



# BELLS OF DOOM

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## CHAPTER I. THE FOUR PLAYERS

"ANOTHER deal, gentlemen?"

The question came in a suave tone. It was uttered by a shrewd-faced young man who was one of a party of four. The men were seated at a card table; the tuxedo-clad speaker was riffling a pack of cards as he spoke.

"Let's call it quits, Claverly," responded a second player. This man, middle-aged and portly, was pleasant in tone. "We dock in New York early tomorrow. Some sleep wouldn't do us any harm."

"All right, Messler," agreed Claverly. "You're the heavy loser. You're the one to choose."

Messler hesitated. Claverly's statement made him think of the other players. Messler looked across the table toward a hatchet-faced individual who was clicking a depleted stack of chips.

"You have lost also, Rosling," observed Messler. "If you would like to extend the game, I am willing."

"Not for me," growled Rosling. "I've been hooked for enough dough already. You're the banker, Claverly. Here're my chips. Cash 'em."

As Claverly complied, Messler turned to the fourth player. He was facing an impassive, hawk-visaged personage who had made no comment. Messler put a formal question to the fourth player.

"How about it, Cranston?" he queried. "Do you agree that it is time to end the game?"

"Yes," came the quiet response.

Chips were clattering. Rosling was turning in his small stack. Messler had an even smaller pile. Cranston's chips, however, were many and of varied colors. Claverly, eyeing them as he prepared to pay, realized instantly that Cranston, like himself, was a heavy winner.

Dull, muffled throbs were audible all the while. These four were aboard the steamship *Laurentic*, in passage from Liverpool to New York. The pounding of the engines accounted for the throbs, for the ship was wallowing through a heavy sea.

These four men were alone in the smoking room of the liner. It was past midnight; other passengers - stragglers who had ventured from their cabins - had retired. Yet these four, untroubled by the roughness of the weather, had continued the game that they had begun earlier in the evening.

It was not surprising that the rough passage had not troubled them. During their acquaintanceship aboard the *Laurentic*, each had learned that the others were accustomed to ocean travel. Augustus Messler, the portly gentleman, was a wealthy New Yorker who was completing a voyage around the world. Milton Claverly, the suave young chap, was ending a trip from Australia. Charles Rosling, the man with the hatchet face, had declared himself to be a frequent transatlantic traveler.

The fourth member of the party - Lamont Cranston - had proven to be the most experienced voyager of all. He had sailed every ocean and was familiar with lands which, to the others, were no more than names.

Cranston had arrived in London just in time to board the *Laurentic*. He had reached the English capital after a journey through the heart of Africa, from Capetown to Cairo.

Accounts settled, Augustus Messler began to comment on these facts. Settling back in his chair, the portly man puffed at a huge cigar and chuckled as he surveyed his companions. He seemed undisturbed by the money that he had lost. The opportunity for a last chat was more important.

"Travelers, all of us," commented Messler. "It has been a pleasure to make your acquaintance, gentlemen. It is odd, the way that people meet. Each man with his own story of the world.

"Myself, for instance. My trip around the world began as a pleasure journey. I had no expectation of adventure until I decided to visit the north of India. My trip to Delhi changed everything. It was there that I acquired the jewels of the Rajah Salgore.

"From then on, my trip required caution. I hired guards for my journey from Delhi to Calcutta and it was well that I did so. Twice, attempts were made to rob me. I did not feel safe until I was out of India."

Messler paused to chuckle. Claverly was eyeing him shrewdly. Rosling was interested, although he tried to feign indifference. Cranston, impassive, was watching the speaker with steady gaze.

"I worked a clever trick in Calcutta," resumed Messler. "I engaged passage on a P O liner; then took a boat that left two days earlier. That was a wise course. They arrested five men aboard the P O ship before it reached England. Those fellows were held as suspicious characters. It is believed that they came aboard to rob me.

"In London, I conferred with the authorities at Scotland Yard. They arranged for my passage aboard the Laurentic. My jewels are safe on this ship. The New York police will see that I am protected when I arrive tomorrow."

Messler paused with a beaming smile. He looked toward Cranston, as though expecting his companion to give a story that would equal his own. Cranston spoke, quietly.

"My experience differs from yours," he stated. "I went to South Africa, prepared for adventure. I trekked the veldt; then set forth through the jungle. I was the only white man in the expedition, until we had passed Lake Victoria.

"Yet in my search for adventure, I found none. The entire trip lacked excitement. Danger existed; but it never came close enough to be a menace. We bagged big game; but always in easy, methodical fashion."

MILTON CLAVERLY smiled suavely. The contrast between the two stories amused him. He felt that it was his turn to speak; so he presented a tale that differed completely from the others.

"I've been to a lot of places," stated Claverly, "and I've had my share of adventures. I wound up in Adelaide, Australia, and I had pretty well decided to remain there, until a month ago.

"Then I received a cable. It announced the death of my father. The cable was from his lawyer. I was needed back in the States. So here I am - on my way to collect a legacy. There's something of a mystery about it, as near as I can make out."

"How so?" inquired Messler.

"My father was reputed to be very wealthy," replied Claverly. "At one time he just about owned the little town of Torburg, where he lived. But his lawyer informs me that the affairs of the estate were quite involved at the time of my father's death.

"I'll collect a worthwhile inheritance, I suppose. But it won't be as large as I might have expected. I guess my father slipped plenty when he grew old. Lost his hold on business. Poor investments, probably. But I'll make out all right. Torburg will be my home instead of Adelaide. Twelve thousand miles apart - that's all - and it doesn't make much difference to a man who's traveled as often as I have."

Charles Rosling had risen from his chair. Steadying himself as the boat rolled, the hatchet-faced man growled a few brief remarks.

"I've traveled plenty, too," asserted Rosling. "But it hasn't been for pleasure or adventure. Business - that's all. I've got no jewels, no big game, no legacy. I don't want 'em. I'm tired of crossing this big pond on a lot of tubs that jump around in bad weather. But I've got to do it, on account of business.

"That's my story. My idea of pleasure and adventure is holding some good hands in a card game. I didn't get any tonight. All I did was get hooked for a bunch of dough. So I'm turning in to see if I can get six hours' sleep out of the bum bunk I've paid too much for. Good night."

Rosling strolled from the smoking room, lurching with the roll of the ship. The others watched his departure. Messler shook his head.

"Some people get very little from life," observed the portly man. "That fellow Rosling is one of them. He's not even a good loser in a card game. Well - we meet a lot of his type.

"I like to keep up acquaintanceships that are worthwhile. Now that Rosling has left us, let me extend an invitation to you two gentlemen. You have heard me speak about the jewels that I acquired in India. Probably you would like to see them."

MESSLER paused to look from Claverly to Cranston. The former showed only mild interest; the latter was impassive. Messler chuckled at this indifference. It pleased him.

"On Thursday night," declared Messler, "I expect to invite a few chosen friends to my home on Riverside Drive. They will have the opportunity of viewing the gems. I should like to have both of you among the guests. Can I count on that pleasure?"

Claverly frowned as he lighted a cigarette. He was considering the invitation, glancing toward the ceiling as he flicked his match. Finally, he nodded.

"I'm due in Torburg," he said, "but I can probably arrange to stay a few days in New York. I'd like to look about town before I leave. I'll call my father's lawyer by long distance, to tell him that I am detained. Yes, Messler, I can be there on Thursday."

"And you, Cranston?" inquired Messler.

"Suppose I call you," responded Cranston. "I am not yet sure of my plans. I am contemplating a trip to Patagonia, which may offer some of the adventure that I failed to find in Africa. But it will probably be necessary for me to remain in New York at least two weeks."

"I think I can count on you, then," decided Messler. He arose and Cranston copied his example. "Good night, gentlemen. Don't be surprised if you see a squad of police when you dock. They will merely be detailed to protect my jewels."

Claverly was still seated when the others left the smoking room. The suave young man was finishing his cigarette. He watched Messler waddle from the room. He saw Cranston follow, a few moments later.

Unlike Rosling and Messler, Cranston did not experience trouble from the rolling of the ship. Across the smoking room, he caught his balance with each lurch. The same was true when he reached the passageway.

Tall, sweeping in stride, this traveler from Africa moved as steadily as if he had been walking on solid ground. He descended a stairway, followed another passage, and paused at the door of a first-class cabin. He unlocked the barrier and entered the darkened room.

There was a click as Cranston drew the cord of a table lamp. His tall form showed as a dim outline just beyond the range of light. The shaded illumination revealed him stooping above a bag that rested on a rack.

Black garments came into view. A cloak swished over shoulders. A broad-brimmed slouch hat settled upon Cranston's head. Then came a soft, whispered laugh as the transformation was completed.

Lamont Cranston had become a being of blackness. Thin gloves were slipping over his long-fingered hands. His outline was that of a mammoth blot.

A hand drew the light cord. The blackened figure merged with the solid darkness of the room.

The door of the cabin opened. Out stepped the sinister form that had developed within. Silent in tread, this shape moved along the deserted passage. A ghostly visitant was aboard the steamship.

MEN of crime would have faltered had they seen that figure. For this being was one of whom they talked in hushed voices. He was no haunting ghost; he was a grim reality. This strange creature who had replaced Lamont Cranston was The Shadow.

In places where danger lay; in spots where opportunity lured men of crime - there one could expect The Shadow. Master of darkness, a fighter who battled evil, The Shadow made it his task to thwart the hordes of crookdom.

Suspects aboard a P O liner - radioed reports of attempts to gain a fortune in jewels - these had been sufficient to bring The Shadow from New York to Liverpool, in time to board the steamship Laurentic.

Scotland Yard had relied upon the strength of the ship's safe to guard Augustus Messler's gems. Men had been stationed aboard as an added precaution. Messler was confident that his possessions were protected; otherwise, he would not have talked.

But all the while, the rare gems were also under the guard of an unseen watcher. Safes could be blown; detectives could be shot down. But The Shadow, his very presence unknown, could not be eliminated. He was here, ready to step in where others might fall.

The voyage was nearly ended. The Shadow, ever-watchful, had decided that the jewels were safe. They would reach New York; they would be carried to a place of safety; but the trail would not end there. The Shadow could judge the future as well as the present.

Keenly, The Shadow knew that danger lay ahead. Already he could scent the plans of scheming minds. Before the Laurentic docked, final ways of crime would be prepared. To learn of those arrangements was The Shadow's present purpose.

The Shadow had dropped the guise of Lamont Cranston. In his chosen character of blackness, he was stalking forth to learn the schemes that brewed.

## **CHAPTER II. TWO TALK TERMS**

TEN minutes had elapsed since Lamont Cranston had strolled from the smoking room. A man was coming along one of the narrow passages of the Laurentic. He stopped before the door of a cabin and unlocked it. He turned on a light switch as he entered the room. The glare showed the features of Milton Claverly.

The young man closed the door behind him, but did not lock it. He smiled in a somewhat leering fashion as he drew a stack of bills from his pocket and deposited the money upon a table.

Forgetting his winnings for the moment, Claverly doffed coat and vest and walked to a wardrobe in the corner of the cabin.

The door of the wardrobe was open. Claverly hung the garments on a coat hanger and slammed the door as he turned away to remove his necktie and collar. The door of the wardrobe bounced open: the roll of the ship swung it toward the wall. As Claverly turned, he saw the door hanging there as if glued in position.

The ship lurched; the door wavered. It still remained open. Claverly shrugged his shoulders. He wondered why the door did not swing shut again, but he had no time for such trifles. He gathered up the

winnings that lay on the table and stuffed the bills in his pocket. Hardly had he done so before a cautious knock sounded at the door of the cabin. Claverly strode over and opened the door.

Rosling entered. The sharp-faced man glowered as he closed the door behind him. He shot the bolt; then looked at Claverly, who was smiling in sophisticated fashion.

"Well?" growled Rosling, by way of query, "what did you find out?"

"Not much," responded Claverly, as he lighted a cigarette. "Messler left shortly after you did."

"Yeah?" Rosling's voice was gruff. "Then how about that dough I was hooked for?"

"Hooked?" quizzed Claverly. "I don't like the word, Rosling. It's a poor way for a fellow to talk. The fault was your own. You don't know how to play cards."

"Maybe I don't," retorted Rosling, "but a guy that can slide the pasteboards the way you do - well, a guy like you don't need luck. You're a card sharp; there's no use arguing that point. Come on. Divvy."

"That's not in our arrangements."

"No? Well, it wasn't arranged for you to fool around and get nowhere with Messler."

CLAVERLY smiled. He blew a cloud of smoke and eyed Rosling narrowly. The door of the wardrobe was still open and wavering with each pitch of the ship. Claverly did not notice it; nor did Rosling.

"Let's get things straight, Rosling," suggested Claverly, in a tone that had a smooth purr. "You and I met aboard this steam ship - strangers until we had left Liverpool - and we made an acquaintanceship. Am I right?"

"Yeah."

"Last night" - Claverly seemed reminiscent - "you paid me an unexpected visit in this cabin. On that occasion, you were equipped with a businesslike revolver. You said you had come to demand a showdown. I did you the honor of thinking you were a detective."

"Well - maybe I look like one."

"You didn't appear dumb enough."

"Lay off the hokum. Listen here, Claverly; we came to an agreement about -"

"I am about to mention that point, Rosling. I merely want to make the details plain before we continue. Last night, after I withdrew my theory that you were a detective, you insisted that I was a crook. You stated that I was after Augustus Messler's jewels."

"That's what I said, and I meant it."

Claverly smiled. He eyed Rosling carefully. There was a smoothness to Claverly's countenance that the hatchet-faced visitor could not match. Claverly proceeded.

"You jump to conclusions, Rosling," he said. "First, you decided that my luck at cards proved me to be a sharper. That meant that I must be a crook. Next, I was friendly with Messler. That proved that I was out to trim him. Finally, you knew that I had come to England on the P O liner that Messler had planned to board at Calcutta."

"That's right," added Rosling. "The ship that had a bunch of crooks aboard."

"Exactly," agreed Claverly, "and those suspects are now held by Scotland Yard. I am not among them. I am traveling freely on the high seas. Which proves -"

"That you're wiser than those guys they grabbed in England. Too wise for Scotland Yard; but not wise enough to fool Hatch Rosling. Get that, Claverly?"

"Your nickname is a good one, Hatch," observed Claverly. "It makes you appear to be exactly what you claim to be - a New York crook. I admire your frankness, Hatch. After you accused me of being a crook you admitted that you were one yourself."

"Sure I did. Why shouldn't I? We're birds of the same feather, Claverly."

THE young man smiled. His suave expression indicated an agreement with Rosling's statement; but Claverly did not commit himself with words. Rosling caught the implication.

"Quit the hokum," ordered the hatchet-faced man. "All that counts is one thing: we'd both like to grab those jewels of Messler's. That's agreed, ain't it?"

"Yes," admitted Claverly, "I must confess that the rajah's gems intrigue me. However, I had not formed any plans for obtaining them. Messler is welcome to them."

"Sour grapes," growled "Hatch. "You ran into the same trouble I did. Couldn't figure a way to snatch the swag. The jewels are safe aboard this tub. But after we get to New York, it'll be different."

"Yes, you will be in your own territory. You will have the opportunity that you need. But my position will be quite different. Assuming that I did want Messler's jewels, New York would be the last place that I could get them."

"But I said we could team up -"

"And that is what surprised me. Here, aboard ship, our positions are equal. We could be of use to each other. But in New York, all is in your favor. I am useless."

"So that's it, eh?" Understanding showed on Rosling's sharp countenance. "You've been thinking things over since last night?"

"I have," answered Claverly, in a dry tone.

"Well, do some new thinking," ordered Hatch. "Look at it this way. You've made friends with Messler. You can work from the inside. All you need is the mob to come in and grab the jewels when you give the signal. It's a set-up."

"Yes," agreed Claverly, "I admit that my position would be a good one. I could work from the inside; you from the outside. Nevertheless, the proposition has one fault."

"What's that?"

"It sounds too good."

"How do you mean?"

"The terms. A fifty-fifty split. Rather a generous concession on your part, Rosling. You could hire another inside man for a lot less."

Rosling had begun to scowl; his expression changed as Claverly's statement ended. Rosling had an answer. He gave it, frankly.

"Listen, Claverly," he asserted, "there's two reasons why we ought to go fifty-fifty. First, because you're the best person I could get for the inside job. Second, because either one of us could queer the other.

"Suppose you worked from the inside and snagged those jewels by yourself. I'd know what you were doing. I could take the swag away from you afterward. See? And suppose I came busting in with a job of my own. You could gum it, couldn't you?"

"Well - there's the lay. There's only one answer. Teamwork. A divvy. There's no catch to it. We talked things over last night. What we decided on - well, it goes. That's all."

CLAVERLY considered it. Rosling watched him light a second cigarette from the stump of the first. Then came a half minute of thought on Claverly's part. Finally, the young man spoke.

"All right, Hatch," he said. "You'll go after those jewels anyway. So we might as well talk turkey. You figure that I can be around when Messler shows the gems to his friends."

"Yeah. You're going to be there. That's your part of the Job. Get it?"

"Very well. I suppose you will be watching to see that I take the opportunity."

"Yeah. You'll have to grab the first chance you get, or tell me the reason why."

"I've found that chance."

"You have? When?"

"Thursday night."

"You mean -"

"Messler talked after you left the smoking room," explained Claverly. "He spoke to Cranston and myself. He invited us to visit his home on Thursday night. We are to view the rajah's jewels."

"Say!" exclaimed Hatch. "That makes it all jake!"

"Under the circumstances," added Claverly, "I shall remain in New York. I shall probably meet Messler off and on before Thursday. Of course, I shall express anxiety about getting back to Torburg."

"That's a good stall," agreed Hatch. "But don't overplay that talk about your father's estate."

"Why not?"

"Because some smart dick might look into it."

"What if he does?"

"Well, he might find out that it was hokum."

"But it isn't." Claverly delivered a broad smile. "You made a bad guess, Hatch, when you thought that I was passing out a phony line."

"You mean you really are coming into a pile of dough when you get to Torburg?"



"Precisely. The estate will not be large; but it actually exists. That's why I'm coming in from Australia."

"And you heard about Messler jewels when you were aboard the P O ship?"

"Yes."

"Say" - Hatch paused to chuckle in commending fashion - "there ain't any guy but you for the inside work. You've got a straight story. You can back it up. Messler's invited you to his place. It's sweet."

The chuckle continued as Hatch turned toward the door. His hand on the knob, Hatch delivered a parting statement.

"Don't worry about the dough I lost tonight," he said. "Keep your winnings. It was worth it. We know how to get in touch with each other after we reach New York. We talked over the job last night."

"We'll pull it just as we planned. The guys outside, waiting for the signal. You give the tip and act like you were surprised like everybody else in the joint. Thursday night - that's set. Unless something goes sour."

HATCH unbolted the door and departed. Claverly puffed his cigarette alone. Turning, he strolled to the wardrobe and took out his coat and vest. Donning the garments, he folded the coat collar around his neck. It was plain that he intended to take a short stroll on an upper deck, as a relief from the stuffiness of smoking room and cabin.

Claverly strolled out. He closed the cabin door behind him, but did not lock it. This was proof that he would return within a few minutes.

Silence reigned in the room where the light still burned. The door of the wardrobe wavered.

Timed to a slight roll of the ship, the door swung shut. This was the first time that it had acted in such fashion. The explanation came a moment later when blackness moved from between the wardrobe and the wall.

Blackness became a living shape. Materializing from the darkened area, the figure of The Shadow grew into being. Tall and sinister, the cloaked form moved silently across the cabin and paused by the outer door. Then came a soft whisper.

A sibilant laugh, confined to the limits of the creaking cabin. That was The Shadow's aftermath to the conversation that he had overheard. The Shadow had reached this cabin ahead of Milton Claverly. From a place of concealment, he had heard all.

The door of the cabin opened. The tall shape glided into the corridor. The door closed.

A few minutes later, Claverly returned. The door of the wardrobe was swinging free. The young man pushed it open so that he could hang up his coat and vest. Then he closed the door. This time it remained shut.

Two had talked terms within this cabin. Those terms had concerned Augustus Messler's jewels. The gems, though safe aboard the Laurentic, would be in jeopardy on Thursday night. Crime lay in the offing. When it came, The Shadow would be ready.

### **CHAPTER III. THURSDAY NIGHT**

THE Laurentic had docked. Thursday night had arrived. Augustus Messler was at home in his Riverside Drive apartment. This was the evening scheduled for the display of the rajah's gems.

Messler lived on the fourth floor of an imposing apartment house. Situated on an eminence above the river, this building appeared lofty from the Drive. Observed from the streets above, it nestled against the side of the hill and lost its high proportions.

From that direction, where thorough-fares were seldom frequented, approach to the apartment house was an easy matter. A side entrance - a fire tower - both offered opportunity for easy access to the building.

It was on one of the rear streets that a coupe had stopped. Two men, in the darkness of the car, were talking in low voices. Their conversation ended as a sibilant whisper came from the street side of the coupe.

Instructions followed, delivered in a strange, uncanny voice. Then blackness detached itself from the side of the car. Streetlights revealed a glimpse of a fleeting form that moved away in ghostlike fashion. After that, blackness alone was dominant.

The two men stepped from the car and followed in the direction that the phantom shape had taken.

These two were Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland. Aides of The Shadow, they had driven to this spot, there to await instructions. The Shadow had investigated the methods of approach to Messler's apartment. He had given his agents orders, to post them in strategic places.

THE SHADOW reached the fire tower. He ascended. The only traces of his passage came when he passed lighted balconies that indicated the floors of the building. There his form materialized momentarily, only to fade when he continued his ascent.

The Shadow reached the fourth floor.

There were two entrances to Messler's apartment. The one that led to the kitchen was situated near the fire tower. The other entrance was further along the hall. The Shadow chose the kitchen entrance. He passed through the kitchen and came to a deserted living room.

There was a door opposite. It was ajar. The Shadow could hear the sound of voices. He approached and peered within. He saw Messler talking with Milton Claverly; the two were in a room that was fitted like a study. Evidently Claverly had been the first of the guests to arrive.

The Shadow listened to snatches of conversation; then came an interruption - the buzz of the bell at the front door of the apartment. The Shadow turned and glided quickly across the living room. He chose the path through the dining nook; here he paused.

Messler had come from the study and was on his way to answer the door. The Shadow could hear the opening of the barrier. Voices followed and two men appeared, following Messler back to the study. The Shadow, gazing from his secluded corner, recognized the visitors.

Both were from headquarters. One was Detective Joe Cardona. A stocky, swarthy-faced individual, Cardona was recognized as an ace among dicks. He was at present serving in the capacity of acting inspector. His presence here meant that Messler had decided that police protection would be necessary when the rajah's jewels were displayed.

Cardona's companion was Detective Sergeant Markham, who frequently accompanied the ace when Cardona needed an aide.

As the three men - Messler and the sleuths - went into the study, The Shadow laughed softly. His tones were not audible beyond the confines of the dining nook.

The arrival of these representatives of the law introduced a new element into the situation. Apparently, Messler had arranged for Cardona and Markham to arrive before the guests appeared. Claverly, however, had come early. He happened to be present for whatever conference was under way.

This fact afforded opportunity to The Shadow. Instead of returning across the living room, to listen in at the study door, The Shadow remained in the dining nook. Swiftly, he divested himself of hat and cloak. He stowed these garments in a small curtained cupboard; to them, he added a brace of automatics.

When he again faced the soft light that came from the living room, The Shadow was in the guise of Lamont Cranston.

With long strides, The Shadow crossed the kitchen and went into the outer hall. He moved to the main door of the apartment and rang the bell.

There was a short pause; then the door opened and Messler appeared. The host appeared relieved to observe that the guest was Cranston.

"HELLO," said Messler. "I hoped it would be you, Cranston. I had not expected anyone to be here so soon."

"I am the first?" came the quiet question.

"Er - no" - Messler hesitated - "Claverly is here already. I - well, we have a while yet, and I think you had better come into the study. We have a sort of conference going on."

"Between you and Claverly?"

"Not exactly. Claverly just happened to be here. Other persons are concerned. It will be all right for you to join us, Cranston. By the way - where is your hat and coat?"

"At the Cobalt Club." A thin smile showed on Cranston's lips. "The night was mild, so I strolled outside without them. Stanley - my chauffeur - happened to come along with the limousine, so I stepped aboard and came here."

Messler was conducting Cranston across the living room. They reached the door of the study as Cranston's statement was completed. They entered. Cranston seemed mildly surprised to see Joe Cardona and Markham.

The headquarters men knew Cranston. He was a friend of the former acting police commissioner, Wainwright Barth; he was also acquainted with Ralph Weston, the present commissioner, who was back at his old job again.

Messler had evidently told Cardona that Cranston was among the guests; for the detective did not show surprise as he shook hands with the arrival.

The men seated themselves about the study. Messler took a chair behind a desk; Claverly was close by. Cranston sat down near Cardona and Markham. Like the others, he waited for Messler to speak.

"Let me resume," said Messler. "I have time to give Mr. Cranston a brief explanation of what is impending. Since he knows you, Cardona, he has probably guessed that you are here on account of the rajah's jewels.

"The jewels, Cranston, are in that safe" - Messler pointed toward a strong-box set in the wall of the study - "and I intend to bring them out after all my guests have arrived. In the meantime, I - well, I have

become a bit concerned about the gems, I thought - or better, suspected - that there might be danger here tonight.

"So I arranged for protection. These two men" - he indicated Cardona and Markham - "will station themselves here in the study, to be ready in case any trouble may occur. I decided - when Claverly arrived early - that it might be well to take certain persons into our confidence.

"Claverly is one; you are the other. I have revolvers here" - Messler paused to bring the weapons from the desk drawer - "and if it is all right with Cardona, I shall have you two men equip yourselves with these guns. Is that satisfactory, Cardona?"

"All right," responded Cardona. "But don't say anything to the rest of the guests."

"Certainly not," agreed Messler. "I shall have a revolver of my own. We three will be in the living room; Cardona and Markham will remain here. Of course, gentlemen" - this was to Cranston and Claverly - "we must not use our weapons except in case of emergency. Should any marauders appear here, I feel sure that Cardona and Markham can deal with them."

KEEN eyes were upon Milton Claverly while Augustus Messler was speaking. Those were the eyes of The Shadow, peering from the masklike countenance of Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow knew that a brief conference had been held prior to his appearance as Cranston. Hence he was not surprised to note that Claverly appeared unperturbed.

In fact, the young man from Australia was more suave than usual. He chanced to speak to Messler while The Shadow's eyes were watching him. Unconscious of the critical gaze, Claverly appeared completely at ease. The part that he was playing seemed quite in accord with Messler's plans.

The discussion continued. Messler had chosen the study as the best place for Cardona and Markham to be stationed. While in this room, the men of the law could guard the safe. Later, they would hold a commanding position, for the study door gave a view of the outer door of the apartment and a portion of the dining nook.

Claverly was listening to Messler's plans. Accepted as a confidant by his host, Claverly had become an inside man on both games. He knew that a raid was coming; he also knew what steps were being taken should marauders visit this place tonight.

The Shadow, in turn, knew the plans that had passed between Claverly and Rosling, aboard the Laurentic. The thin smile that showed upon Lamont Cranston's lips was the only reflex of the thoughts that were passing through The Shadow's keen brain.

Upon Claverly depended the signal for the raid. It would be impossible for Claverly to get word to Rosling that the police were here. Yet Claverly could easily offset the efforts of the law by simply withholding the required signal. That, at least, would mean stalemate. Cardona and Markham waiting within; crooks lurking without; no meeting between the opposing forces.

But did Claverly intend to forego the signal? Something in the man's easy manner had impressed The Shadow. Those keen eyes that stared from the visage of Lamont Cranston were unflinching in their steady survey. The Shadow could observe something that others did not notice - a tenseness that Claverly showed in spite of his apparent ease.

A BUZZER sounded. More guests were arriving. Messler arose from his chair and indicated the door. He waited until Cranston and Claverly had walked into the living room. Then he followed. He closed the

door of the study behind him, leaving Cardona and Markham on guard with the gems.

Messler admitted his guests. They were the first of several arrivals who came in quick succession. All were wealthy men, friends of Messler's.

Half an hour after the conference had ended, there were a dozen guests seated about Messler's living room. This completed the expected quota.

Interest was in the air. All were anxious to see the rajah's jewels. Messler decided to end the impatience of his guests. He entered the study and was gone for a few minutes.

When he returned, he was carrying a long, flat box. This was the receptacle that held the jewels from India.

Men gathered about. Exclamations sounded as Messler opened the box to reveal a dazzling display of gems. Blood-red rubies, sparkling sapphires and deep-green emeralds vied in resplendent beauty.

After the first inspection, the throng spread slightly. Guests listened while their host began to display the jewels one by one, giving a brief history of each stone as he showed it.

Milton Claverly was standing by the window. Keen eyes watched the young man raise the stump of a cigarette to obtain another light. The Shadow, watching, knew that the action could be viewed by anyone outside the apartment building.

Claverly flicked the stump from the window, turning in that direction as he did so. His gaze steadied off toward the Drive, to the lights that followed the line of the Hudson River. From below, quartered in the seclusion of the side street, any watcher could have noted Claverly's procedure.

A smile was firm on the lips of Lamont Cranston. In this guise, The Shadow was ready to thwart the attack that he knew must follow. For Claverly's action meant one thing only: The inside man had passed the signal that was to bring in workers of crime.

#### **CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW'S PART**

MINUTES passed after Claverly's signal. The time period had no effect upon Augustus Messler. The owner of the rajah's jewels was continuing with his description of the gems. His guests were listening with quiet interest.

Milton Claverly had strolled away from the window. He had crossed the room and was standing on the far side, close to the door of the study.

Lamont Cranston, however, had made no move. He was in the place that he had originally taken. He was just around the corner from the dining nook.

This spot suited The Shadow for the present. It gave him a command of the outer door. It also enabled him to flank the dining nook. One of those two entrances must be used by the expected raiders. The Shadow held a position that was quite as effective as the study door where Cardona and Markham lingered.

Keenly, The Shadow was watching Claverly; yet the young man did not notice the eyes that were upon him. Claverly, where he stood, was out of sight of both Cardona and Markham. He, too, could watch both entrances.

It was plain to The Shadow that Claverly did not know from which direction the crooks would enter.

That was not surprising. The conversation aboard the *Laurentic* had indicated that Claverly would handle the inside job alone, leaving the actual robbery to the crooks whom Rosling headed.

Hence The Shadow was watching Claverly, knowing that the inside man would show some change of expression when the crooks arrived. It was not necessary for The Shadow to gaze toward either door.

Strain had begun to show on Claverly's countenance. There was a reason. Although men from headquarters were present, Claverly had given the signal. He had set a tough task for the crooks who would soon be due.

Did Claverly think that Rosling's band could overpower the watching detectives? Did he fear to postpone the signal for the raid, thinking that he might incur Rosling's antagonism? Did he feel that he might be called to accounting, should the raid fail?

So far as the crooks were concerned, Claverly could pretend that he had not known of the detectives in the study. On the contrary, he was running a risk of exposure if the raid went wrong.

In his analysis of Claverly, The Shadow had given the young man credit for being a smooth worker. The Shadow was sure that Claverly must have had reason for giving the signal in spite of the difficulties that would confront Rosling's raiders.

The glint of The Shadow's eyes; the firm, unchanging smile that showed on his fixed lips - these were the only indications of The Shadow's thoughts. The Shadow was gaining a definite conclusion. He knew that Claverly had chosen to play a bold game; that the young man was uncertain as to the outcome.

Succeeding seconds seemed to mark their effect upon Claverly's demeanor. For the first time, the inside man was showing real worryment.

THEN came a change. There was a creaking sound from the dining nook, a noise which The Shadow heard. Something must have been visible there also, for Claverly's eyes had turned in that direction. Messler, talking to his guests, was not aware that enemies were approaching.

Claverly shifted nervously. The Shadow turned. At the same instant, a big, rough-faced raider stepped into view from the dining nook. He was followed by two others. A growled voice made Messler and the guests turn toward the speaker.

"Stick 'em up!" came the order, backed with revolvers. "Keep your mitts high! Drop them jools and back up against the wall!"

Messler obeyed. His guests copied his example. The Shadow saw Claverly feign total surprise, as the young man raised his hands along with the others. But The Shadow's hands were not lifted. His right, going to the pocket of his tuxedo coat, was drawing the revolver that Messler had given him.

The raiders had not noted the tall form of Lamont Cranston. When the leader swung in that direction, he stopped short at the sight of the revolver which suddenly covered him. The man uttered a growl, calculated to bring his fellows to his aid. But before they could turn, an answering challenge came from across the room.

Cardona and Markham were springing into view. At sight of the detectives, the crooks knew that the trap had closed. Sullen faces glowered as horny fists dropped guns upon the floor. Caught between Cranston and the men of the law, these raiders had no chance to fire a single shot.

Messler sprang to guard his jewels. His guests formed a group behind him. The revolver dropped back into Cranston's pocket while Cardona and Markham forced the three crooks off in the direction of the

study.

"So it's Mike Tocson, eh?" Cardona was speaking as he eyed the leader of the three crooks. "Brought in a couple of gorillas to see what you could grab. Well - you won't be fencing that stuff. You'll be doing a turn up the river. We've got the goods on you. This makes you a fourth offender, Mike. Looks like you'll stay in the big house when you get there."

The mobleader snarled a retort. His face was venomous; but he knew too well that Cardona would stop him if he tried to make a break.

Messler and his guests looked on with interest as the crooks backed away from the guns of the detectives. None noted Cranston's actions - not even Claverly.

The tall globe-trotter had played his part in aiding Cardona and Markham. Quietly, he had strolled away. He had entered the dining nook and passed from view. The Shadow had played his part as Lamont Cranston. He was preparing - for some reason - to resume the guise of The Shadow.

"Get in that room," barked Cardona, thrusting the muzzle of his gun against Tocson's ribs. "Get in there - the three of you -"

The detective stopped short as Tocson laughed hoarsely. The man was staring beyond Cardona, looking straight toward the outer door of the apartment. Backing, Cardona swung in that direction. His action was instinctive. The door had opened with Tocson's laugh.

Coming through the doorway was a new squad of three desperadoes. The crooks had worked a double game. One crew had come through the kitchen; the other had headed for the main door. The first raiders had been nabbed; the second group, by their delay, had arrived to rescue them.

AS Cardona and Markham wheeled to meet these new enemies, Tocson and his two gorillas pounced upon the two detectives. Down went Cardona and Markham. The new crooks sent the guests cowering toward the walls. Only Messler, drawing his revolver, was ready to fight in this emergency.

A gun swung toward him; the leader of the new raiders was ready to fire.

Then came the first shot. It roared from an unexpected quarter - the entrance of the dining nook. The shot was delivered from an automatic held in a black-gloved fist. With the burst came the jeering tones of an unearthly laugh. The mobleader went sprawling, unable to fire at Messler.

Cardona and Markham were milling with Tocson and the two gorillas. But the other pair of crooks at the door were ready for the menace. They saw it before a single guest could turn toward the dining nook. They knew the foe with whom they had to deal. The Shadow!

The shot - the laugh - these were the tokens of the ominous presence. The sight of a tall being garbed in black brought frenzied cries from the crooks at the outer door. Simultaneously, the two men aimed at the sinister figure that had appeared as if from nowhere. They wanted to get The Shadow before he could loose new shots.

Revolvers cracked. Bullets zizzed wide of their mark; for the crook's shots came in haste. A split-second later, tongues of flame roared from both automatics. Stabbing shots found their marks. The frenzied gorillas staggered. The Shadow whirled.

His action was well timed. Tocson, battling with Cardona, had wrested away the detective's gun. A revolver gained, the mobleader was making a desperate effort. The Shadow, then Cardona. Such was Tocson's plan.

But The Shadow had foreseen attack from the corner of the room. His quick whirl flashed the crimson lining of his black cloak. His action was not a mere turnabout. In his speedy move, The Shadow went sweeping out into the center of the room, heading toward the outer door where sprawled raiders lay helpless.

It was this fast action that saved The Shadow. For Tocson, most desperate of all the raiders, was the surest shot of the lot. Had The Shadow remained stationary, he would have been a perfect target for Tocson's fire. But his sweeping whirl was something that the mobleader had not anticipated.

THE revolver barked as Tocson swung his aim. Shots sped close to the moving target, but they failed to nick the traveling form in black. Tocson's bullets thudded into the walls. Two shots were wide; the third went high as The Shadow's form suddenly faded toward the floor.

Then came the answering report. It was a perfect shot from The Shadow's right-hand gun. Tocson, linked with Cardona, offered a difficult target. Only the mobleader's right arm and shoulder were certain marks for The Shadow to find.

The bullet from the automatic lodged in Tocson's shoulder. The mobleader slumped. Cardona knocked the revolver from the fellow's grasp.

A gorilla grasped Markham's gun as his companion twisted the detective sergeant toward the floor. The crook aimed for The Shadow. He was too late. Again an automatic thundered. The gorilla succumbed.

Then came another shot. It dropped the last gorilla as he was about to pound Markham's head against the wall. The crippled crook rolled on the floor. Cardona and Markham, rising, grabbed their guns. They looked for The Shadow. He was gone.

Swiftly, The Shadow had swung out into the hall. He expected reserves. He encountered them. Some were coming from the fire tower; others from a passage that led to a side stairway. As The Shadow appeared, gorillas stopped to aim.

Then came shots from behind them. Crooks wheeled. Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent had separated; each had followed one group of crooks. The Shadow's laugh sounded weirdly through the hallway as his automatics opened their quick staccato. Gorillas sprawled and dived for cover.

One opening attracted them. This was the door to Messler's kitchen. They took it, to avoid The Shadow's shots; to escape the fire that his agents were delivering from the rear. But this led them into a new trap that had formed during The Shadow's fire.

Plunging into Messler's dining nook, the crooks were met by the fire of Cardona and Markham. Two gorillas fell; the others dropped their guns and raised their arms. Surrender to the law was better than another hopeless fight with The Shadow.

Sweeping along the hall, The Shadow had neared the fire tower. With one quick movement, he drew off hat and cloak. He hissed an order; Cliff Marsland stepped into view. The Shadow thrust his black garb into his agents arms. The automatics accompanied the cloak and hat.

Cliff turned and headed down the fire tower. Harry Vincent, at the end of the side passage, had also heard The Shadow's command. He took to the stairway. The agents were hurrying back to their coupe. The Shadow, again in the guise of Lamont Cranston, was ready to return to Messler's apartment.

He chose the door through the kitchen. Carrying the revolver that Messler had given him, he came through the dining nook to find Cardona and Markham covering the last of the raiders. Messler and



Claverly had also drawn their revolvers. They were standing by.

CLAVERLY'S suavity had returned. There was nothing in his manner to show disappointment because the raid had failed. He was working with the law, like Messler and Cranston. Safe with the winning side, he showed no sign of trepidation.

Despite the number of raiders, there was one absentee. That man was Hatch Rosling. Apparently, he had left this job to lesser crooks. Gorillas were sullen; the only one who might speak was Mike Tocson, glowering wounded from the floor.

With prisoners guarded by Markham, Messler, Claverly and Cranston, Joe Cardona turned to quiz the crippled mobleader. Tocson had crawled along the floor and was glaring upward in defiance. Before Cardona could question him, Tocson's left arm came up.

A revolver glittered. It was Tocson's own weapon. He had reclaimed it from the floor. Finger on trigger, the mobleader aimed for Joe.

Then came two reports. One was the crackle of the .32 that Messler had given Cranston. It came first. It dropped Tocson's arm and stopped the rogue's shot.

Then came the burst of Cardona's revolver. It was a belated shot. But Cranston's prompt aim had saved Joe's life. The detective fired instinctively, even though Tocson's arm was dropping. The mobleader sprawled, dying. His chance to speak was ended.

Two hours later, a blue light glimmered in the corner of a black-walled room. The Shadow was in his sanctum. His soft laugh sounded through the room.

As Lamont Cranston, The Shadow had received congratulations for his effort in behalf of the law. Presumably, he had been trapped with other guests; like Messler and Claverly, he had been ready at the finish.

The mysterious arrival and departure of The Shadow was unexplained. Crooks - dead, wounded and captured - had been removed from Messler's apartment. The jewels were safe, with police on guard. Tomorrow, they would be put in a safe-deposit box.

Guests had departed, among them Milton Claverly. The young man - like Lamont Cranston - had been commended for his aid. He was going back to Torburg. Nothing had been said that might have connected him with the frustrated robbery.

The Shadow's hand began to write beneath the light. Coded words, in ink of vivid blue. Deft fingers folded the completed message. Again, The Shadow laughed. He had completed instructions to his agent, Harry Vincent.

For The Shadow sensed that crime was not ended. Hatch Rosling was still at large. Milton Claverly had left unmolested. While those two were active, The Shadow intended to keep watch. The paths of Claverly and Rosling had crossed aboard the Laurentic. Perhaps those paths would cross again.

Cliff Marsland would seek traces of Rosling in New York; Harry Vincent would watch Claverly in Torburg. For The Shadow could foresee another meeting between Rosling and Claverly. When that time came, wherever the place, crime would be concerned.

## **CHAPTER V. THE LAWYER SPEAKS**

"WELCOME back to Torburg, Milton."

The speaker was a firm-faced, gray-haired man who had risen from behind a mahogany desk. His grip was forcible as he shook hands with Milton Claverly. This was Louis Vandrow, the Torburg attorney who represented the Claverly estate.

Seating himself opposite the lawyer, Milton lighted a cigarette and began to smoke while he waited for Vandrow to speak again. The attorney was busy with a file of documents which evidently pertained to the estate.

The window of the office gave forth a good view of Torburg. A town of scattered dwellings, the community appeared to be enjoying an afternoon siesta. Milton Claverly smiled as he studied the vista that the window offered.

Torburg had no railroad. Hence the town had spread out in a natural fashion. The central district was nestled in a depression that lay between sloping hills. The building that housed this office was on the outskirts.

Rising, Milton strolled to the window and viewed the town for a beginning. He saw the old hotel that had existed since stagecoach days. He noted the cluster of stores that he remembered since childhood. He turned his gaze toward residences that were situated among trees. He could not see his father's house, for it was past a slope; but on the intervening rise of ground he observed a structure that was new to him.

THIS was a rounded tower, some forty feet in height. It was built of stone; and its walls were tapering. There was a door at the bottom; but the tower was windowless until near the top. There, Milton saw an eight-sided belfry, which had slits for openings. The tower was capped by a large, octagonal cupola that topped off the belfry.

"Admiring the bell-tower?"

The question came from Vandrow, who had finished with the papers. A smile showed on the lawyer's rugged face. Milton nodded.

"Who built it?" he questioned.

"Your father," replied Vandrow.

"He built that crazy tower?" Milton shook his head in a puzzled fashion. "No wonder he lost so much money. What was his idea?"

"A gift to the town," replied Vandrow. "There had been talk of a monument upon that slope. Impossible suggestions were made regarding it. So your father settled the matter by building the bell-tower for the community."

"Why did he pick on a bell-tower?"

"Some whim, I suppose. Your father was a man of original ideas. He had made money. It was his right to spend it as he chose."

"Maybe," grunted Milton. "But he might have left more to his heirs than he did. Don't let that statement mislead you, Mr. Vandrow" - Milton paused as he added the additional comment - "because I'm not thinking of myself alone. Whether or not I shared in the estate would have made no difference."

"It's simply my opinion that a bell-tower like that one is a senseless idea. I'm not saying that to criticize my father; I merely mention it to back up my theory that he must have slipped a bit during his later years."

"You are wrong, Milton," returned Vandrow, shaking his head, "entirely wrong. You were not here when your father died. You had not seen him for a great many years. I assure you that your father, David Claverly, was mentally alert up to the time of his death."

"Yet he built bell-towers?"

"He built one bell-tower. It was more sensible than some stupid monument to which he would have been asked to subscribe. It remains, at least, as a unique memorial. I, for one, approved of its construction."

"All right," laughed Milton, "I'll vote for the bell-tower. It's not surprising, though, that I didn't like it when I first saw it. Father and I never agreed on anything."

"So I recall," mused Vandrow. "Yet you and he had real understanding. He often remarked on that fact to me. He said that he had made his way through the world and that he wanted you to do the same. That was why you left Torburg."

"He staked me," stated Milton. "Gave me fifty thousand dollars. I shot the works. Spent it inside of a year. After that - well, I had to battle my own way. I was too proud to come back home."

"You made out well in the end."

"Yes, but the going was tough for a while. My father knew of some of the troubles I ran into. I used to write him after I got out of my scrapes. I guess -"

MILTON paused. He puffed at his cigarette, then noticed Vandrow's friendly expression. He decided to continue.

"I guess some of my letters wouldn't look good in print," said Milton. "They might give the idea that I had followed a pretty shady career. But after I settled down in Adelaide, I put all that behind me."

"A wise procedure. You can forget the past, Milton. Youthful escapades seldom produce serious consequences. As for your letters to your father, I feel sure that he must have destroyed them. That is, unless they happen to be in this box."

The lawyer arose to approach an opened safe. He brought forth a tin box and handed it to Milton. The box was locked. Milton shook it and noted that it contained light objects only.

"I left the key with Lester," explained Vandrow, "your father's old servant. The box probably contains personal papers that your father thought would be of interest to you."

The lawyer seated himself at the desk and began to tap the file of documents that he had been studying. Milton laid the tin box aside to hear what Vandrow had to say.

"Your father," stated the attorney, "encountered unexpected misfortunes in his business enterprises. I must admit that those troubles came during his later years. But they can not be attributed to failing mentality.

"David Claverly made only one mistake. That was in confining his activities to the Torburg section. He handled all building contracts in this vicinity. His wealth increased year by year. But he ran into opposition."

"Who from?" inquired Milton.

"Other prominent men," replied Vandrow. "No one individual could have damaged your father's business.

It took a combination to perform that deed. There were three who seemed to envy your father's success."

"Who were they?"

"Maurice Dunwell was one. You probably remember him. He is a local manufacturer."

"I know him. Who else?"

"Stuart Hosker, a man who is important politically. He was the second. Willis Beauchamp, the local banker, was the third."

"You say they combined against my father?"

"Yes. They controlled different bodies of selectmen in the neighboring townships. Your father ran into unexpected losses on his contracts. His work failed to gain the approval that the specifications demanded."

"Did he know that there was a plot against him?"

"Yes and no. He always met opposition bluntly. In this case, he practically abandoned the contracting business. He put his money into real estate."

"For what purpose?"

"To sell land to a power company that intends to build a huge reservoir near Torburg. That was proof of your father's foresight. Most people thought that his purchases were folly."

"Were they?"

"No. Unfortunately, however, he ran into new troubles with his contracting business. He was forced to borrow money. He put up the real estate as security."

"And lost it?"

"Yes. But only because of death. His notes were coming due and I feel sure that he could have paid them. Then he died, suddenly, after a short illness."

"And who gained the real estate?"

"The three men - Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp."

"A flock of crooks!" Milton's comment was vicious. "What did they do? Kill my father?"

"QUIET, Milton," warned Vandrow. "There is no proof that they sought to do physical injury to your father. In fact, subsequent events proved that those three men did not appreciate the value of the land that they had gained. They made only a fair profit on its sale."

"Who bought it?"

"A holding company. A concern which will probably sell it to the power company later on. Had Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp held the property, they would have gained much more."

"That's one satisfaction," decided Milton. "Well, those are three names I'll remember. Dunwell - Hosker - Beauchamp. You can call them what you want. I term them crooks."

"Then what about Abner Zangwald?" inquired Vandrow, with a shake of his head. "He was your father's friend; yet he, too, loaned money on some of the property."

"That's different," retorted Milton. "I remember Zangwald. Owned a lot of farm land, didn't he?"

"He still does."

"Well, he wasn't one of the three conspirators, was he? I guess when father died, he had to take the property since he couldn't collect the money. That's business."

"But Zangwald still has the property."

"You mean he didn't sell out to the holding company?"

"That is precisely what I mean. Zangwald stands in a position that the others failed to gain. He intends to keep the property until the power company needs it. He may gain a full million by its sale."

"You mean he knew my father's plans?"

"He did. In fact, he and your father alone knew for a certainty that the power company intends to come to Torburg. The others are not positive of it, even yet, and they have sold out to the holding company."

"Then it looks like Zangwald is a crook in his own right," asserted Milton, hotly. "You asked for my opinion. You've gotten it. Zangwald is the worst of the bunch!"

With this statement, Milton Claverly arose. Louis Vandrow did the same. He picked up the folio of papers and shook his head sadly.

"You are as headstrong as your father," rebuked the lawyer. "That was his great failing. A tendency to become impetuous. He curbed it as he grew older -"

"And look at the deal he received," interposed Milton. "Maybe, if he had kept on being tough, he wouldn't have lost all his money."

"There is still some left," reminded Vandrow, tapping the folio. "Considerably in excess of one hundred thousand dollars, to be divided between yourself and your father's ward, Phyllis Lingle."

"There should be millions," protested Milton. "You admit that yourself, Vandrow. That's your trouble; you're too placid. This was thievery - this robbing of my father!"

"It is getting late, Milton," said Vandrow, in a kindly tone. "We do not have time to go over affairs in detail. Suppose you see me here tomorrow, after you feel in a mood to discuss matters."

"All right," agreed Milton, staring at the window. He saw that dusk was gathering outside. "But I think I ought to know more about the circumstances of my father's death."

"Talk with Lester," suggested the lawyer. "He was in the house when your father died. Ask him for the key to the box that I have given you; and bring up the subject of your father's death."

With that, Vandrow led the way through the door and down a flight of stairs. On the street, he and Milton parted ways. The lawyer walked in toward the town; Milton took a street that led in the direction of his father's old mansion.

THE road curved along the side of the hill. As he followed it, Milton Claverly stared up toward the bell-tower, which stood like a forgotten chimney upon the summit of the little hill.

The tower reminded him of an old-world campanile. The shrouding dusk brought memories of the past. Staring at the tower, Milton realized that this bleak structure was a memento of his father. It spoke of prosperity that had been forgotten; of wealth that had passed to other hands.

Vengeful utterances came from the young man's lips as his eyes gazed steadily toward the tower. Louis Vandrow had seen the outburst of Milton Claverly's anger. This was a new manifestation of the wrath that the lawyer's statements had kindled.

As Milton Claverly continued on his way, the epithets that he growled were those of ill wishes for the men who had despoiled his father. Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp were the men whom Vandrow had named. To those three, Milton had added another of his own accord. That was the name of Abner Zangwald.

## CHAPTER VI. LESTER SPEAKS

It was later that evening. Milton Claverly was standing in front of an open fireplace, warming his hands above the glowing hearth. He was in a room that had brought back childhood memories - the library of his father's home.

Seated close by was an attractive girl of twenty. This was Phyllis Lingle. Her father had been an old friend of David Claverly. After her father's death, the contractor had become her guardian. Phyllis had lived here ever since.

Milton Claverly had remembered Phyllis as a child of five. He had been surprised upon meeting her tonight, for the little girl of his recollections had grown to womanhood. Phyllis seemed older than her years. She was attractive and quiet of manner.

His meeting with her had caused Milton to subdue the rage that he had felt after his conversation with Louis Vandrow. For the first time since his discussion in the lawyer's office, Milton felt ready to resume talk concerning his father.

"You were here when my father died?" questioned the young man, turning to Phyllis.

"No," replied the girl, in a tone that bore a touch of sadness. "I was away - at school - and I had not been informed of his illness. I did not know that it was serious."

"Lester was here?"

"Yes. But he had very little to say when I returned. I learned simply that your father died very suddenly. It - it seemed almost incredible to me."

"You were here for the funeral?"

"Yes - that is, not for the first one. But the second - the real funeral -"

"What do you mean, Phyllis?"

The girl's voice had choked. Milton spoke soothingly, wondering what had caused her sudden hesitation. Phyllis recovered her composure, but her voice was strained as she explained.

"I forgot that you did not know about the crypt," said Phyllis. "Your father - when he was growing older - developed one very strange phobia. It seemed - well, it seemed that he gained a fear of being buried alive."

"What was the reason?"

"I don't know. I believe that once, when he was ill, he fell into a trance condition. However, he dreaded the thought of a burial immediately after death."

"But how were there two funerals?"

"The first was when they placed his body in the crypt. His will called for that, Milton. The crypt was a special addition that he built to the house. There is one entrance in the cellar; another outside."

"His body was placed in the crypt?"

"Yes, to remain there for a week. After that, it was removed and taken to the cemetery."

"And the crypt?"

"The doors were locked. To stay so. The will provided for that also."

"Are there no keys?"

"They were destroyed."

MILTON pondered over the girl's words. This was a new angle that concerned his father's death. After a brief interval, Milton put another question.

"When was the crypt built?" he asked. "About the same time as the bell-tower?"

"Yes." The girl's voice quavered. "But don't talk about the bell-tower, Milton. Those bells - I can remember them yet. I never want to hear them again!"

"You heard them at the time of my father's death?"

"No!" Phyllis gasped as she made the statement. "No! If I had heard them then - I - I think I would have gone mad! Don't talk about them, Milton!"

The girl's face had whitened. Milton could see her trembling. He approached and spoke in a quiet, encouraging tone. Phyllis tried to smile.

"I'll forget it, Milton," she said. "But don't talk about the bells. Ask Lester about them. He can tell you -"

At that moment, Lester entered. A stoop-shouldered, cadaverous fellow, the servant possessed eyes that were both keen and suspicious. He directed his gaze toward Milton and acted as though about to ask some question. But when he spoke, it was to deliver a message.

"Someone wishes to speak to you on the telephone," said Lester. "A gentleman from New York, sir."

"His name?" inquired Milton.

"He said it was Vincent, sir," replied Lester. "Mr. Harry Vincent."

"I never heard of him," declared Milton, abruptly.

"So he said, sir," stated Lester. "He told me that he knew a friend of yours - a Mr. Lamont Cranston -"

"A friend of Cranston's, eh?" broke in Milton, quickly. "I'll talk to him, Lester. Where is the telephone?"

"Across the hall, sir. In the old parlor."

Milton left the library. When he returned five minutes later, he found Phyllis alone in the room. The girl had completely recovered her composure.

"A chap selling real estate," remarked Milton. "Buying it, too, for that matter. His name is Harry Vincent and he comes from New York. A friend of Lamont Cranston's."

"Who is Lamont Cranston?" asked Phyllis.

"I met him on the boat," replied Milton. "An interesting chap. A millionaire globe-trotter. He was returning from a trip through Africa."

The young man paused to light a cigarette. This was a give-away habit with Milton Claverly. His natural suavity was sometimes lost when he came to a stopping point in conversation. On those occasions, he invariably produced a cigarette as reason for the pause.

This time, Milton was wondering whether he should mention more concerning Lamont Cranston. He decided to do so, now that Vincent - a friend of Cranston's - happened to be in town.

"Cranston and I went up to see a wealthy fellow named Messler," resumed Milton. "There was trouble up at the place. Some gunmen tried to steal a batch of Messler's jewels. He had detectives there; Cranston and I aided them in stopping the robbery. Rather a nasty affair. Exciting, though."

"I remember telling Cranston that I had property here in Torburg. I suppose he told this chap Vincent to stop here and see me. Well, I'll talk to Vincent tomorrow. He's staying down at the hotel. I might invite him up here to dinner, since he's a friend of Cranston's."

MILTON went back to the fireplace. Phyllis picked up a book that she had been reading. She announced that she was retiring for the night.

After the girl had gone from the library, Lester passed through the room. Milton hailed him.

"I want to talk to you, Lester," said the heir. "First, about that key to the box that Vandrow gave me. Did you get the key from your room?"

"Yes, sir." The servant produced the key. "Here it is."

"Something else, Lester." Milton's tone was nonchalant. "Regarding my father's death. What was unusual about it?"

A strange look appeared upon the servant's cadaverous countenance. Lester's eyes stared through narrowed lids.

Milton met the focused gaze; he could see a glitter that the servant was unable to suppress.

"Come on, Lester," urged Milton. "I was talking with Mr. Vandrow. He said that you could tell me -"

"I can!" Lester spat the words. "I can tell you that your father was killed! I can speak to you, for you are his son."

"Killed?" echoed Milton. "How?"

"I do not know," returned Lester. "But he died by someone's hand. His enemies wanted him to die."



"Someone came here to kill him?"

"No. If they had, I would have slain them instead. I do not know how my master was killed. I had been watching him. I had given him his medicine, as Doctor Humbrell told me to do. Nothing had been touched. No one was here. Yet the master died."

"Small ground for suspicion, Lester."

"It is not suspicion, sir. I know that someone brought about the master's death."

Milton shrugged his shoulders. He had expected intelligent answers from Lester. These statements were disappointing. The servant seemed to realize that fact. He approached and wagged a finger.

"Doctor Humbrell could have told, sir -"

"What? You mean he played a part in it? Was the medicine poisoned, Lester?"

"No, sir. But some change was made in the directions. There were new prescriptions - new hours at which to give them - and your father died immediately afterward."

"What did Humbrell have to say?"

"Nothing, sir." Lester's tone was solemn. "There was nothing he could say, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because" - Lester's voice had become a croak - "Doctor Humbrell died the same night as your father. He never reached his home after he left this house."

"He was murdered?" questioned Milton.

"They called it an accident, sir," responded Lester. "Some miscreant had opened the drawbridge over the old canal. Doctor Humbrell's car toppled from the road. He was drowned before he could be rescued."

MILTON paced back and forth. This was an incident that Vandrow had not mentioned. Probably the lawyer, like everyone else, believed that the physician's death had been an accident. Then a thought struck Milton.

"Lester," said the heir, "tell me about the bells. Why does Miss Phyllis fear them?"

"Because they tolled the master's death," croaked the servant. "And never since have they been rung. They tolled his death - before he was dead!"

"What!"

"I mean it, sir. They called it an accident; but I know the truth. They did not believe me when I told them that the master was still alive."

"Give me the details. Here, sit down, Lester. I want your story."

Milton took a chair while Lester perched himself on the edge of a bench. In his same croaking tone, the servant resumed the story. His voice pictured the events of which he spoke. Milton Claverly could almost see the scene in his father's bedroom.

"The master had a spasm after Doctor Humbrell had gone," explained the servant. "He dropped back on

the pillows. I knew that Doctor Humbrell could not have reached his home. I called up the young doctor who lives close by.

"He came here and pronounced your father dead. He went downstairs to telephone to different persons, while I remained here. The master was lying before me" - Lester spread his hands - "like a corpse. I, too, thought that he was dead.

"Time went by, sir. The young doctor had not returned. He was making many calls. Then I heard the bells" - Lester cupped his hand to his ear, as if hearing an echo from some distant space of time - "the bells in the tower. Those were the bells that your father had placed there. Those bells were to ring the death of people who meant much to Torburg.

"The bells were ringing for the master. Slowly, sir, as though they knew who it was that had died. The bells were filled with sorrow. Tears came to my eyes as I listened. Then I heard breathing. I looked toward the master" - Lester's eyes opened and stared toward an imaginary bed - "and I saw him - saw him, sir - rising from his death couch!"

"My father was alive!"

"Yes. Alive and speaking!"

"What did he say?"

LESTER was on his feet. The old servant's eyes were glowing wildly. He was playing the part of his dying master, repeating words, gasped words, that had been indelibly impressed upon his memory.

"He said: 'The bells! Bells of doom! They are ringing for me! They will be silent, those bells that ring for me. But when they ring again, they will tell new doom! Doom for those who -'"

Lester's quaver ended. The servant sank back upon the bench. It was Milton who was on his feet. Eagerly, the heir spoke. He wanted to hear all.

"Go on, Lester. Go on. What else did my father say?"

"That was all, sir. No more. He sank back upon the pillows. He was dead. He had heard the bells. They kept on ringing, with that clang that I can still hear."

Milton paced across the room. The story had impressed him. Just as he had pictured the sight of his dying father, so could he imagine the ringing of the bells in the tall tower. Tracing back from effect to cause, the young man turned to the servant.

"Who rang the bells?" he quizzed.

"Old Yokes, the bell ringer," replied Lester.

"Who told him to ring them?" demanded Milton.

"He did not know," responded Lester. "He said that someone called his home and told him to ring the bells. A death knell for David Claverly."

"And the bells have been silent since?"

"Yes, sir. The tower has been closed and locked. But some time" - Lester's eyes glared venomously - "those bells will ring again. Again - again - again! They will be bells of doom!"

"To whom have you told this story, Lester?"

"I told it to the young doctor. To Mr. Vandrow. To Mr. Zangwald. To others, sir - such as Miss Phyllis - and many have heard the tale."

"My father was buried in the crypt below the house?"

"Yes, sir. But his body was removed one week later. It was buried in the cemetery."

"What about the crypt? Is it locked?"

"Yes, sir. The keys have been destroyed."

Milton nodded. This matched the statement that Phyllis had made. Milton strolled across the room and picked up the tin box that he had received from Vandrow. Lester eyed the object curiously.

"Documents of my father's," remarked Milton. "Other objects, perhaps. This little key that you gave me will open the box. I shall examine its contents tonight."

WITH that, Milton walked from the library and ascended the steps to the second floor. He was going to the room that Lester had prepared for him.

The servant heard his new master's footsteps dwindle. Then Lester shambled from the library and went to the rear of the main hall. He opened a door that led to a driveway behind the house.

There, Lester stood staring through the moonlight. To his left was the low roof of the sealed crypt that extended from the house. But the servant's eyes did not turn in that direction. They were gazing toward the right, toward the slope upon which the old bell-tower stood ghostlike in the moonlight.

A fierce expression came upon Lester's face. Crossing the drive, the servant turned his view toward the town below. He raised a clenched fist as his lips spat curses. His venom was directed upon the town of Torburg.

Imprecations ended, Lester went back into the house. The bolts of the door clicked shut. The mansion, like the bell-tower, rested silent beneath the moonlight that shone upon the little town of Torburg.

## **CHAPTER VII. FROM THE TOWER**

THE next evening found a group of three assembled in the library of the old Claverly home. Milton Claverly and Phyllis Lingle were present. The third person was a visitor: Harry Vincent.

Harry had met Milton late that afternoon. He had accepted an invitation to dine at the Claverly house. Dinner had been set late; the meal had passed without event. Now the three were gathered in front of the fireplace in the library.

To Harry Vincent, this had been a most amazing visit. Amazing because it had been without incident. Usually, when Harry set forth at The Shadow's bidding, he encountered strange conditions in short order. But this expedition had brought nothing.

Harry had come to Torburg to make the acquaintance of Milton Claverly and to watch events that might concern the man from Australia. Harry knew that Milton had been present at the affray in Messler's apartment, but he knew nothing of any part that the young man might have played there.

Often, The Shadow dispatched his agents without giving them too much information. This left them free to

draw conclusions from what they might actually encounter - not from what they might expect to happen. Hence Harry knew only that he was to watch Milton Claverly; and he had reduced his task to two simple probabilities.

The first was that Milton was faced by some unseen menace - a trap into which he had placed himself by coming to Torburg. The second was that Milton had come here for purposes of crime. The man might be a crook for all that Harry knew.

To Harry, Milton seemed a likable chap. Yet The Shadow's agent was suspicious of the fellow's suavity. Milton had a steady eye, one that could meet any glance. At the same time, his talk was smooth and he had the ability of diverting the conversation from any subject that was not to his liking.

Evidence of this came shortly after they had gone into the library. Phyllis made a chance remark that brought a quick look from Milton. The girl's statement concerned a telephone call.

"LONG distance was trying to get you today, Milton," said Phyllis. "It was shortly after you had left for Mr. Vandrow's office. I meant to tell you at lunch time; but I was out."

"Lester told me of the call," responded Milton. "When I came in from Vandrow's, I called the operator. It was a mistake. She had the wrong number. Vandrow is my lawyer" - this was to Harry Vincent - "and he's the man you will have to see regarding any real estate transactions."

"You mentioned his name during dinner," stated Harry, pretending not to note how Milton had changed the subject. "Did he tell you much about your property holdings when you saw him this morning?"

"He talked considerably," said Milton. "But very little of the property is really worthwhile. My father lost most of his valuable real estate. He was swindled before his death."

"By whom?"

"Three men here in town. Big shots who tried to ruin his contracting business. They managed it and they grabbed a lot of property as well. Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp - birds of a feather, those three."

Milton paused speculatively. As in Vandrow's office, he was beginning to boil. He was not satisfied with his denunciation of the combine. He added another name to theirs.

"Abner Zangwald is a phony, too," he stated. "Pretended to be a friend of my father's. But he grabbed his share of land. He's holding it for a big clean-up, the skinflint! I'd like to wring his neck!"

"That's not fair, Milton." The protest came from Phyllis. "You may be right about the three men whom you first mentioned; but Abner Zangwald was a real friend of your father's."

"So you thought," gibed Milton, "but I'm not so easily fooled. After what Vandrow told me -"

"Why, Vandrow is Mr. Zangwald's lawyer. He would not say a word against him!"

"He didn't. That's the funny part of it. Vandrow stood up for Zangwald. The old geezer is fooling him just as much as anyone else. Listen, Phyllis. My father bought a lot of property for a good investment. Three men grabbed their share and got rid of it at a profit.

"But Zangwald is holding on to what he got; and that proved him to be a fox. Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp did their dirty work when they smashed my father's contracts. Seizing the property was just an added touch.

"Meanwhile, Zangwald lay back. He was a friend. But he stands ready to clean up a million dollars on that land he took from my father."

"A million!" exclaimed Phyllis. "That's impossible, Milton. The other men made no such profit as that when they sold their land. They had as much of the real estate as Mr. Zangwald."

MILTON reached for a cigarette. He realized suddenly that Phyllis Lingle knew nothing of the power project. He had forgotten that the matter was still a secret, so far as the public was concerned. As he lighted his cigarette, he made up for his blunder.

"Guess I was exaggerating," he grumbled. "I just figured that old Zangwald wouldn't be hanging on to the land unless it meant plenty of profit. There's an idea for you, Vincent. Why don't you look up this fellow Zangwald? See why he won't sell his real estate?"

"He has a lot of land?" questioned Harry.

"Plenty," replied Milton. "I tell you what I'll do. I'll ask Vandrow about the exact property that Zangwald acquired from my father. Then you stop around to see the old egg and try to buy some of it. Tell me how you make out, afterward."

"All right," agreed Harry. Then, seeing that Milton was about to dismiss the subject, he took that task upon himself. "Speaking about property," he added, "Who owns that old tower up on the hill?"

A pallor showed on the face of Phyllis Lingle. Milton Claverly sobered as he puffed his cigarette. He was the one who answered, in a slow, monotonous tone.

"My father built that bell-tower," he informed. "He gave it to the town of Torburg. The bells were placed there to peal forth certain tidings. One purpose was that of sounding death knells for the departed -"

"Don't!" Phyllis was pleading as she rose from her chair. "Don't talk of that, Milton! I can't bear it!"

"I'm sorry," apologized Milton. "I had forgotten how you felt about those bells, Phyllis -"

His plea ended as the girl went from the room. Unable to control her emotions, she was sobbing as she left. Milton turned to Harry.

"The bells sounded my father's death," the heir said, in a sober tone. "Lester - the old servant - spread some absurd rumor that my father had revived while the bells were tolling; that he called them 'bells of doom.'

"No one was present to verify the story. It may have been the product of Lester's imagination. However, the bells have remained silent ever since. The tower door is padlocked."

"Did Miss Lingle hear the bells?" inquired Harry.

"No," replied Milton, "but she learned the story. It was usual to toll the bells during important funerals in Torburg; but that custom was omitted when my father was buried. Perhaps the fact that the bells were silent impressed Phyllis more than their ringing would have done."

Harry nodded. He could see that Milton was perturbed. Harry attributed that fact to the young man's concern for Phyllis.

Lester entered while Milton was standing silent; the arrival of the suspicious-eyed servant increased the gloom.

Harry glanced at his watch. He noted that it was close to eleven o'clock. He decided that it would be wise to return to the hotel; and he mentioned his intention.

Milton Claverly made no effort to stay his guest's departure. Lester produced Harry's hat and coat. The Shadow's agent left.

WHEN he reached the hotel, Harry sat down in the lobby and lighted a cigar. There had been something ominous in the incident at Claverly's. It foreboded strange events in Torburg. Harry wished that he could learn more concerning the bell-tower. He wondered who could give him the complete story.

It was nearly midnight when Harry had finished his cigar. Meanwhile, a lanky, stoop-shouldered man had entered the small lobby of the old hotel. This fellow was talking with the proprietor when Harry arose and approached the desk. Harry addressed the proprietor.

"I left my coupe on the street last night," informed Harry. "You said it would be all right. What about tonight? Should I put it in a garage?"

"It's too late," returned the proprietor. "The only garage in town closes at ten o'clock. Did you lock your car?"

"Yes."

"Then leave it on the street. It's safe there."

"But what about the police? Won't they object?"

The proprietor chuckled. He pointed to the lanky man who was slouched on the desk.

"Mr. Vincent," introduced the proprietor, "shake hands with Sheriff Locke. He represents the law in this town. Ask him about your car."

"Leave it where it is," said the sheriff, as he shook hands with Harry. "If old Conkling wants to shut his garage at ten o'clock, it's his own hard luck. I'm not going to drive visitors away from Torburg by putting tickets on their cars."

"Thanks," said Harry, "I appreciate it, sheriff. I expect to be in town for several days -"

He stopped. A telephone had rung behind the desk; the proprietor, answering the call, was beckoning to the sheriff. The official took the instrument and growled a hello. His conversation was a brief one. He banged the receiver on the hook and swung to Harry.

"I want to use your car," exclaimed the sheriff. "You drive it - take me up to Maurice Dunwell's. I'll show you the way. There's trouble up there. That was his niece calling."

"What's the matter, sheriff?" put in the proprietor.

"I'll tell you later," returned Locke, grimly. "Hurry, Vincent. We've got to get up there quick!"

They hastened from the hotel and clambered into Harry's car. The sheriff pointed the way. Harry shot the car forward. It was then that the sheriff began to talk.

"Dunwell's been shot," he stated. "That's what his niece said. He's a big fellow in this town, Dunwell is. A manufacturer. There - take the street to the left. Last house on the right - where the lights are -"

HARRY pulled up in front of an old mansion. He and the sheriff leaped from the car. The front door

opened as they approached. A young girl pointed toward the entrance to a living room.

Locke strode in that direction. He paused when he had crossed the threshold. Harry Vincent stopped beside him.

Slouched in an easy chair was the figure of a wizened man attired in a dressing gown. This was Maurice Dunwell. His head was bent forward upon his chest. His hands, with clawlike fingers, were clutching the arms of the chair.

Just below the level of the man's bent-down chin was a jagged, bloodstained mark upon the dressing gown. Blackened burns showed with the crimson stain. Maurice Dunwell had been shot through the heart, at close range.

"I - I heard the shot," gasped Dunwell's niece, speaking from the door. "Then - then the front door closed. Someone killed my uncle - someone who ran away -"

The girl paused. The sheriff was nodding solemnly as he studied Dunwell's body. A whirring sound came from the mantelpiece. A clock struck the hour of twelve with quick, short strokes.

The sheriff did not notice the sound of the strokes. He approached the body and placed his hand on the slumped shoulder.

"Dead," he said, turning to Harry. "It's murder. No question about it. I'll call the county coroner, to tell him about -"

The sheriff broke off. He swung about in sudden amazement as a new sound came to his ears. Harry Vincent stood transfixed; so did the girl by the door of the living room.

Dong!

From far off came the sound of a solemn bell, a stroke that rifled through the outside air. It was a note that commanded complete attention.

Dong!

Again the melancholy stroke. Ghoulishly, it floated to the ears of these listeners, bringing involuntary shivers as they heard the muffled tone.

Dong!

Harry Vincent knew the source of that sound. The knell was coming from the old bell-tower! These were the tones that had tolled the death of David Claverly. High in the deserted belfry, the brazen clappers were beating forth the news that another life had passed!

Bells of doom! Their monotone continued. Rusted throats were clanging the death of Maurice Dunwell. A murderer's triumph was gaining its announcement. Throughout the neighborhood of Torburg, sleepers were awakening to learn that horror had come to the little town.

MINUTES passed. They seemed endless. Yet the three living people stood as rigid as the corpse of Maurice Dunwell. The throbs of those brazen bells were hypnotic. They held the listeners motionless. Then, with the suddenness that had marked their beginning, the peals ended.

Echoes persisted. Cold night air, sweeping in through the opened front door, carried a chilling quiver. The clangor had left a menace in its wake. Silenced, the bells were as terrible as before.

Long seconds elapsed before the sheriff could find his voice. When he spoke, his words were gasps that came from dry, parched lips.

"The bells - the bells in the tower!" Locke was stammering as he turned to Harry Vincent. "They pealed the death of David Claverly. He - he said they would ring again. We have heard them! I heard them - yes, I heard them - and you heard them. They -"

The sheriff shuddered as he paused. His hard-faced countenance had paled. Mechanically, he raised a hand and pointed a trembling finger to the slumped corpse in the chair.

"They were ringing for this man," he blurted. "The bells were ringing the death of Maurice Dunwell!"

## **CHAPTER VIII. THE SHADOW ENTERS**

THE town hall of Torburg was a remodeled structure that stood on the slope of one of the hills about the village. This building was the meeting place for all town committees. It housed the offices of various officials.

Usually, the town hall was closed at night. But on this evening, nearly twenty-four hours after the death of Maurice Dunwell, the lights of the old building were aglow. Cars were parked outside the town hall.

A group of men were in conference. They were gathered about a long table in a fair-sized room. At the head sat a big, bushy-browed fellow whose thick lips and glaring eyes marked him as a dominating personage. This was Abner Zangwald, at present the chairman of Torburg's board of selectmen.

Other members of the board were present. With them were certain persons who had been summoned to the meeting. Sheriff Wheaton Locke was present, accompanied by Harry Vincent. Louis Vandrow, attorney for the board, was near the lower end of the table. The county coroner was also present; and the final member of the group was a roughly dressed fellow - Absalom Yokes, formerly the bell ringer in the old tower.

This group had joined in solemn conclave to discuss the episode of the preceding night. Under ordinary circumstances, a meeting of this sort might have been amusing to Harry Vincent. But the present occasion was one that commanded solemnity.

Abner Zangwald was speaking in a rumbling voice. Harry, staring across the room, fixed his eyes upon a doorway that led to a little anteroom. As Harry watched, he saw the door move inward. The motion was almost imperceptible; yet it impressed Harry.

In the morning, Harry had managed to send a wire to New York. His telegram had been a simple message, pertaining to real estate transactions. It had been dispatched to Rutledge Mann, an investment broker whose headquarters was in Manhattan.

That telegram, however, had constituted word to The Shadow. Mann, like Harry, was an agent of the mysterious chief. The simple dispatch had meant that trouble had broken out in Torburg.

Afterward, Harry had written a coded report, which he had left in an envelope on a table in his hotel room.

Tonight, Sheriff Locke had called to take Harry to the meeting of selectmen. The envelope had still been in its place when Harry had left. But the agent felt sure that The Shadow must have arrived to find his report. Harry believed that the motion of the anteroom door was a sign of The Shadow's arrival.

IN this surmise, Harry was correct. The meeting of selectmen had gained an unseen visitor. A blackened



shape stood in the space beyond the barrier. The Shadow had pressed the door so that he might see and hear. Only his agent, expecting his arrival, had been keen enough to detect the slight token of The Shadow's presence.

Zangwald's voice was rumbling a summary of the situation that existed in Torburg. The words came to Harry's ears. Harry knew that The Shadow - like himself - was hearing Zangwald's statement.

"The murder of Maurice Dunwell," declared Zangwald, "is a matter for the county authorities. What concerns us, as selectmen in the town of Torburg, is the ringing of the bells in the old tower. That building comes under our immediate jurisdiction.

"Who rang those bells? - we do not know. Absalom Yokes was formerly the bell ringer. He states absolutely that he did not ring them. The door of the tower is sheathed with iron. It is padlocked. We, as board of selectmen, have the only key.

"Apparently, some miscreant must have possessed a duplicate. That person entered, rang the bells and departed. What was his purpose? We can suppose it to be a mere prank. If so, it was an ill-timed jest. One, my friends, that should bring punishment to the perpetrator."

Zangwald glared about the group. His eyes seemed accusing as he spoke of the unknown miscreant. The other selectmen seemed cowed by Zangwald's glower. Peaceable, mild-mannered men, they were completely under the dominance of this bushy-browed chairman.

"As board of selectmen," resumed Zangwald, "we have listened to the statements of the county authorities. Sheriff Locke and Coroner Thomas have discussed the murder of Maurice Dunwell. We know that the law is making its utmost endeavor. Therefore, our only concern is in the matter of the bell-tower. We shall extend our meeting to take up that subject."

A wave of Zangwald's hand. The sheriff and the coroner arose. Harry Vincent followed suit. The three left the meeting room.

Yokes, the bell ringer, was about to follow, but Zangwald motioned him to remain.

Passing through the unlighted anteroom, Harry Vincent noted blackness in a corner beyond a rack where coats and hats were hanging. He and his two companions - sheriff and coroner - obtained their hats and coats. They passed from the anteroom.

After their departure, a form moved from the darkened spot in the corner.

The figure of The Shadow swished toward the inner door. Again, the unseen investigator was listening to the discussion.

"WHY not tear down the old tower?" one of the selectmen was inquiring in a high-pitched, rustic voice. "Hain't no use having it up there on the hill."

"The tower has been deeded to the town," objected Zangwald. "The terms of the gift, I believe, prevent us from demolishing it unless it becomes unsafe."

"I call it unsafe now," wheezed another selectman. "People ringing those bells, waking us up in the middle of the night. I call that an outrage against the community."

"That is a far-fetched argument," decided Zangwald. "No, the tower must remain as it stands. The question is, should we place watchers about it to see that the ringing of the bells is not repeated?"

"Why don't you open it up again?" put in Yokes. "I'll take the old job that I used to have."

"As bell ringer?" Zangwald chuckled. "Not a good suggestion, Yokes. We do not need a bell ringer to keep the bells from ringing. No, gentlemen" - this was to the selectmen - "if we decide to guard the tower, we must place competent watchers in charge at all times. That will mean considerable expense."

Mumbles came from the selectmen. They were tight-fisted fellows, accustomed to economy. This plan did not appeal to them. At the same time, they appeared annoyed by the thought that the bells might ring again.

"Let me make a suggestion," put in Louis Vandrow. "If someone rang those bells merely as a prank, the best plan is to ignore it. Therefore, this board should forget the matter. No one can steal anything from the tower. The bells, themselves, are quite safe.

"On the contrary, let us assume the tolling which occurred last night had a connection with the murder of Maurice Dunwell. In that case, the matter might prove important to the county authorities. We can consider the bell-tower as evidence. Therefore, I suggest that this board turn over the key to Sheriff Locke. Make him the temporary custodian of the tower."

Zangwald began to rumble an objection. It was not heard. The selectmen were voicing their approval of Vandrow's suggestion. It offered them a prompt solution of the problem. Zangwald apparently saw that he would be outvoted. Reluctantly, he gave his agreement.

THAT ended the meeting. While the selectmen chattered, Zangwald arose and beckoned to Vandrow. He led the way to the anteroom, found his overcoat and produced the key to the tower. He handed it to the lawyer.

"Here's the key," stated Zangwald. "You can give it to the sheriff."

Vandrow shook his head as he received the key. He wanted to give it back to Zangwald. The chairman laughed and refused it.

"It was your idea, Louis," he growled.

"Perhaps," returned the lawyer, "but I am neither a member of the board nor a messenger. I don't intend to spend my time looking up the sheriff."

"Give me the key," put in another man who had come into the anteroom. It was Yokes, the ex-bell ringer, "I'm going down to town. I'll find Wheaton Locke."

Vandrow nodded and handed the key to Yokes. The man went out while the other two were putting on their hats and coats. Neither noted the sharp eyes that were watching them from the blackness in the corner.

"By the way, Louis," remarked Zangwald, in a gruff whisper, "do you remember the last time that the bells rang? When David Claverly died?"

"Yes. Absalom Yokes rang them. He said he received a mysterious telephone call. He was ordered to ring them."

"I know the story. Also what Lester, the old servant, said. About David Claverly coming out of his coma, in time to hear the bells before he died."

"Lester might have imagined that."

"Perhaps." Zangwald paused to glower toward the lawyer. "By the way, you have talked with young Claverly?"

"Yes."

"Did you mention the names of the three men who robbed his father?"

"Yes."

"And my name?"

"Yes."

"What was his reaction?"

"Well" - Vandrow seemed reluctant in his admission - "he did not seem pleased to learn that you had gained some of his father's property."

"You informed him that I had been his father's friend?"

"Yes; but he seemed rather doubtful of the fact."

A frown had furrowed Zangwald's bushy brows. The man scowled as he laughed gruffly. His tone was not at all pleasant.

"You are my attorney, Louis," he stated, dryly. "Therefore, I can speak in confidence to you. The fact that I have entrusted my affairs to your management is sufficient proof that I can rely upon your silence.

"Therefore, I am making this statement. I intended to visit young Milton Claverly. I wanted to talk to him, to tell him personally of my friendship for his father. I desired to gain young Claverly's regard. But I have postponed that visit."

"Why?" inquired Vandrow, in surprise.

"Because of what happened last night," responded Zangwald, in a low growl. "Because of the death of Maurice Dunwell."

With that statement, the wealthy landowner turned and left the anteroom. Louis Vandrow remained, his right hand cupped about his chin. A frown showed on the lawyer's rugged face, as Vandrow pondered over Zangwald's cryptic statement.

EYES from the dark watched Vandrow's meditation. Then came voices from the meeting room. The selectmen had finished their chatter. Vandrow aroused himself and followed the course that Zangwald had taken.

The selectmen entered the anteroom, gathered their hats and coats and departed. Enveloped in his cloak, The Shadow waited motionless in the corner until the throng had departed. Then he moved swiftly from the room and gained the steps to the ground floor.

A janitor was locking the front door. The Shadow made his exit by a side portal that the man had not yet closed.

Instead of turning toward the town, The Shadow took a side road that skirted the hill. He was familiar with the terrain, for Harry Vincent's report had included a rough map of Torburg. The course that The Shadow had chosen was leading him toward the home of Milton Claverly.

A steeple clock chimed the hour of twelve. The Shadow had approached the stretch of road that lay below the old tower. Another turn, he would be in sight of the Claverly house, which stood beyond the curve of the hill.

Suddenly, The Shadow paused. Sequestered in the darkness at the side of the road, he stared toward the top of the slope. Outlined against the dull moonlight that filtered through clouds was the old bell-tower, somber and gray.

There was no explanation for The Shadow's stop. It might have been prompted by a chance, coincidental thought. Still, it could have been induced by an uncanny, psychic knowledge of something that was about to happen.

Whatever the reason, the action became the forerunner of a strange event. Brief seconds passed while The Shadow lingered. Then, as if in answer to a question that hovered in his mind, an ominous token came from the tower on the hill.

Clang!

The stroke came from the belfry. It rang out through the night air. Caught by the straying breeze, it tolled its message to the town below.

Dong!

The second stroke. No longer did The Shadow pause. That melancholy clangor could root ordinary beings to the spots where they were standing, but it held no power over The Shadow.

Tonight, precisely twenty-four hours after their previous toll, the bells in the tower were ringing out another dirge. Stroke by stroke, in solemn precision, the massive brazen cups were repeating the knell that Harry Vincent had reported.

While the bells clanged, bringing new terror to the town of Torburg, The Shadow, creature from the night, was sweeping up the slope toward the tower on the hill!

## **CHAPTER IX. DEATH DISCOVERED**

Dong! - Dong! - Dong! -

There was rhythm in the funereal chime. Not one bell, but several, were forming a death medley as they clamored from the tower. Heard from a distance, the monotone was strangely musical; but as The Shadow neared the base of the tower, the closeness of the sound caused a jangle.

Discordantly, the reverberations clashed. The welling strokes seemed like rusty protests. Hideously, the bells were wrangling as their donges no longer blended. Then, with a final crash, their knell ceased. Echoes alone throbbed from the belfry as The Shadow reached the metal-sheathed door.

To gain this point, The Shadow had been forced to circle the tower. Scarcely more than twenty seconds had elapsed since the clangs had ceased. The final impetus to the bells must have been given only a few seconds earlier.

His form outlined in the moonlight, The Shadow was gazing at the door. The entrance to the tower was closed. A clamped padlock was in view. Anyone who had left the tower must necessarily have locked the door behind him.

Where, then, was the intruder?

The Shadow's eyes turned to survey the ground about. The tower stood away from trees. No one could have fled from the spot before The Shadow had gained the door. That, at least, was improbable.

It was possible that the intruder was still within. The closed padlock might have been shut by some accomplice. The bell ringer might be waiting inside, confident that the padlocked door would shunt investigators away.

There was no sign of a lurking person who might be here to aid anyone within the tower. A soft laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. A gloved hand produced a picklike instrument. The Shadow wedged the prong into the snap of the padlock.

The device yielded. The Shadow fastened the padlock to the staple, after he had drawn the hasp. He opened the door and entered the tower. His flashlight showed the interior. The tower had a concrete base; its walls were finished smooth.

A circular stairway ran about the inside of the tower. This disappeared ten feet above, for the central portion was equipped, at that point, with a thin wooden floor. Evidently the tower had various levels.

Swiftly, The Shadow ascended. He reached the first floor and again played the light. Here was another section, some ten feet in height, with a floor above. Its cross-dimensions, however, were less, due to the taper of the tower.

Up another flight. Again, The Shadow studied a deserted floor of even smaller radius.

Then came a third floor, likewise empty when The Shadow flicked the light upon its interior. Estimating the height of the tower, The Shadow knew that the next flight would bring him to the belfry.

Cautiously, The Shadow crept upward through total darkness. He reached the belfry. An automatic came from beneath his cloak. The flashlight blinked close to the floor, then upward to the hanging bells. A brief inspection; but it sufficed.

The belfry was empty!

MOONLIGHT was coming through the slitted windows of the belfry. As The Shadow lingered, his eyes became adapted to the dull glow. Passing clouds brought better illumination. All was visible. The Shadow studied his surroundings.

The belfry was about eight feet high. The bells were comparatively small ones, lighter in weight than The Shadow had supposed. They hung from the roof of the belfry, which was absolutely level. Two cross beams supported the bells; the rest of the ceiling was formed of boards, like the floors that The Shadow had passed.

One feature that The Shadow had noted was the arrangement of the ropes. He had seen three ropes hanging through a hole in the ceiling at the bottom of the tower. He had traced these all the way upward. Now he observed them attached to the bells themselves.

A soft laugh whispered through the belfry. The situation intrigued The Shadow. Had he found someone lurking here, the result would have been a simple encounter. The total absence of any lurker gave The Shadow a new trail of mystery.

He had heard the bells ring; he had found the tower locked; but he had discovered no one in the belfry. The Shadow was searching for an explanation; his soft laugh indicated a determination to gain the answer to the riddle.

But before The Shadow could begin a further inspection of the bells, an interruption came from the ground below the tower.

Voices sounded. Peering through a slitted window, The Shadow made out the forms of men who had arrived. One was Sheriff Wheaton Locke. The official had found the opened door at the foot of the tower.

Conditions were reversed. The Shadow, stationed in the belfry, had no opportunity to descend the stairway - unless the sheriff and his squad decided to depart without an inspection. To them, the unlocked door might mean that someone had come and left in haste. It might also indicate that some person was still within the tower.

Half a minute passed. Then The Shadow saw the men enter the door below. It was plain that they intended to inspect the tower. The Shadow desired no encounter with these representatives of the law. Their discovery of the unlocked door had been a misleading episode. It was best that they, like The Shadow, should find the tower empty.

Choosing the side of the belfry that was away from the direction of the town, The Shadow thrust one arm through a slitlike window. His head followed; then his body. Despite the narrowness of the opening, The Shadow squeezed through in the fashion of a contortionist, until only his legs remained within.

Hat and cloak projected dizzily above the ground that lay forty feet beneath.

Then long arms reached upward and gripped the cornice of the cupola - a projection which extended down to the tops of the slitted windows.

Gaining a firm hold, The Shadow drew his legs through the window; then pulled himself straight upward. He clutched an ornamental facade that ran along the joint of two sloping sectors. With this grasp, The Shadow pulled himself to the top of the cupola and made his way to the highest point.

THE dome was much larger than it appeared to be when viewed from the ground. Its proportions were almost as large as those of the belfry beneath it. From this topheavy portion of the tower, The Shadow commanded a circling view of the countryside.

Spying eyes could not see him from below, for he was above the edge of the cupola. From a distance, the moonlight might have shown his figure as a dark splotch on one section of the eight-sided dome. That, however, was the reason why The Shadow had chosen the side toward the summit of the hill. He knew that no one would be viewing the tower from that direction.

Temporarily forgetting the presence of the sheriff, The Shadow gazed from his lofty perch. He noted the town of Torburg; then looked in other directions. By the increased moonlight he could make out the thin thread of a railroad a few miles away. Then his keen gaze picked spots where stretches of roads appeared upon the hillsides.

Hawklike, The Shadow was using this opportunity to search for prey. He caught the glitter of automobile lights and followed the course of a car as it sped into a wooded patch. Then, despite the clouding of the moonlight, he kept his turning gaze upon every sweep of clear space that the view afforded.

There were muffled sounds from the belfry. The Shadow did not heed them. The sheriff and his men had arrived; The Shadow knew that they would soon depart. Still making the most of his temporary observation post, The Shadow continued to survey the terrain below.

Then came a discovery. Nearly a mile away, near the bottom of the far slope of the hill, The Shadow had

noted a curving road that broke in spots where wooded stretches intervened. He caught the tiny glimmer of automobile lights as they appeared upon that road. A car, its speed increasing, was driving away from Torburg.

Blink - the lights disappeared in a wooded stretch. They shone again; then blinked. The Shadow saw them reappear upon what was evidently the right fork of a road. Then the car dipped beneath the contour of a hill and its course was lost.

Yet The Shadow still watched. He was looking far beyond, waiting for some trace of the automobile.

Minutes passed. No sign reappeared.

Voices at the foot of the tower. The sheriff and his men had gone down from the belfry. They had departed; and they had locked the door behind them.

The Shadow made no move; he was still watching for the reappearance of that car, estimating the time that it would take to arrive upon an open stretch of road. At last, The Shadow laughed softly.

That car, in a sense, had come from nowhere. Specifically, The Shadow had observed two stretches of open road near the bottom of the hill. The car had not appeared upon the first; yet The Shadow had observed it on the second stretch.

That meant that the car had either been parked off the road, or had come from some byway that connected with the highway. After that, the car had disappeared as mysteriously as it had arrived. Lost by the contour of the hill, it had evidently gone to some secret destination within five miles of Torburg.

The time element figured. It meant that while The Shadow had been ascending the tower, while he had been gaining his post upon the cupola, some unknown person had been traveling afoot to a spot where a car was waiting.

From then on, the evidence indicated that the unknown person had driven away to a secluded place well outside the town limits, yet within easy approach of Torburg. A considerable area was involved; yet a well-managed search should surely produce results.

WITH this clue in mind, The Shadow eased downward from the cupola. Swinging from the facade to the cornice, he swung his tall form until he gained a foothold in a slitted window. Dropping one hand, he grasped the opening in the belfry.

The bottom door had been locked from the outside. Hence The Shadow did not reenter the tower. Instead, he began a descent down the outer wall. It was a precarious task, yet one which The Shadow performed with comparative ease.

Often, The Shadow used rubber suction cups in maneuvers of this sort. He did not employ them, however, when he made the descent from the tower belfry. The rough-hewn stones that formed the surface of the tower were all that he needed in this downward trip.

With the skill of a human fly, The Shadow reached the ground and stood at the base of the tower.

Harry Vincent had given The Shadow complete details regarding the location of certain houses in Torburg. In cutting back to the tower, The Shadow had considerably reversed his course. He was approximately half a mile from the home of Milton Claverly. Much closer, yet in the opposite direction, was another house that interested him. That was the home of Stuart Hosker, the politician.

Others whom The Shadow regarded as important made their residences in more distant parts of

Torburg. Thus it was merely a matter of situation that caused The Shadow to consider a visit to Hosker's. The place was close by; a quick trip there could be followed by a journey along the far side of the hill which would make a shortcut to Claverly's.

FOUR minutes after he had left the bell-tower, The Shadow arrived outside a stone house that showed a surface covered by vines of ivy. A dull light glimmered through a shaded window on the second floor. The Shadow gripped the vines and moved upward.

The window was unlocked. Noiselessly, The Shadow raised the sash. He lifted the lower edge of the curtain to view the interior of the room. The light was coming from a bed lamp clamped to the top of a big bed.

The foot of the bed was toward the window. High and solid, it prevented further view. The window shade rose slowly. The Shadow moved inward from the night. His tall form materialized into its cloaked proportions. With one swift stride, The Shadow advanced and reached the foot of the bed.

Standing like a strange specter from space, The Shadow turned his burning gaze upon a figure that lay sprawled on the bed. He saw a man past middle-age, pajama-clad, with outstretched arms and upturned face.

It was Stuart Hosker. The man's face was rigid in death. The front of his pajama jacket was stained with crimson, where the bullet from an assassin's gun had tapped the victim's heart blood.

Death had again struck in Torburg. Alone in this house, Stuart Hosker had been slain by the same hand that had murdered Maurice Dunwell. The shot had not been heard by outside ears. Crime - until now - had remained undiscovered.

The Shadow's whispered laugh was solemn. Sinister, it bore no mirth. It was a grim token of new purpose to track down some fiend of evil. That laugh bespoke the knowledge that, on the morrow, would be spread throughout the town of Torburg.

The Shadow knew why bells of doom had tolled. Last night they had been a knell for Maurice Dunwell. Tonight, they had clanged a dirge to mark the death of Stuart Hosker.

## **CHAPTER X. THE NEXT EVENING**

TORBURG was a peaceful place by day. It was only when darkness shrouded the town that ominous danger seemed to approach. Harry Vincent was thinking of this contrast as he stood in Milton Claverly's library.

Last night, Harry had heard the tower bells toll their second message since his arrival in Torburg. Harry had been at the hotel when the grim ringing had occurred. When morning came, the inhabitants of the little town were horrified by a new discovery: the murder of Stuart Hosker.

When Harry had risen, he had found an envelope upon his table. Coded instructions from The Shadow. In response, Harry had set out in his coupe shortly before noon. He had been traveling about all day, studying a specified area to the north of Torburg.

The Shadow had deputed this work to his agent because Harry, presumably here to investigate real estate, would naturally be driving through the countryside. In his orders, The Shadow had told Harry to look for any side roads that might lead to possible hiding spots.

Harry had uncovered several places. Most important of these was an old, dilapidated house that he had



spotted while driving along a rocky road through the woods. To all appearances, the place was deserted; yet Harry had noted tire tracks in the mud of the driveway. He had a hunch that someone was about the old house.

It had been dusk when Harry made his discovery. Returning to Torburg, he had added the location of the old house to the list of other places that he had studied. In his hotel room, Harry had left a sealed envelope for The Shadow.

During dinner, Harry had speculated where The Shadow might be. Somewhere about the town perhaps; maybe entirely away from Torburg. The ways of The Shadow were strangely secret, even to his agents. Harry felt sure of only one point: namely, that The Shadow must sleep by day and act by night. That alone could explain his amazing activities.

At the hotel, Harry had received a call from Milton Claverly. The young man wanted Harry to come up to the old mansion.

Returning to his room, Harry had found his report missing. He knew that The Shadow had taken it. Communication was temporarily ended. So Harry had left a new coded report. He had gone to Claverly's; and he was waiting now to talk to Milton.

Lester had shown Harry into the library. The old servant had proven taciturn. He had bowed; he had ushered Harry in; he had gone to inform his master that a visitor had arrived. That was all. But Harry had noted the servant's face. He had fancied that he saw a gloating upon Lester's cadaverous features.

Two men had died in Torburg. Maurice Dunwell and Stuart Hosker had been murdered on succeeding nights. Harry recalled that Milton had mentioned both of those men as persons who had robbed his father.

Lester must share Milton's dislike for Dunwell and Hosker. That explained the servant's malicious look. Lester, apparently, was making no effort to conceal the gladness that he felt because the two had died.

STANDING before the fireplace, Harry heard footsteps. He looked up to see Phyllis Lingle entering the room. He bowed as the girl approached; then stood attentively as he saw that concern was registering upon the girl's face.

Phyllis Lingle was attractive. Dark-haired, blue-eyed, she had impressed Harry Vincent when he had first met her. He remembered, though, that her quiet, friendly demeanor had changed to sheer nervousness when Milton Claverly had mentioned the subject of the bells.

That had been two nights ago. Since then, the bells had tolled two knells.

The experience of listening to those dreaded dirges had produced a marked result on Phyllis Lingle. Harry could see that the girl's mind was troubled. Her face was drawn; her lips trembled as she spoke in a low, quavering tone.

"Mr. Vincent" - the voice was pleading - "I must talk to you - before Milton comes. I want to tell you why he sent for you."

The girl glanced over her shoulder to make sure that Milton was not approaching. She clutched Harry's sleeve and resumed her statements, speaking rapidly and almost incoherently.

"Milton spoke to me tonight," explained Phyllis, in her quick tone. "He told me that I might have to testify that he had been here in the house - at midnight - last night and the night before. I replied that I could not do so."

"Why not?" quizzed Harry.

"Because" - the girl was faltering - "because I am not sure that he was in the house. I - I was asleep both times. Those terrible bells awakened me. They - they frightened me. I dreaded to leave my room."

"You stayed there?"

"Yes. That is why I can not say that Milton was here. So I told him to call upon Lester for such testimony. He said that Lester would not do."

"Why not?"

"He did not tell me -"

The girl stopped. She moved quickly away and seated herself in a chair. She was reading a book when Milton entered a few moments afterward.

The young man glanced suspiciously in the girl's direction; then smiled suavely as he approached to shake hands with Harry.

Motioning his guest to a chair, Milton began to talk. The subject of his discourse was real estate; but Harry knew that there must be some other reason why Milton had asked him to come here.

Ten minutes passed; then Phyllis left the room and went upstairs. Milton changed the subject immediately.

"VINCENT," he said seriously, "I'm worried. I want to tell you why. I think I can rely upon your friendship. I'll tell you what's troubling me. The bells!"

Harry nodded.

"People are linking the bells with the murders," resumed Milton. "That's my big worry. Those two chaps that died - Dunwell and Hosker - were enemies of my father. I've got every reason to be glad that they are dead. Do you get my inference?"

"You mean that you might be linked with the crimes?"

"Yes. Look at the facts. My father built the bell-tower. He was robbed by Dunwell and Hosker - and Beauchamp also. Lester spread a story that my father came to his senses while the bells were tolling his own death; that my father called them 'bells of doom' and laid a curse on certain men whom he did not name.

"Now, when I arrive in town, the bells begin to ring again. Each knell spells murder. It looks like vengeance. I might be the killer. I thought of it two nights ago, when I heard the bells ring out Dunwell's death. I thought of it last night when they clanged for Hosker. But I didn't worry at the time."

"Why not?"

"Because I had a perfect alibi. Two witnesses, here in the house, to prove that I had not gone out. Phyllis was one; Lester the other. So this evening at dinner, I mentioned the subject. After Phyllis and Lester had their say, I realized that my alibis weren't worth a nickel."

Harry raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"First of all," declared Milton, "Phyllis said that she could not testify in my behalf. She stated that she had

not seen me within an hour before the bells began to ring - either last night or the night previous. She added that she had not seen me after the bells rang.

"I told her that was foolish talk; that she knew I was in the house. She agreed with me on that point. She said she would take my word for it. But she appears to dread a cross-examination."

"I see," remarked Harry. "If her testimony were analyzed -"

"It would break down. I can't blame her for wanting to be truthful, Vincent, but I thought surely that she would be able to twist her testimony so that it would sound well."

"You still have Lester."

"Yes" - Milton's tone was bitter - "Lester saw me not long after the bells rang; on each occasion. He would testify in my behalf. But I found out that his word would be useless."

"Why?"

"I'll show you."

Milton swung on his heel. He went to the door of the room and called the servant. Lester appeared and stood with shoulders stooped and scrawny hands clasped.

"Lester," said Milton, soberly, "Mr. Vincent is a friend of mine. Tell him what you told me about the bells."

LESTER'S leer turned to a venomous, toothless grin. Fists rising, clenched, the servant voiced hoarse words, while his eyes flared with maddened elation.

"Bells of doom!" he crackled. "Bells of doom! They have brought judgment upon those who did evil! My master told that this would come. I heard him, when he rose from his death bed. Ha - ha - ha - ha - ha - ha -"

Lester's laugh dwindled into an insane chuckle. Pointing a bony claw at the two young men who watched him, the servant crouched forward and glared with wild eyes. His voice became a guttural croak.

"Bells of doom - they have rung again. Do you know what those bells can mean? Bells ring the curfew hour. They bring people to their homes, away from the night, where evil spirits prowl.

"Then there are bells that drive away those spirits. I know it! I know it! For the old master told me!" The servant's head was bobbing; his voice had become a discordant shriek. "He told me of those bells! After the curfew, the bells that drive demons back to their abodes!"

The old servant seemed to shrink. His clenched fists had risen; they lowered. Again a bony finger marked each word that Lester uttered. His voice was croaking again; his eyes were staring above his pointing finger in the fashion one would sight along the barrel of a gun.

"There are bells that drive off sickness," clucked the servant. "They heal, like bells that bring joy. There are bells that sound out victory; bells that clang like thunder. Some bells ring when coffins are being carried to the grave!"

The old servant had straightened. His long finger was pointing to the floor. He was gathering himself for his final statement; his lips were framing a gloating grin.

"Do not forget the passing bell." Shrinking, Lester clasped his hands across his chest. His eyes were

cunning as they looked from man to man. "The passing bell" - the croak was solemn - "the one that you have heard. That was the bell that tolled my master's death. That was the bell of doom!"

"He heard that bell while he lay dying. He knew that bell meant death. He spoke like a prophet, when he said that bells of doom would ring again. They rang two nights ago for Maurice Dunwell" - Lester spat the name and paused - "they rang again last night. They were for Stuart Hosker."

Lester hissed the second name. He stood silent; then gave a final croak, while he bobbed his head to emphasize his statement.

"Those bells will ring again! They will ring - ring - ring - until all are dead! Until all are dead" - the man's voice was a shriek - "all those who were enemies of this house! Until all of them are dead!"

The spasm ended. Lester gave a cackling chuckle, then turned and shambled from the room, leaving Harry and Milton staring at each other. Harry could feel cold shivers passing down his spine.

"You see?" questioned Milton, anxiously. "What kind of an alibi could that old fellow give? If he broke loose with that mad talk, they would put me down as the murderer and class him as an accomplice."

"Where did he get all the facts about the bells?" questioned Harry.

"From my father, I suppose," replied Milton, soberly. "Louis Vandrow gave me a box that my father had left me. It contained a batch of documents of little consequence. Many of the papers related to bells and their purposes.

"But let's get back to the important subject" - Milton's suave face was nervous - "about my alibi. You've got to help me, Vincent. You can do it."

"I wasn't here at midnight."

"I'm not thinking of the past. I'm worried about the future."

"The future?"

"Yes, tonight."

"You mean you expect new murder?"

Milton Claverly nodded in response to Harry's question. He pointed out through the door by which Lester had left. Milton spoke in a low tone.

"That old fellow is no fool," he said, in reference to Lester. "Strange factors are at work, Vincent. I am serious when I say that I fear new crime tonight. Someone else may be murdered."

"Do you mean Willis Beauchamp?"

"Perhaps. He was closely identified with the two who have died. That, Vincent, is why I want someone else to be here in this house. Someone on whom I can surely rely."

"Like myself?"

"Yes. Why not come up here, Vincent? Stay in this house instead of the hotel. If the bells should ring again, you will know that I am here. I ask it, as a favor."

Harry pondered. He glanced at his watch. It was after ten o'clock. Harry doubted that he would be able

to communicate with The Shadow. However, he could leave word at the hotel, telling where he had gone.

This house seemed close to crime. Phyllis Lingle's statements; Lester's wild behavior; Milton Claverly's fears - all made the mansion bear a close relationship to the mystery bells of the Torburg tower. Harry did not need orders from The Shadow. He knew that his chief would instruct him to accept the invitation to remain here.

"Very well," decided Harry. "I'll go down to the hotel and get my bag. I'll be back in less than half an hour."

Milton Claverly smiled. His face showed relief. Harry Vincent left the library and headed for the front door.

Milton dropped into a chair beside the fireplace. The suavity returned to the young man's features as he lighted a cigarette that he had pressed between his lips.

## **CHAPTER XI. MIDNIGHT APPROACHES**

IT was after eleven o'clock when Harry Vincent arrived back at Milton Claverly's house. A car was parked in the drive. As Harry alighted from his coupe, he saw someone standing by the front door of the house.

The door opened as Harry approached. Lester was admitting the visitor. Carrying his bag, Harry hastened forward and entered also.

In the hallway, he recognized the man who had arrived before him. It was Louis Vandrow. The lawyer, hearing Harry enter, turned and nodded to the young man. He stared, a bit surprised, when he saw the bag in Harry's hand.

Milton arrived from the library. He knew that Vandrow and Harry had met before. So he dropped a comment that would explain the reason for Harry's arrival. Milton made his statement while Harry was handing his bag to Lester.

"Vincent intends to stay here a while," Milton told Vandrow. "He is tired of the old hotel, so I invited him up to the house. Come, Mr. Vandrow. Let us go into the library. I had not expected you tonight. Do you have special business to discuss?"

"In a way, yes," replied Vandrow, in a reluctant tone.

"Concerning my father's estate?" asked Milton.

"No," said the lawyer, "we have gone over all the necessary details regarding the estate. This is a personal matter, Milton. One that relates to recent events."

"The deaths of Dunwell and Hosker?"

"Yes."

"Then Vincent can listen to what you have to say. He is a friend of mine. Speak freely, Mr. Vandrow."

The lawyer seemed reluctant to proceed after they had seated themselves in the library. Harry's presence troubled him. It was apparent that Vandrow wanted an open discussion with Milton. The heir recognized that fact. He laughed.

"Don't worry about Vincent," he assured Vandrow. "I think I know what you are going to tell me. My name has been associated with those murders. Am I right?"

The lawyer stared, startled. Then he nodded. Milton had guessed the reason for his reserve.

"I thought so," said the heir. "Vincent and I have been discussing the matter. After all, it's only natural that people should wonder about me. The bells began to ring after I arrived in town. The two men who died were enemies of my father."

"Precisely," agreed Vandrow. "What is more, those two were closely associated. They were two - of three. Willis Beauchamp is the third."

"What about him?" questioned Milton.

"The sheriff is guarding his home," replied Vandrow. "A squad of men have been placed on duty there."

THIS was not news to Harry Vincent. He had learned this fact when he had returned late in the afternoon. It had been discussed in the hotel; Harry had mentioned it in his report to The Shadow. But Milton Claverly accepted the statement as something that he had not heard.

"So they're guarding Beauchamp," he chuckled. "Well, I'm glad to hear it. But Lester won't be pleased."

"Why not?" questioned Vandrow, sharply.

"Because he thinks someone's going to get the fellow," returned Milton. "Lester has been walking around all evening, sputtering talk of vengeance."

"Milton," said the attorney, seriously, "matters are much more serious than you suppose. I talked with Abner Zangwald over the telephone tonight. He mentioned your name."

"Did he refer to me as a suspect?" questioned Milton, coldly.

"Not exactly," responded Vandrow. "Really, Milton, I feel that Zangwald has a kindly feeling toward you."

"You know my opinion of the man," broke in Milton. "I think he's a hypocrite! But we'll let that pass. Did Zangwald connect me with these deaths or did he not?"

"He said," replied Vandrow, slowly, "that as your attorney, I should keep a close watch upon your affairs. That if I did not, others might."

"Meaning whom?"

"The law, I suppose."

"Has the sheriff put men on duty around this house?" inquired Milton, half jestingly. "Does he think that he might trap me running back and forth between here and the bell-tower?"

"Men might be stationed here," returned Vandrow, soberly. "I know that Zangwald, as chairman of the board of selectmen, has had conferences with Sheriff Locke. They are meeting tonight, up at Zangwald's home. I am going there."

"So you stopped here on the way."

"I did. To give you advice. Milton, let me suggest that you remain within this house, just as you have on

the last two nights. Do you understand?"

"That's exactly what I intend to do. Moreover, Vincent will be here to prove that I do not leave the place."

"Hm-m-m." Vandrow mused as he heard this statement. "That seems like a good idea. But do not overplay it, Milton. It isn't wise to establish an alibi in advance. Simply assume that Vincent has come here as a guest. As you told me previously. Because he was tired of the hotel."

"That's natural enough," stated Milton. "Don't worry about me, Mr. Vandrow. I'll be a good boy and stay at home. I'll go to bed early, before twelve o'clock, when the spooks start ringing the bells in the old tower."

"This is no laughing matter," declared the lawyer. "Remember, those bells have sounded the knell of murder."

"They don't concern me," retorted Milton. "Vincent and I are turning in as soon as you leave. Listen, Mr. Vandrow. I have been in bed every night before those bells began to ring. I intend to follow the same plan tonight. Tell Abner Zangwald he can come up here and find me asleep."

"I don't care to jest about the matter," said Vandrow. He glanced at his watch. "I must be on my way to Zangwald's. May I use the telephone, to make sure he is there?"

"Certainly."

"You may listen while I converse with him."

"Thanks for the invitation."

Milton beckoned to Harry. The two followed Vandrow from the library. The lawyer crossed the hall to the old parlor. The young men entered after him.

VANDROW sat down at the telephone table and called a number. Then he began a conversation, of which Milton Claverly and Harry Vincent heard but half.

There was another listener, also. Lester had appeared; he was standing by the opened door.

"Hello..." Vandrow began to speak to someone. "Is that you, Mr. Zangwald?... Yes, this is Louis Vandrow. Yes, I'll be there to talk with you and the sheriff... The coroner, too... Any new developments?... What's that? Why, I thought he was staying in his house, under guard..."

"Business in New York, you say... A long distance call early in the evening... Well, I guess that's a good idea... Yes, that big limousine of Beauchamp's can travel fast. Well, it's best for him to get out of town... Certainly... Yes, I'll talk to you when I reach your home."

The lawyer hung up the receiver; he arose from the table. Lester entered, bringing his hat and coat. It was then that Milton Claverly inserted a suave remark.

"You mentioned Willis Beauchamp," stated the young man. "Did you say something about him leaving town?"

"Yes," replied Vandrow. "Zangwald tells me that he received a long distance call from New York. He called Zangwald after that, to inform him that he was leaving the house."

"When?"

"Beauchamp expects to leave just before midnight. He will enter his garage and step into his limousine. Then his chauffeur will drive him over to Lewisport, on the B R Railroad. Some of the sheriff's men will follow. So Beauchamp will be well enough protected."

"I'm glad he's getting out of town," decided Milton. "Well, I'm turning in. I guess you'll want to do the same, Vincent. If the bells ring, old man, be sure to wake me."

Milton accompanied Vandrow to the door. Then he and Harry went upstairs and entered their rooms. The two apartments were at different ends of a long hall.

Downstairs, Lester was standing by the front door. His eyes were glaring. He, too, had heard the announcement of Beauchamp's departure. The servant's fists were clenched. His face glowered as his cracked lips twitched.

Then, in methodical fashion, the servant crossed the hall and extinguished the lights. He moved slowly up the stairs to the second floor; his footsteps creaked as he took another flight of steps to the third.

Harry Vincent, lying in his bed, could hear the old servant moving on the floor above. Then came silence. The mansion, like the tower on the hill, was hushed amid the quietude of night.

## **CHAPTER XII. THE SHADOW MOVES**

THIS night was a gloomy one. The sky, heavily clouded, allowed no rifts for moonlight. Objects on the ground were blackened into total invisibility. The countryside about the town of Torburg was one continued blot of inkiness.

Off in a secluded patch of woods stood the old house that Harry Vincent had located. It was not even visible among the trees. The eyes that watched it were also hidden. The Shadow had stationed himself close to the deserted building.

The Shadow had pieced important facts. He knew that Willis Beauchamp was well guarded. It would take at least a squad of men to trap him in his residence. No corps of gunmen could be assembled within the limits of Torburg.

If called from outside, a crew of ruffians would need a meeting place. This house - The Shadow had prowled through it - showed signs of recent occupancy. The Shadow was positive that crooks were due to meet.

Midnight was approaching. Yet The Shadow lingered. Minutes ticked slowly by. Finally, a glimmer of light wavered from the road in front of the house. It became the glare of headlights. A car approached, jouncing along the rocky road. It swung into the driveway beside the house.

The Shadow waited until the lights were extinguished. Then he crept forward. He found a shuttered window and opened it. He rose from the ground and entered an empty room. He moved across to a door and pressed carefully.

A glow showed through the crack. Four men were gathered about the adjoining room, a kerosene lantern on the floor. They were talking in growled voices. The Shadow recognized them as a group of Manhattan mobsters.

"Say," came a gruff tone, "this is a cuckoo lay. What's Beef been doin', using this joint as a hide-out?"

"Better ask him when he shows up," came a response. "Maybe he'll tell you."



"Fat chance," said the first mobster. "He won't say nothin'. D'you think he's been hangin' out here alone?"

"Sure? Why not?"

"Well, Beef ain't no big shot. You know well enough that he must be workin' for some guy that's runnin' the wheels of the racket, whatever it is."

"All right. That's none of our business. Beef was wise, keepin' us a long way off until he came for us today."

There was a pause in the conversation. The Shadow knew now why the house had been deserted when he had first arrived. But where was "Beef," the head of this assembled crew? The answer came - from a mobsman's lips.

"Beef kept on ahead in the coupe," said another ruffian, speaking for the first time. "Guess he had to go somewhere and get a tip-off from the big shot. Well - he ought to be back pretty quick."

Another pause; then, from outside the house came the rumble of a motor. The noise ceased. A door clattered. Into the room stepped a husky, big-fisted man whose ruddy face added to his beefy appearance. This was the fellow that the crew expected.

"All set," growled Beef. "Come along, get going. We'll take the touring car. Leave the coupe here."

"What's the lay, Beef?" asked a gorilla.

"You'll find out," returned the leader. "I'll tell you on the way. Listen, you mugs, we're pinch-hitting tonight, in case something goes wrong. That's all I've got to say right now."

The big man swung toward the door. The others followed.

THE SHADOW made no move until they had departed. Then he crossed the room and reached the door that the crew had taken. He saw the lights flash from the touring car. He heard the starter. The machine swung along the drive.

The Shadow's flashlight glimmered. It picked out Beef's coupe, standing near where the touring car had been. Swiftly, The Shadow reached the car. A soft laugh came from his lips when he saw that the ignition key was in its lock. The Shadow had expected this. Beef would have had no reason to lock the car. The fact that the key was present meant a saving in time; it eliminated the few minutes that The Shadow would otherwise have required to fit a special key of his own.

The coupe shot forward. Lights out, it found the rocky road. The Shadow piloted the car by the feel of the front tires. Up along the road, he spied the glimmer of Beef's headlights. That was sufficient. Guiding by that moving beacon, The Shadow kept his course.

The touring car swerved when it came to a highway. The Shadow arrived shortly afterward. The coupe sped amazingly along the road, closing the distance between the two cars. Like a phantom automobile, The Shadow's machine was hidden in the dark behind the touring car; the sound of its motor was unheard by the men ahead, because of the roar of their own machine.

Close enough to use the glow of the touring car's headlights; far enough behind to keep his presence unknown, The Shadow kept up the equal pace. He watched the touring car slacken as it neared a curve. He slowed the coupe and picked his way at a snail's pace through the darkness.

The lights of the touring car were no longer visible. The Shadow learned this by peering through a cluster

of saplings on the inner side of the road. A soft laugh came from within the coupe. The Shadow knew the reason.

The touring car had stopped to block the curve. It was awaiting the approach of a car from the other direction. The Shadow stopped the coupe and listened. He caught the murmur of a smooth-running motor; then, barely discernible through the thin trees, he saw the glimmer of arriving lights.

There was no time to lose. The Shadow shot the coupe forward. Still without lights, he took the curve. Then, from ahead, came the glare of focused headlights. An instant later, the blaze was blocked by the shape of the touring car, squarely across the road.

Revolvers barked from the touring car. Shots were aimed at a big machine that was coming along the road. Then came the shriek of brakes. The chauffeur of a huge limousine was bringing his car to a stop.

He was in time to avert a collision; but his natural action brought another menace. By stopping, he was making his car a perfect target for the five mobsters who had opened fire with their revolvers.

Doom for the chauffeur and whomever might be riding with him. Such seemed the natural decree.

But The Shadow could turn the hand of fate. His foot pressed the accelerator to the floor. As new shots flashed from the touring car, the darkened coupe came hurtling from the night, aimed squarely for the center of the mobster-manned machine!

BEFORE a single gorilla knew what was coming, the coupe reached its goal. It mashed the side of the touring car with terrific force. While wild shots blazed, the parked machine careened from its position. It hurtled over on its side; then turned turtle. The top collapsed as gorillas went sprawling upon the road and in the ditch.

The front of the coupe rose upward as The Shadow jammed the brakes and clicked off the ignition. Radiator was driven back to motor. The Shadow's left arm warded off the glass that crashed in from the windshield.

Spokes broke from front wheels as the car came down. The coupe jounced upon its front axle. The car swiped sidewise; a rear wheel gave beneath the strain. Popping tires sounded as the coupe stopped at a crazy angle.

The limousine had stopped, half across the road. From behind it, came a following car - a sedan filled with men. The driver swerved to avoid the limousine. He made another sweep as he applied the brakes; then released the pedal to come out of a skid. The sedan shot clear past the tilted coupe.

The chauffeur had leaped from the limousine. Foolishly, he sprang forward into the lights of the car. A revolver barked. One mobster, only slightly injured by the crash, had fired. The chauffeur staggered; then fell to the ground.

The door on the lower side of the tilted coupe had opened. The Shadow, dropping to the road, moved quickly to the right, to avoid the lights of the limousine. His automatic was ready. He did not have to use it.

Men had clambered from the sedan that had swung beyond the wreckage. As the mobster fired a wild shot toward them, they answered with a volley. The crook made no response.

The Shadow, coming up to the side of the limousine, had quickly guessed the facts. He knew that this car must belong to Willis Beauchamp. Beef and his crew had come to stop it. The sedan was filled with sheriff's men. It had tailed the limousine to give protection.

Was Willis Beauchamp in the car? Or had this flight from Torburg been a bluff? These developments were factors that had come about while The Shadow had been watching the house in the woods. The Shadow wanted the answer. He had time to gain it.

The sheriff's men had stopped beside the wrecked cars. They were examining the bodies of the mobsters who had failed to survive the crash. Two of the officers were picking up the chauffeur.

The limousine was unscathed. The Shadow opened the door. His flashlight glimmered, in guarded fashion. The Shadow expected to find emptiness, or else a cowering man in back. He paused at the sight that actually greeted his gaze.

Slumped on the tonneau was the figure of a tall, elderly man. His hat had fallen from his head, revealing his shaggy mop of gray hair. His coat was open. The center of his shirt-front showed a dripping stain of carmine. This man - Willis Beauchamp - was dead.

LIKE Dunwell and Hosker, Beauchamp had been shot through the heart. Beef had spoken the truth to his mob. Their purpose had been to make sure that the victim died. But their foray had been unnecessary. Somehow - somewhere - a bold assassin had delivered death beforehand.

The door closed silently. The Shadow glided into the darkness behind the limousine, just as two men arrived to make sure that Beauchamp was all right. Excited shouts arose as the sheriff's men discovered the dead body.

Those shouts reached The Shadow's cars as his tall form was gliding up along the slope beside the road. But The Shadow did not pause. His course was taking him off across the hill, toward the distant bell-tower which, as yet, had not begun new clangs of doom.

### **CHAPTER XIII. AT ZANGWALD'S**

TWO men were standing in Abner Zangwald's living room. Both were officials of the county. One was Sheriff Locke; the other was Coroner Thomas. The two were eying the clock upon the mantel. It was nearing the hour of twelve.

The doorbell rang. A servant answered it. He returned, conducting Louis Vandrow into the room. The lawyer looked about, expecting to see Zangwald. The sheriff pointed his thumb toward the ceiling.

"Mr. Zangwald went upstairs to his study," informed Locke. "just after you called up from Claverly's. He told the servant to let him know when you arrived. I guess the man's gone to get him."

"Sorry I was late," replied Vandrow. "I thought it important, however, to talk to young Claverly. That was in accord with Mr. Zangwald's wishes."

The sheriff nodded.

"While we are waiting for Zangwald," suggested Vandrow, "tell me about Beauchamp. Why did he decide to go to New York?"

"I don't know," admitted the sheriff. "He called Zangwald, because he couldn't get me. Said something about a long distance call, but it sounded like a stall. Zangwald got hold of me and I gave the O.K. If Beauchamp wanted to leave town, that was his business."

"I came by his house on my way here," said Vandrow, "but I didn't notice anything unusual. Has he gone yet?"

"Yes. Here was his idea. You know where his garage is - off from the house, about fifty yards in back."

"Close by the hedge."

"That's right. Well, Beauchamp sneaked out there through the back door at eleven-thirty. Got into his limousine. Then the chauffeur went out about five minutes later. Only, that time, they turned on the lights at the back of the house.

"Get the idea? So if anybody was watching, they'd think the chauffeur was going alone. He was instructed to bring out the car just as if it was empty. Then he started over to Lewisport, like he was going to meet somebody."

"And Beauchamp was in the car?"

"Yes, lying low. He explained to Zangwald that he intended to make a get-away; he told me the details when I called him after I got here."

"I see. Well, it sounds like a good plan. Did the limousine go out all right?"

"Like clockwork. The chauffeur was sitting, up in front like a tin soldier. A couple of the boys called me from Beauchamp's. The rest were in a car out front. They followed along, after the limousine, but not too close. That was Beauchamp's idea, too."

As the sheriff completed his statement, Abner Zangwald appeared. The bushy-browed man nodded to Louis Vandrow. He rumbled a question to Locke:

"Beauchamp left, did he?"

"Yes," replied the sheriff.

"Good," said Zangwald. "Well, Vandrow, how did you make out at Claverly's?"

"I talked to young Milton," replied the lawyer. "I questioned him a bit regarding the last two nights. He said that he had been at home."

"That's what he would have said. How was his attitude? Did he appear shifty?"

"He was jocular. He was not at all inclined to be serious."

"What's this about?" put in the sheriff. "Are you figuring young Claverly in these murders?"

"Not exactly," returned Zangwald. "At the meeting the other night, I happened to talk with Vandrow. I mentioned that it was quite a coincidence that Maurice Dunwell should have been murdered just after Milton Claverly had returned.

"I made no accusation. I simply said that Dunwell was one of three men who had been unfriendly to David Claverly. Therefore, Milton, as David's son, could hardly be saddened by Dunwell's death.

"After the murder of Stuart Hosker, I studied the subject more deeply. I was really worried. As chairman of the selectmen, I hold a responsible position in this town. Today, when I learned that Willis Beauchamp was in terror of his life, I felt that it would be wise to keep an eye on Milton Claverly."

"What do you think of it, coroner?" questioned Locke, turning to the man beside him.

Thomas shrugged his shoulders. It was a full minute before he made his comment.

"Maurice Dunwell," he said, "was slain by persons unknown. So was Stuart Hosker. I see no evidence that points to Milton Claverly. Until we have a definite connection, it would be unwise to regard him with actual suspicion."

"Looks that way to me," added Locke, in a grumbling tone. "I want evidence to work on before I begin accusing people. We've got none. Not yet. That is, nothing that can lead us to the guilty party."

"Understand me," put in Zangwald. "David Claverly was my closest friend. I have a feeling of good will toward his son. I thought that Louis Vandrow was the proper man - as Milton's lawyer - to look into what Milton had been doing."

"We can not deny the fact that Milton might have been antagonistic toward both Dunwell and Hosker. That means that later on his name may be drawn into these cases. Therefore, whether he is right or wrong, it is advisable to know more about his activities."

"I guess you're right, Mr. Zangwald," expressed the sheriff. "I'll tell you why. If young Claverly had it in for Dunwell and Hosker, he'd probably be sore at Beauchamp, too. I guess that's why Beauchamp thought he needed protection."

"Beauchamp was associated with Dunwell and Hosker," stated Vandrow. "That was sufficient reason for his worry. Why go out of our way to draw Milton Claverly into the situation?"

"Right," agreed the coroner.

"Well," said Locke, "one thing's sure. If Torburg is the danger zone, Beauchamp's out of it. Nobody knows that he beat it - that is, nobody but us four and my men."

LOUIS VANDROW chewed his lips as he heard the remark. Abner Zangwald noted the action. He glared at the lawyer; then put a sudden question.

"How about that, Vandrow?" he inquired. "You were over at Claverly's when you called up here, weren't you? Around quarter past eleven?"

"Yes," admitted the lawyer.

"Did young Claverly hear what you had to say?" asked Zangwald. "Did he get wind of the fact that Beauchamp was leaving town?"

"I mentioned it," replied Vandrow. "Milton was in the room when I was talking. He asked me about Beauchamp. I told him that Beauchamp was going to New York."

"Who else was there? The girl?"

"No - Lester, the old servant. And a friend of Milton's. A real estate man from New York, Harry Vincent."

"I know the fellow. He came in to see me about real estate. He was the one who went with you up to Dunwell's, wasn't he, Locke?"

"Yes," returned the sheriff. "Vincent is all right. Don't worry about him."

"I'm not," declared Zangwald, dryly. "I'm thinking about young Claverly. It's too bad that he learned about Beauchamp's departure. If anything should happen -"

"Let us refrain from apprehensions," put in Vandrow. "As the sheriff has said, Beauchamp is outside the

danger zone."

There was a pause. A huge grandfather's clock delivered its musical chimes. Midnight had arrived. Twelve strokes came from the clock. Then Zangwald spoke.

"You spoke of the danger zone," he declared. "This, gentlemen, is the danger hour. If harm has come to Willis Beauchamp, the bells of doom will peal. Let us hope that they will not ring tonight."

An ominous silence followed the words. Then came a chuckle from the sheriff.

"Those bells can't ring," he asserted.

"Why not?" demanded Zangwald.

"I've been waiting to tell you this," chortled the sheriff. "Just a little idea I had this afternoon. You know that key you gave to Yokes? The one he handed over to me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I went up to the tower this evening. Thought I might put a couple of men on duty; but I didn't want to call them away from Beauchamp's. So I used the key. I went up in the tower."

Locke paused to lift a heavy traveling bag from the floor. He placed it on the table and undid the clasps. He spoke as he opened the bag.

"I brought back some souvenirs," he chuckled. "Here they are, look at them."

He revealed the contents of the bag. Within lay three brazen clappers. The sheriff removed them, one by one, and placed them on the table.

"Unhooked them," he said. "That fixed the bells. I don't care who gets in there and yanks the ropes. Those bells won't ring."

Again, Locke chuckled as he stared at the surprised expressions on the faces of his three companions. Still laughing, he placed his hands on the heavy clappers. Then, in an instant, his lips became rigid. A commanding sound had come above the sheriff's chortle.

Clang!

A muffled throb from far away. A note that all had heard before. It was the opening stroke of a deep-throated gong. A second peal resounded. Then a third.

Dong! - Dong! -

Once again, the tower bells were tolling forth their mournful dirge. New notes of doom were reaching the ears of astounded listeners. Here, beneath the sheriff's hand, were the clappers of the tower bells. Yet the strokes of doom were resounding through the night.

Tone for tone, perfect in the spacing of their chiming, the bells in the tower were pealing forth their irresistible message.

The bells of doom were sounding another knell!

## **CHAPTER XIV. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE**

Clang! - Clang! -

The strident clamor drummed its clashing message to Harry Vincent, half asleep in his bed at Claverly's. The bells of doom were like a nightmare, weaving their jangle into Harry's dreaming mind.

Dong!

The final stroke. The bells had ended as abruptly as before.

Harry raised his head. A breeze from the half-opened window was almost tingling with the final reverberations of those concluded strokes. Harry could actually feel the sound of the bells.

Hurrying into some clothes, Harry stumbled from the room. He wanted to find Milton Claverly. Groping his way through the darkened hall, he reached the top of the stairs. He saw a dull light from below. Harry descended.

All was silent when Harry reached the lower hall. Calculating, Harry felt sure that others must have heard the bells before him. Someone must have come downstairs to turn on that light. Looking through a darkened stretch of hall, Harry spied the outline of the side door. He went to the portal and turned the knob.

The door was unlocked. It swung inward, aided by a gust of air. Harry stepped out into the blackness of a rear drive. The night was pitch-dark; he could not even see the grayish gravel that crunched beneath his feet.

Wondering why the door was open, Harry paused to listen. He tried to calculate the time that had passed between the ending of the bells and his arrival here. Harry found himself at a loss. It might have been three minutes - possibly five -

Time for someone to have come back from the old bell-tower? The thought was startling. It was almost like a premonition. Promptly upon the thought, Harry heard a sound. It was the slight crunch of gravel, at the far side of the drive.

Barely discernible was a low wing that extended back from the house. This was the addition that housed the sealed crypt which had served as temporary resting place for the body of David Claverly.

Creeping in that direction, Harry pressed his hand against the stone surface of the low wall. He edged through darkness toward the spot where he had heard the crunches. He stopped. Like echoes, other crackles replied from ahead. They ceased.

Harry shifted forward. Again the crunches. They were closer. Was someone creeping back to the house? Or had someone, sneaking away, reversed his course? Hearing another click, Harry sprang suddenly forward. He was leaping for the person in the darkness, whoever he might be. Harry's guess was perfect. His forward-thrust hands encountered a human shape.

AN instant later, Harry was struggling with an adversary. The man was powerful. As Harry locked with his opponent, he realized that the man might be Milton. Harry cried out as he wrestled:

"Claverly! I'm Vincent -"

The response was a fiercer struggle. An arm wrenched from Harry's grasp. A swift fist shot through the dark. It clipped The Shadow's agent squarely on the jaw. The other arm came free as Harry slumped. Groggily, he sprawled on the gravel.

Darkness seemed to whirl as Harry heard quick crunching steps. He came up to his hands and knees, ready to resume the fight. His head was spinning; he could hear the footsteps dwindle. But he could not guess in what direction they had gone. Harry swayed and slipped back to the gravel.

One minute passed; dully, Harry sensed that slow footsteps were coming in his direction. He roused himself; he turned about and saw framed light. The side door of the house was open. A stooped figure was coming toward him.

It was Lester, the old servant. A flashlight blinked from the fellow's hand.

Harry tried to rise. Lester caught him; with surprising strength, the man helped Harry to his feet. The flashlight, turned upward, showed each man the other's face.

"What happened, sir?" Lester's voice was apprehensive. "I heard you shout."

"I encountered someone out here," explained Harry. "I came out through the side door - after the bells rang - the side door was open -"

"I locked it, sir.

"It was open when I found it."

A call came from the opened door. Milton Claverly was standing there, in his shirtsleeves. He stepped into the dark; his white garb showed in the blackness. Stepping away from Lester, Harry approached the house.

"What's the matter, Vincent?" inquired Milton. "Come back into the house, and let me know what happened."

Harry complied.

As the two men went inside. Lester stood crouched in the center of the drive. The servant was listening. Apparently, he was wondering if some lurker still remained on the premises.

Suddenly, the servant turned on his flashlight. He swept it in a wide beam, along the fringe of the drive. It passed the wall of the silent crypt. It probed among the trees; there it stopped. A guttural sound came from Lester's lips.

By a freak of chance, the servant's light had picked the outline of an approaching shape. Coming through the trees, stopping the instant that the light appeared upon it, was a phantom form cloaked in black.

The Shadow had swung in from his course across the hill. He had heard the talk in the driveway. He had recognized Harry Vincent's voice. Creeping forward, he had been caught suddenly within the range of Lester's unexpected light.

BURNING eyes. The servant saw them glitter from beneath the brim of the slouch hat. They were unearthly eyes, those blazing orbs of The Shadow.

Instinctively, the servant trembled.

Then, to his ears came the low tones of a sinister laugh.

Lester dropped back as he heard the eerie taunt. It was meant for the servant's ears alone. It served its purpose. Lester's light wavered as the man's hand faltered. Dropping toward the ground, it no longer covered the motionless form in black.



There was a swish through the shrouding gloom. Lester did not hear it. The Shadow had lost no opportunity. He had faded quickly with the night, the moment that Lester dropped his hand.

Recovering from his fright, the servant raised the flashlight. This time its rays showed nothing but the trees.

Retreating toward the house, Lester kept sweeping his torch. It failed to reveal a new glimpse of The Shadow. The servant arrived at the house; his hand trembled as it opened the door.

Then Lester sprang inside and slammed the barrier behind him. Bolts shot into place.

When he reached the hall inside the house, Lester turned suddenly as he heard a voice from the stairs. It was Phyllis Lingle. Clad in slippers and dressing gown, the girl had come from her room. She questioned Lester in an anxious tone.

"What has happened?" inquired Phyllis. "Tell me, Lester; what happened outside?"

"Mr. Vincent encountered a prowler," croaked Lester. "But he is all right, Miss Phyllis. I can hear him talking to Mr. Milton, in the library."

Phyllis hurried down the stairs. She joined Lester and the two entered the library. They found Harry Vincent standing before the fireplace, rubbing his jaw. Milton Claverly was seated close by, smoking a cigarette.

"Lester," snapped Milton, "Vincent tells me that the little door was open. You should have bolted it before you retired."

"I thought I did, sir," responded the servant. "Really, it is something that I should not have forgotten."

"But you forgot it tonight."

"Yes, sir.

"Vincent heard the bells," declared Milton. "He was the first of us to get downstairs. Finding the door open, he naturally went out to the drive."

"I thought you might be out there," remarked Harry, eying Milton as he spoke.

"I was upstairs," stated Milton, promptly, "getting dressed. I couldn't find my coat and vest so I came down in my shirtsleeves. There wasn't time to go fumbling about in the closet, looking for the right hanger."

"I must have come down ahead of you, sir," said Lester. "I was sound asleep on the third floor. Then I heard the bells ring" - a chuckle - "and I was glad. Bells of doom -"

"Cut it, Lester," interrupted Milton, sternly. "This is no time for more of your madness. What I want to know is: who was outside this house - and why?"

Phyllis Lingle uttered a suppressed gasp. Harry Vincent was the only one who heard it. He looked quickly toward the girl. Her face was pale. Phyllis tried to cover up her sudden outburst. Lester came unwittingly to her rescue.

"I can tell you, sir, he croaked. "I can tell you who was outside this house. It was a spirit, sir - a ghoul from the old bell-tower. I know. I have seen!"

The old servant's chortle was maddening. Yet even the wildness of Lester's eyes did not detract from the force of his words. Milton Claverly stared. He seemed to half believe Lester's words. Then Milton laughed, uneasily.

"Seeing spooks, eh?" he quizzed. "Forget that stuff, Lester. It will drive you crazy."

"I saw!" repeated the servant. "I saw him - the spirit from the night!"

"Black, with burning eyes! Coals of fire, sir, that looked at me. It came from the tower" - the servant pointed his finger upward and wagged his bony hand - "it came to prove that my old master's words were true!"

"Enough of that!" broke in Milton. "Keep quiet, Lester. Now I know that your wild imagination has gained the best of you."

HARRY VINCENT was thinking. He had seen enough of Lester to know that the servant was fundamentally sane. Lester had seen someone outside the house; but not the person with whom Harry had battled. Harry's antagonist had escaped; after that, The Shadow had arrived here at the house.

Who had been the man in the dark? Harry's foe could have been Milton Claverly. For that matter, Lester - the servant had unusual strength - might have been the fighter who had dealt the lucky blow to Harry's jaw.

Both Milton and Lester were dressed. Harry had no proof that either man had gone to bed. One or the other could have been coming back from the tower. It was quite possible that the guilty party could have gone into the house after sprawling Harry on the gravel.

Recollecting, Harry realized that he had been completely staggered by the punch. It had been the equivalent of a knock-out blow. A minute - no, at least two minutes - had elapsed before Lester arrived to give aid. There had been another time space before Milton had appeared.

Harry's thoughts changed. He came to a consideration of The Shadow. He knew that it was not his chief whom he had encountered; The Shadow would have recognized Harry's cry in the dark. But The Shadow was close at hand. Harry would soon have a chance to make a report.

Lester was walking from the library.

Milton spoke to the servant, to ask him where he was going. Lester responded that he intended to make sure the rear door was locked.

"I'm sure I pressed the bolts when I came in, sir."

"I'll go along to make sure."

The two left. Harry was musing. Then came a soft voice. Phyllis Lingle was approaching. The girl spoke breathlessly.

"I heard the scuffle, Mr. Vincent," she said. "I knew that you had met someone in the dark."

"Do you know who it was?" questioned Harry, quickly.

"No," replied Phyllis. "It was too dark to see from my window. But - there is something that I must tell you -"

She stopped and drew away. Milton and Lester were returning. Harry saw the girl's lips frame the word:

"Tomorrow."

Harry gave a slight nod and turned away. Milton noted nothing. He paced over toward the fireplace, stood there for a few moments; then spoke.

"Guess we'd better turn in," was his comment. "There's no use looking for the chap you bumped into, Vincent. After the way Vandrow talked, I don't like the idea of going outside the house after dark.

"We would look mighty suspicious wandering about with flashlights. For that matter, it wouldn't be so good if anyone dropped in on us while we're in this room. I suggest we go back to bed and talk things over in the morning."

MILTON'S suggestion was followed. Five minutes later, Harry Vincent was seated in his own room. He had turned on a single light, a little lamp above a table in the corner. But Harry had not gone back to bed.

He was seated at the table, writing with a fountain pen that he had taken from the pocket of his vest. Briefly, in coded words, Harry was giving the full details of all that had occurred. Trained in The Shadow's service, Harry had gained a remarkable ability to remember events with exactitude.

His departure from the hotel, his chat with Milton Claverly; his return and the remarks that Vandrow had made - all these went into the report. Then came Harry's description of his experience after the bells had clanged. Most important - to Harry's mind - were the interrupted conversations that he had held with Phyllis Lingle.

Harry folded each sheet as he completed it. He placed the entire report in an envelope. He sealed the container; then went to bed. But he left the table lamp burning. That was a signal to The Shadow.

Time passed. Night breezes sighed about the mansion. From the thick, outer darkness, keen eyes studied the silent house. They spied the only glimmer of light, the dull glow from the window of Harry's room. A stealthy figure approached the house.

Shortly afterward, the figure of The Shadow appeared through the open window. It materialized in weird fashion. The only person who might have seen that forming shape was Harry Vincent; but he had gone to sleep.

Gloved hands opened the envelope. The Shadow read the coded lines. The writing faded, line by line, as he completed his perusal. Such was the way with messages between The Shadow and his aides. They used a special ink that vanished after contact with the air.

The Shadow wrote brief lines. He sealed them in an envelope and left the message where he had found Harry's report. Silently, the tall shape merged with the darkness beyond the window. The Shadow had gone.

Later, a sardonic laugh rippled from a spot along the hillside, not far from where the old bell-tower stood. The Shadow had returned to the mysterious thickness of the night.

## **CHAPTER XV. THE LAW CONFERS**

ON the next afternoon, a group of men were assembled in the meeting room at the Torburg town hall. Sheriff Locke and Coroner Thomas were there; also the deputies whom Locke had placed as guards at Beauchamp's home.

Besides these representatives of the law, another was present. This was Galt Jornal, the county

prosecutor.

Jornal had come to Torburg to make a complete investigation of the latest murder. He had summoned all who might furnish clues to the death of Willis Beauchamp. In addition, Jornal had requested the presence of Abner Zangwald, to represent the board of selectmen. Zangwald, in turn, had invited Louis Vandrow to the conference.

The county prosecutor was a bluff individual. He liked to get results; and he believed that slipshod methods had permitted crime in Torburg. When he called the conference to order, his first act was to read over reports that he had received from the sheriff and the coroner. That done, Jornal came down to business.

"We'll center on the case of Willis Beauchamp," declared the prosecutor. "First off, Beauchamp was afraid for his life. Reason: because he had been closely associated with the two men who were slain. That's clear enough for all, I think.

"Beauchamp wanted a guard around his place. He got it. But he wasn't satisfied. He wanted to clear out, to go to New York. Maybe he thought he'd be safer there. Anyway, he stated as his reason that he had received a long distance call from New York. Am I right on that point?"

"Yes," replied Zangwald. "Beauchamp called me and said that he wanted to leave for New York. He proposed the manner in which he intended to depart."

"He talked to me afterward," corroborated Locke. "Told me just what he'd told Mr. Zangwald. It was over the telephone - after I came to Mr. Zangwald's home. I called Beauchamp from there."

"Very well." The prosecutor became emphatic. "Let's continue that matter further. Who was it that called Beauchamp from New York? You don't know, do you? You don't even know whether or not he really received a call from New York. You can't prove that he received any calls at his home, can you?"

"We can't prove that he didn't," observed Zangwald, dryly.

"Granted," was Jornal's retort, "but we're dealing in facts - not suppositions. All we actually do know is that you, Zangwald, talked with Beauchamp by your own testimony. And that Locke here talked with him later. By Locke's testimony and yours, Zangwald, because you were present when Locke called Beauchamp."

"Somebody called Beauchamp," put in one of the deputies. "I know - because I was on guard at the side of the house. I heard the bell ringing inside."

"When was that?" demanded Jornal.

"Early in the evening," replied the deputy. "About nine o'clock, I reckon."

"Was that your call?" questioned Jornal, turning to Zangwald.

"I didn't call Beauchamp," returned the bushy-browed man. "He called me. Look at the report sheet, Mr. Jornal."

The prosecutor nodded. Then he turned to the deputy. He eyed the man severely.

"About nine o'clock," remarked Jornal. "That's the time you heard the phone bell ring. Did you hear it later? At the time when Sheriff Locke put in his call?"

"No," returned the deputy, "but I wasn't at the side of the house much after nine o'clock. We were kind of patrolling the place, later in the night."

"I see. Did anyone else hear a telephone bell ring from inside Beauchamp's house?"

No response.

"Hm-m-m," mused Jornal. "Well, it looks like Beauchamp got a call from somewhere. But maybe it wasn't from New York, Maybe it wasn't of any consequence. That's where we're stumped."

"Why so?" questioned Zangwald, in his rumble. "It appears to me that the matter of the telephone call is irrelevant. What is it's bearing on the case?"

"We want to know the exact reason why Beauchamp acted the way he did" explained Jornal. "Maybe it was a freak idea of his own. But maybe" - the prosecutor paused emphatically - "maybe somebody called him up and talked him into putting himself in a trap."

THIS came as a new theory. The looks that the listeners exchanged were proof that they saw the point that Jornal had presented. Before anyone else spoke the prosecutor added another comment.

"It might have worked either way," he asserted. "Some friend might have double-crossed Beauchamp. Talked about him getting out of town. Suggested ways and means. On the other hand an enemy could have called him. Threatened him. Ordered him to get out of town or die. That would have worked."

"A few moments ago," put in Zangwald casually, "you said that we should deal in facts not in suppositions. Just what are you discussing at present?"

"I'll talk facts" retorted the prosecutor angrily. "I'll tell you what I think about Beauchamp's death. I'll tell you that the people in this town are dunder-heads to let crime happen right under their noses!

"Three men have been murdered. All by one killer. Don't shout 'supposition' at me this time. The cases are too much alike. You can't dodge that fact. Dunwell's death was excusable. Nobody knew it was coming. Hosker's was something that shouldn't have happened. Locke should have guarded the man.

"But Beauchamp - well, letting him get killed was the biggest blunder ever pulled in this county! He was safe in his house. He shouldn't have been allowed to get out. Nevertheless, Beauchamp is dead. What I'm going to do is analyze his death."

The prosecutor paused to cough. He stood up and crinkled the report sheets between his hands. Then in the manner of an orator he continued:

"There's only one place where the murder could have occurred. That was in the garage. The killer got there ahead of Beauchamp - laid for him in the limousine - shot him. That shows we're dealing with a mighty bold customer. It also proves your men were dead on their feet, sheriff."

"Why?" demanded Locke.

"Because they didn't hear the shot in the garage," retorted Jornal.

"We weren't near the garage," objected a deputy. "We stayed away from it, on purpose."

"Sure," put in another, "and those doors are thick. They slide together so close you couldn't get a razor blade between 'em. If Beauchamp was shot in the garage, it ain't no wonder we didn't hear it."

"That will be enough," rebuked the prosecutor. "I see by reports that Beauchamp's chauffeur did not turn

on the lights in the garage. Apparently, he did not realize that murder had been done before his arrival. He drove from the garage carrying a corpse in his car."

"Then why," questioned Zangwald, "was a car blockading the road to Lewisport? Why did the deputies find dying men who looked like mobsters? They were certainly posted there to make trouble for Beauchamp."

"I agree with that," said the prosecutor. "Furthermore, the reason for the mobsters is easily explained. Either the murderer feared that he would fail to gain the opportunity of murdering Beauchamp in the garage; or he wanted to cover up his work by making it appear that Beauchamp had been slain later, on the road."

THE prosecutor had spoken in logical fashion. His words brought nods from coroner and sheriff. Vandrow appeared speculative; while Zangwald looked somewhat doubtful. Finally the lawyer registered his agreement and Zangwald nodded slowly.

"Unfortunately," declared Jornal, "Beauchamp's chauffeur was killed by the mobsters. None of that crowd remains. As luck had it, a coupe smashed into their touring car and overturned it. I see that you have not located the driver of the coupe. That is not an important point. The man probably left the scene, fearing that he would be arrested. However, he should be commended for smashing into a car-load of crooks.

"Our problem is to find the murderer. He is a man of nerve. He shows no half measures in his crimes. He has left no clues to his identity. He has spread terror through this town."

The prosecutor paused. He turned to Locke and told the sheriff to dismiss the deputies. The men filed from the room. Jornal remained with Locke and Thomas. He also motioned Zangwald and Vandrow to stay.

"We can now discuss the matter of the bell-tower," announced the prosecutor. "It has figured strangely in these deaths. It appears to have a connection with the murders. It makes the crimes look like the work of a fanatic."

"That tower's got me licked," put in the sheriff. "Wait'll I tell you about it, prosecutor. The first time those bells rang, I didn't go up there until a while after. I found the door locked. Nothing wrong. That was the time when Dunwell died."

"Go on."

"When Hosker was murdered, we didn't find out about the crime until the next day. But we heard the bells ring and we got up there not long after. I had the key to the tower - I'd gotten it from Absalom Yokes. But I didn't need it."

"Why not?"

"Because," replied the sheriff, "the door was unlocked."

"Unlocked?" questioned Louis Vandrow. "I thought you opened it with the key."

"So did I," observed Abner Zangwald. "You told the coroner that you had searched the tower."

"Sure I searched it," said the sheriff. "But I didn't have to unlock it to get in. Well - I locked it up afterward. I was going to put men there last night, but I needed them at Beauchamp's."

"So instead," broke in the prosecutor, "you removed the clappers. That is in your report. You also say that you visited the tower last night after the news came in that Beauchamp was killed in his limousine."

"Yes," said the sheriff. "I sure was stumped when I heard the bells ring without their clappers. Mr. Zangwald here can tell you that. I was over at his place. I was going to hot-foot it to the tower; but before I got started, the deputies showed up to tell us Beauchamp had been murdered."

"So you went to the tower later?"

"Yes, and found no clappers in the bells."

"Was the door locked?"

"Yes."

"Then how do you explain the ringing?"

The sheriff looked at the coroner, who nodded. Evidently the two had cooked up a theory for the prosecutor's benefit. Locke bent forward over the table.

"SOMEBODY got in the tower," asserted the sheriff. "He must have been smart, for he had new clappers with him. He put them in the bells."

"What! You found new clappers for the bells -"

"No. Because the man that put them there was smart enough to take them out again."

The prosecutor scowled. The theory did not appeal to him. Nor did Zangwald approve. The bushy-browed selectman rumbled a basso laugh.

"More supposition," he asserted. "Well, well! We are dealing with a very thorough-going murderer. One who carries his own bell clappers in case of emergency."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Maybe the fellow was watching the tower. He might have seen me come out with the clappers."

"Plausible" put in the coroner.

"It's more than that," added the sheriff. "It's the only answer. Because if nobody put clappers in those bells, what made the bells ring?"

The prosecutor pondered. This was a question that he could not answer. Neither Zangwald nor Vandrow made comment. The sheriff smiled triumphantly.

"A good point," decided the prosecutor, after a pause. "One that balks us. Gentlemen, we are confronted by a mystery of the most insidious sort. Our one consolation is the fact that the reign of terror is ended."

"Are we sure of that?" inquired the coroner.

"Yes," decided Jornal. "There were only three in the group that has been slain. Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp. All are dead. Our job is not to prevent new crime. It is to solve the riddles that the past presents."

There was an uneasy silence. Abner Zangwald was on the point of speaking. Louis Vandrow rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Sheriff and coroner were silent.

"The first question," said the prosecutor, slowly, "is whether we are dealing with one man or two."

Surprised expressions greeted this statement. The prosecutor smiled.

"One man," he said, "could have killed each of those three victims. After that, he could have gone to the bell-tower. But do you think that one man would have tried it alone?"

"One man could have done it," stated the coroner.

"No, he couldn't!" exclaimed the sheriff. "He'd have had to work too quickly after killing Beauchamp. He had to put clappers in the bells."

"Let us not be hasty," warned Jornal. "We know that the murderer had accomplices. The mobsters on the road were specimens. The actual killings, coupled with the bell ringing, may have been a one-man job. On the other hand, they may have been the timed actions of two persons, working together.

"Suppose that we give this matter further thought. Get our minds to work. Be ready with our individual theories. Perhaps some of you may know of possible suspects. If you do, name them,"

Zangwald was about to speak. The prosecutor raised his hand. Jornal had not yet finished.

"We can meet tonight," he declared. "Then we can talk at length, without undue haste. Where shall we convene?"

"At my house," suggested Zangwald.

"Very well," decided Jornal.

"What about my deputies?" questioned Locke.

"Put them up at the bell-tower," retorted Jornal, in a testy tone. "Watch the stable now that the horse is gone. That's the best place for them. They can't blunder there."

With that, the prosecutor arose to end the meeting. Men filed forth into the afternoon air. Their serious faces showed that they were pondering upon Jornal's words. Locke and Thomas; Vandrow and Zangwald; all were busy with thoughts that concerned the reign of crime in Torburg.

## **CHAPTER XVI. HARRY'S MESSAGE**

DINNER had ended at Claverly's. The meal had been served early; and it had proven a gloomy affair. Milton was in a solemn frame of mind; he had maintained it all day, ever since the news of Beauchamp's death.

Lester, creeping about the dining room as he served the food, was wearing a perpetual smirk. The old servant was silent because his master had ordered him to be. But he made no secret of the joy that he felt, now that the last of the three had died.

Harry Vincent was restless; Phyllis Lingle was strained and worried. They had gained no opportunity to talk. Harry knew that the girl must have some news of importance. He wanted to learn it; to get word to The Shadow.

With dinner over, all had retired to the library, with the exception of Lester. A ring at the front door brought the servant into the hall from the dining room. Lester answered the call and admitted Louis Vandrow. He ushered the lawyer into the library.



Something in Vandrow's look told Milton that his attorney wanted a conference. In challenging fashion, the young man spoke before the attorney had the opportunity.

"Whatever you have to say," snapped Milton, "can be spoken in the presence of all who are here. I suppose you have come to find out where I was last night."

"I have," returned Vandrow, mildly. "I hope, Milton, that you followed my advice."

"I did. I never left the house. Vincent, here, can testify to that fact."

"Can you?" questioned the lawyer, turning to Harry.

"Yes." The Shadow's agent tried to conceal the reluctance of his reply. "I can not state that Milton Claverly was under my constant observation; but he -"

"You can account exactly for what happened after the bells rang in the old tower?"

Vandrow's question was an anxious one. It came as an interruption; and it brought a jolt to Harry Vincent. The lawyer was specifying the most crucial portion of last night's episodes.

"That is important, Vincent," added Vandrow. "I fear that Milton may be called upon to account for his activities. I must be sure that they can be substantiated. Any questioning will boil down to a definite analysis of the ten minute period which came directly after the bells ceased ringing."

Harry could feel Milton's eyes upon him. He knew that the heir was depending upon his support. Lester was standing by the door, watching. Both knew that Harry could not give a true statement of Milton's actions during the interval which Vandrow had mentioned.

Harry glanced toward Milton. He saw a tinge of apprehension on the young man's face. He knew that Milton feared that he would mention the encounter in the dark.

Lester was staring, his eyes wide open. The servant wore a significant leer. Vandrow was impatiently awaiting Harry's answer. This was a time for strategy.

"I FEEL positive," declared Harry, slowly, "that I can give a satisfactory account of Milton Claverly's whereabouts at the time the bells rang last night. Does that please you, Mr. Vandrow?"

"It does." The lawyer nodded in relieved fashion. "I am glad" - this was to Milton - "that you had this capable witness present in the house. Milton" - the attorney paused, his features serious - "there is to be a conference tonight at Zangwald's home. The county prosecutor will be there."

"How does that concern me?" questioned Milton in a suave tone.

"Very directly," replied Vandrow. "The sheriff will be there; the coroner also. I am attending. At that time, various theories will be presented concerning the deaths of Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp.

"The prosecutor appears determined to follow any lead to the limit. He is angry because so little has been accomplished. He believes that the ringing of the bells is connected with the deaths. He is looking for any person who might have had occasion for enmity toward the dead men."

"And I am one?"

"Frankly, you are. Those three swindled your father. You have suffered because of their activities. Your heritage was lessened. Once your name is mentioned tonight, the prosecutor will demand that you be quizzed."

"Who intends to mention my name?"

Milton's tone was cold. The young man was facing Vandrow squarely. His moroseness had vanished. Milton was openly challenging. Vandrow looked troubled.

"Not I, Milton," responded the lawyer. "As your attorney, as your friend, it is my part to keep you free from troublesome situations. But when your name comes up, -"

"I ask you again" - Milton's tone was a demand - "to name the person who will mention me."

"Very well. I can tell you. Abner Zangwald will throw suspicion upon you."

"How do you know?"

"Because he was about to mention your name this afternoon, while talking with the prosecutor in the town hall."

"Why should Zangwald make this step against me?"

"Because he believes that you had cause to act against the three men who died -"

"No!" Milton blurted the interruption. "You are wrong, Vandrow! I shall tell you the reason why Zangwald will bring up my name. He is a hypocrite! He pretended to be my father's friend. He laid aside the mask after my father died.

"Tell Zangwald this for me. Tell him that I detest him. Tell him that I feel no more than contempt for Dunwell. For Hosker. For Beauchamp. Tell him that the only man in Torburg whose sudden death would please me is Abner Zangwald, himself!"

THE young man paused with clenched fists. Vandrow stood aghast. He looked toward Harry; toward Phyllis. He stared to see Lester framed in the door. Besides Vandrow, there were three other witnesses of Milton's rage.

"This is bad," declared the lawyer, solemnly. "Calm yourself, Milton. This is no time to lose your temper. I am sorry that you have spoken in so violent a manner. I have come here as your friend, to tell you that you face a serious predicament.

"It is possible that the prosecutor may come here tonight. With others, to question you. What you have just said is a threat. A serious threat. One that I shall not repeat; and one that I advise you to forget."

Milton had no comment. Vandrow looked about toward the other persons; then concentrated his gaze upon the young man who confronted him.

"Milton," declared the lawyer, "I am sincere when I say that your entire future rests upon your own discretion. Be prepared for visitors tonight. Curb your temper while you await their arrival. My advice must be heeded.

"When the ring of the doorbell announces that the visitors have come, have Vincent and Phyllis upstairs. Lester also. Answer the door yourself. Be affable. Answer questions frankly and quietly.

"If corroboration of your testimony is needed, we can call Vincent. He may be the only person required. Perhaps Phyllis may be called upon; Lester will be ignored if possible. Come, Milton. Promise me your cooperation. Matters are more serious than you suppose."

Vandrow clapped his hand upon Milton's shoulder. He drew the young man toward the door, talking in a

friendly tone as they walked along. Lester preceded them. The lawyer's manner was having its effect upon Milton Claverly. The young man was nodding in response to quieting words.

Harry looked toward Phyllis. The girl approached and began to speak. This was the opportunity that had come at last. Eagerly, she began the story that she had sought to tell before.

"LAST night," whispered the girl, "I heard someone outside the house. Prowling, there - after those terrible bells had ceased to peal."

"The man that I -"

"The man who fought with you. But it was not the first time that he came here. I heard him twice before. On those other two nights. just after the bells. I saw him, by the moonlight."

"Where?"

"Beyond the end of the crypt."

"The crypt?"

"The low extension from the house. He disappeared while I watched. I did not see his face."

"Can you describe him?"

"He - he was about Milton's height. But he was stooping, like Lester. I could not tell whether he was going from the house or coming here. That was because he moved out of sight at the end of the crypt."

"There is a door in the crypt?"

"Yes. An outside door; and an inner door that connects with the cellar. But both are locked. The keys were supposedly destroyed. It would be impossible for anyone to open either door without a key."

"Yet you believe -"

"I do not know what to believe." The girl quivered. "I have had terrible, dreadful thoughts! I have realized that if someone held those keys, he could go in and out of this house by passing through the crypt -"

The girl stopped. Milton was returning, followed by Lester. There had been a brief conference at the front door. That final chat with Vandrow had sobered Milton Claverly.

"I guess the quiz is coming," asserted Milton. "When it does, I'll have to bluff it out alone for a starter. If you're still up when those people come here, Vincent, I'll have to ask you to go upstairs."

"Quite all right," declared Harry.

"I'll be ready when you give the word. By the way, Milton, I've got to phone the hotel. All right if I do it now?"

"Certainly," said Milton.

Harry went from the library. He crossed the hall, entered the parlor and closed the door behind him. Instead of calling the hotel, however, he gave another number. It was one that he had memorized from the instructions left by The Shadow.

A quiet voice responded. Harry announced his identity. A responding whisper assured him that The

Shadow was at the other end of the wire. Quickly, Harry told of Vandrow's visit. Then he added an account of his brief conversation with Phyllis Lingle.

The call ended, Harry went from the parlor. From the hallway, he saw Phyllis ascending the stairs. He called a cheery goodnight, then continued into the library to find Milton pacing back and forth across the floor.

Brief silence followed in the hallway that Harry had just passed. Then, from a niche outside the parlor door, Lester stepped forth. The servant's eyes glittered in suspicion. His lips formed a fierce leer.

Lester had been eavesdropping. Outside the door, he had caught brief snatches of Harry's conversation. He had stepped from view when Phyllis had appeared. He had remained out of sight until Harry had crossed the hallway.

Catlike, the old servant moved into the darkness of the dining room. His lips were twitching. Whispered epithets came incoherently. They told that some plan was forming in the stooped man's mind.

Bells of doom had tolled the deaths of three. Terror, presumably, had ended its reign in Torburg. Yet this night was already as ominous as the three that had preceded it. A menace lay above the town; the danger seemed thickest here at Claverly's.

Milton was steeling himself for an ordeal. Harry was ready for whatever might come. Now, Lester, by his actions was giving proof that he, too, would figure in the events that were drawing nigh.

## **CHAPTER XVII. THROUGH THE CRYPT**

A SHADED lamp was glowing. Hands moved beneath it. Quartered in the neighborhood of Torburg, The Shadow had made a silent room his temporary sanctum. White paper was drawn beneath the light. A hand began to write with a pen that delivered ink of vivid blue.

The Shadow was making his deductions, piecing shreds of evidence, building upon the facts that he had learned. His soft laugh came in a sinister whisper. The Shadow had much upon which to draw.

His findings paralleled those of the county prosecutor. But where Jornal's facts had dwindled to speculations, The Shadow's statements were direct. Where the prosecutor had ceased to speculate, The Shadow went beyond.

Three deaths delivered by a single hand. Such was The Shadow's decision. Pen poised above paper and inscribed a name. It remained there, glaring, that name. Then it faded.

The Shadow had inscribed the name of the murderer!

Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp. Each had been slain by a bold venturer who had timed his strokes to perfect precision. He had entered the homes of two; he had gone into the garage of the third. Murder delivered, this killer had traveled on his way.

Like the sections of a jigsaw puzzle, The Shadow had put together the facts that he had gleaned from various sources. His own investigations; conversations that Harry Vincent had reported; keen bits of deduction - all had enabled him to form a clear picture of circumstances in Torburg.

To The Shadow, the real beginning of crime went back to the time of David Claverly's death. The elder Claverly had made investments in real estate. His life had ended at a time when he stood ready to clean up millions.

Had David Claverly been murdered? The probabilities said yes. At any rate, his death had meant opportunity for three men who had gained the property which David Claverly owned. Why had they loaned money on that real estate? Why had all three gained the same hold upon David Claverly's possessions?

The facts pointed to a plot. Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp had weakened David Claverly's status in Torburg. They had finally squeezed his most cherished possessions. But there, all semblance of a scheme had ended.

It was common news that those three men had sold Claverly's property to a holding company. They had not gained a great profit on the sale. That cleared them of complicity in the death of David Claverly, so far as known facts were concerned.

But in strange contrast was the behavior of Abner Zangwald. He had claimed to be David Claverly's friend. He had never represented himself as a man of deep craft. Yet he had refused to sell to the company that had bought out Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp.

Why had Beauchamp become so apprehensive after the deaths of Dunwell and Hosker? The Shadow's laugh told why. It was plain that some secret of the past had worried the last of the three schemers. Beauchamp had known that he was marked for death.

It was plain that he - with Dunwell and Hosker - had conspired to gain David Claverly's wealth. They must have dealt in death, for death had been dealt to them. Yet Beauchamp, despite his fears, had made no statements to the sheriff.

The Shadow laughed again. He saw the answer. Those three had not yet completed their chain of scheming. Their sales to the holding company had not marked the final chapter in their book of evil deeds. The Shadow saw that the holding company was a blind. He knew the truth.

Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp had made sales to a company which they actually controlled. But that fact was a secret. When the power corporation came to Torburg, the holding company would sell it the property and reap the profits. But the big share of the gain was intended for the pockets of the three schemers.

SUCH was The Shadow's verdict. He knew why those three had died. They had covered up all traces of their schemes. They had done it well. Too well. Now that they were dead, their efforts had gone for naught. The three had lost their opportunity. Their heirs would not reap the profits, for the whole scheme had been a guarded secret.

Certain living men possessed facts. That much had been revealed. Louis Vandrow, to begin with, knew that a conspiracy had existed against David Claverly. The lawyer had proof that Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp had broken down the contractor's business and had finally gained valuable property that belonged to Claverly - only to sell out in a hurry.

Abner Zangwald probably knew the same. But he had also gained a slice of David Claverly's real estate. He had refused to sell it. Was that merely good business judgment; or did it indicate a suspicion of the scheme that Dunwell and Hosker had hatched with Beauchamp?

Next, Milton Claverly knew facts. On the surface, he had gained but few - those that he had learned by hearsay. But the young man had communicated with his father at times; moreover, he had been the recipient of a box of documents left by David Claverly.

What had Milton found within that box? Papers of importance? Other objects? Milton had casually told

Harry Vincent that the box held nothing of consequence. But no one, other than Milton himself, had seen the actual contents.

Lester - the old servant - claimed that his master had been murdered. He talked of bells of doom. Lester had been close to David Claverly. The old servant was cunning, despite the outbursts in which he indulged. Lester was a factor; for he had knowledge of his own.

The Shadow knew that if living men told all, the riddle of the bells would be explained. The tower on the hill contained some secret. Had David Claverly built it merely for an idle whim?

The Shadow laughed. He knew that there must have been some other purpose for the tower.

Like the crypt in which Claverly's body had been placed. David Claverly had evidently possessed a genuine fear of trance condition. That was why he had specified, in his will, that his corpse must be in the crypt for one week prior to burial.

Also in his will, he had stated that the bells which tolled his death should remain silent from thenceforth. Provisions had been fulfilled. David Claverly's body had been placed temporarily in the crypt; the door of the tower had been sheathed with metal and padlocked.

Yet bells of doom had rung! They had fulfilled the wild, dying words of David Claverly - those words that Lester had reported hearing. A laugh told that The Shadow had found a definite link. He could see an answer to the ringing of the bells.

The Shadow had been in the tower close upon the ringing. That had been on the second night of doom. He had found no one there. He had even scaled the high, ornamental cupola. He had gained no trace of a bell ringer.

Last night the bells had rung again despite the fact that their clappers had been removed. Sheriff Locke had tried to explain the fact; but his theory of duplicate clappers was puerile. There was a simpler answer to the ringing of the bells. One that The Shadow had divined.

AGAIN the hand wrote on the paper. The Shadow was considering a final element. Two nights ago, someone had driven from the neighborhood of Torburg, off to an old house in the woods. Last night, mobsmen had assembled in that house. The Shadow had dealt with them on the Lewisport road.

Those crooks had been summoned to aid in murder. Their presence proved an outside connection. The killer, lurking here in town, had gained the services of some aide who could obtain New York thugs when they were needed.

The murders. The bells.

They were connected. But The Shadow could see in them the workmanship of two men, not one. Death had been delivered in different parts of town. The killer, by all rights, should have gone his way immediately after each death.

Who then, had rung the bells?

The Shadow laughed as his hand inscribed a name that faded a few moments later. This was a deduction; but one which fitted well with, circumstances that The Shadow knew. For The Shadow had come from New York. There, he had witnessed the beginning of crime. Even previously, he had heard schemes discussed aboard the steamship Laurentic.

The light went out. A swish from The Shadow's cloak. The master sleuth had work to do tonight. Though

his deductions had been keen, The Shadow had been looking for new clues to fit into the picture. One had come - by telephone.

Harry Vincent had talked to Phyllis Lingle. From the girl, The Shadow's agent had learned that someone had been outside the crypt on three successive nights. Harry himself knew that a person had been there on the third occasion; but Phyllis had given him proof that this had been the rule and not a mere exception.

Phyllis Lingle was another factor in the situation. The girl had lived in Torburg. She had been David Claverly's ward. She had been away when her guardian had died. Nevertheless, she had heard Lester's story.

Did Phyllis know more than she had stated? Was her mention of a prowler by the crypt an effort to tell part, but not the whole? Gliding through the darkness of the spread-out town, The Shadow laughed softly as he considered this final factor.

Whatever the girl's motive, she had emphasized the crypt. Like the tower, the crypt had been built by David Claverly. Crypt, like tower, could have played its part in crime. Its possibility as a secret entrance to the mansion was something that The Shadow had intended to test tonight.

LATER, the figure of The Shadow appeared at the end of the low-built extension. Moonlight was present tonight; but the figure by the door of the crypt remained unseen. In the shade cast by the end of the wing, The Shadow was totally obscured.

A flashlight glimmered cautiously. Its rays were focused on the lock alone. The Shadow began his work. It was a formidable task. Even to his probing pick, that lock seemed adamant. No other cracksman could have opened it without a key. But The Shadow's task at last drew success. The lock yielded.

The Shadow entered the crypt. He closed the door behind him. It locked automatically.

Descending a short flight of darkened stairs, The Shadow used his flashlight to pierce the intense gloom of a musty room. The rays showed the solid stone walls of the crypt. The Shadow's footsteps moved softly over a tiled floor.

The Shadow reached an inner door. Its lock was a duplicate of the first. This door, too, was at the head of a short flight. Experienced with the first lock, The Shadow made swifter progress with the second. He came out upon a little landing of the cellar stairs.

The flashlight ceased its glimmer. The Shadow paused. Then he cautiously ascended wooden steps and opened a door to the hallway of the ground floor. He lingered there as footsteps passed. Someone was going to the second floor. The Shadow heard the paces on the stairway; he listened as they reached the top. Then he could hear traces of the same person going up another flight. The Shadow knew that Lester had retired for the night.

The Shadow stepped into the hallway. He could hear voices from the library. Harry Vincent talking with Milton Claverly.

Then, just as The Shadow was about to advance, the doorbell rang. Quickly, the phantom visitor moved into the darkness of the parlor on the other side of the hallway. He closed the door behind him.

The bell rang again. Milton and Harry appeared in the hallway. Milton motioned for Harry to go upstairs. Harry understood. This ring of the doorbell probably meant that the visitors had arrived from Zangwald's.

As Harry reached the landing, the bell sounded for the third time. Its rings were short and impatient. Harry continued upward. Milton went to answer the door in person.

From his hiding place, The Shadow could hear the closing of the front door.

He caught the sound of footsteps in the hall. They were going toward the library.

A few minutes passed; then The Shadow opened the door of the parlor and stepped into the hall. Silent as a ghost, he crossed to the library.

The door was closed. The Shadow slowly turned the knob. Imperceptibly, he opened the barrier to the thinness of an inch. The sound of voices came from within. Two men were talking. Milton Claverly's words showed worry; those of the other were gruff.

Peering through the narrow opening, The Shadow saw the men within. He caught the profile of the visitor. He listened until he caught the trend of growled conversation; then, silently, he reclosed the door to the living room.

The Shadow moved away. He did not go back through the locked crypt. That was unnecessary. The Shadow left by the front door. He moved stealthily through the night until he passed an open space.

From here, The Shadow could see the old tower, chimneylike in the moonlight. But his eyes did not gaze up the slope of the hill, nor did his footsteps turn in that direction. The Shadow was still picturing the scene in the library.

For Milton Claverly's lone visitor was not one who had come from Zangwald's. He was a man whom The Shadow had not previously spied in Torburg, yet one whom The Shadow - through his deductions - had expected in this vicinity.

The man who had been talking to Milton was Hatch Rosling. The two who had talked together upon the Laurentic, and who had plotted to steal the rajah's jewels from Messler, were holding a new meeting. To The Shadow, this situation symbolized the approach of another crime.

Where? The Shadow knew. Death, if it struck again in Torburg, would find a victim whose identity was clearly in The Shadow's mind. There was still time to meet the coming threat. That would be The Shadow's task.

## **CHAPTER XVIII. IN THE MANSION**

THOUGH Harry Vincent had obeyed the injunction to depart when visitors arrived, he had used keen thinking in his action. In the hallway on the second floor, Harry had paused to listen. Footsteps had told him that one man - not several - had come to see Milton Claverly.

It was after eleven o'clock. Harry had naturally supposed that the conference was ended at Zangwald's. If so, why had only one man come to this house? Harry could see but one plausible answer. Abner Zangwald must have failed to bring up Milton's name.

Who had come in alone? Louis Vandrow, probably. With the menace to Milton forestalled, the lawyer would naturally have returned to talk to his young client. Picturing Milton and Vandrow in the library, Harry could imagine them discussing the details of whatever had passed at Zangwald's.

It dawned on Harry that an opportunity lay below. Since his conversation with Phyllis, Harry had gained a deep mistrust of circumstances. He knew that he could not rely upon Milton Claverly for a report of whatever news Louis Vandrow might have brought back from the conference.



The only course was to listen in. It would be in accord with the designs of The Shadow, for Harry's chief had ordered him to be alert. Discretion was part of the duty which belonged to Harry, yet he could see no danger in venturing a trip downstairs. No one was on the floor below, except those two in the library.

Harry stole to the stairway and descended. His footsteps creaked at intervals; but with each pause, Harry made sure that he had not been heard. There was no trace of voices. He knew that the library door must be closed.

Reaching the hallway, Harry tiptoed in cautious fashion. He reached the door and laid his ear against it. He could hear a growled voice from within; after that, the faint semblance of Milton Claverly's tone.

Harry realized suddenly that the visitor could not be Vandrow. If not, who was he? Milton had said nothing about another visitor. Had Milton deceived Harry; or had Milton, himself, been deceived?

Harry recalled that Milton had gone into the parlor after Vandrow had departed. Harry's phone call had reminded Milton to make one of his own. Ostensibly, Milton had business in New York that required calls to that city. Affairs that dealt with the settlement of the estate. Milton had not been specific on that point.

Had Milton called someone after Vandrow's departure? Had he summoned the unknown visitor who was at present in the library? Perhaps.

Picturing the events of the past hour, Harry realized that Lester, too, had had opportunity to enter the parlor. Harry had acquired a profound mistrust for the old servant. Wild one moment, somber the next, Lester seemed like a man who was playing a well-feigned part.

Could Lester have entered the picture? Harry wondered. He thought of Lester upstairs on the third floor. He wondered if by any chance the old fellow had decided to creep downstairs.

Harry turned from the library door; as he did so, he fancied that he heard something creak from the stairs to the second floor.

The stairway was obscure from this point. Harry went back across the hall and looked upward. No one was on the steps; yet it was possible that Lester had reached the bottom before Harry had turned. Impelled by his imagination, Harry swung about. At that instant, bony hands shot for his throat.

Lester had come down the steps. The servant had turned into a darkened passage that formed a route to the cellar steps. He had spied Harry eavesdropping. That, apparently, had made him believe an attack was justified.

THE force of Lester's spring sent Harry backward. The young man's head thumped against the newel post at the bottom of the banister. That jar; the clutch of Lester's claws - the combined factors were sufficient. Harry slumped gasping upon the steps.

Before Harry could recover, Lester had pinioned his arms. Half dragging, half carrying the victim, Lester hauled Harry along the passage to the cellar. With surprising strength, the servant drew his victim down the wooden steps, past the entrance to the crypt, off toward a coal bin in the corner.

As Harry half regained his senses, choking claws again pressed his throat. Harry subsided. Lester twisted his arms in back of him and rolled Harry on his face. Whisking a rope from the corner of the bin, the servant bound Harry's wrists. Then he tied the young man's legs.

Rolled on his back, lying upon a heap of coal, Harry felt his consciousness return. It was too late. Already, Lester was pressing a thick handkerchief between Harry's teeth. The servant was snarling

venomously as he tightened the improvised gag.

Harry decided that it was best to make no struggle. He settled back and closed his eyes, pretending another lapse into oblivion.

Lester departed. Harry heard his footsteps pound across the stone floor. He listened while the servant's creaking tread ascended the steps. Then Harry began to struggle with the cords. They were tight; but he knew that he could loosen them eventually.

While he struggled, resting at brief intervals, Harry tried to figure out the servant's purpose. Had Lester merely decided to mete out this punishment because he had caught Harry snooping? Or did the servant plan evil and want Harry out of the way?

Both questions were elusive. In either event, Lester had been convinced that the bonds would remain secure. For he had made no search of Harry's pockets. Hence he had failed to find the stub-nosed automatic that Harry had been carrying ever since his arrival in Torburg.

UPSTAIRS, Lester had reached the gloomy ground-floor hall. A silent chuckle quivered on his leering lips as he looked toward the closed door of the library. Milton Claverly and his visitor had not heard the sounds of the brief struggle on the stairway. That was to Lester's liking.

The servant approached the closed door, waited there a moment, then turned back toward the stairway. Crouched forward, he began a slow ascent, cautiously contriving to keep his footsteps unheard. He reached the second floor; then continued to the third.

When his footfalls ceased, a door opened and another person crept into the darkened second story hall.

It was Phyllis Lingle. The girl had heard Lester come down from the third floor. She had opened her door after the servant had passed. She had heard the scuffle from the floor below. But Phyllis, when she had first peered down the stairway, had observed no one below. She had advanced too late to see Lester dragging Harry Vincent to the cellar.

The girl had heard Lester's return. She had stepped back in her room to let the servant pass. Sure that Lester was on the third floor, the girl was anxious to learn what had happened below. She crept to the stairway and began a slow descent. Halfway down, Phyllis halted. She could hear the door of the study as it opened.

Low voices. Milton's tone - then a growled interruption. Guarded footsteps. Milton and someone else were coming through the hall.

Phyllis waited; but they did not pass the foot of the stairway. Instead, they turned through the portion of the hall that ran alongside the stairs.

Crouched on a step, Phyllis peered between the uprights of the banisters. She could see the heads and shoulders of the two men as they went by. Though the hall was gloomy, she caught a clear glimpse of Milton's face. It was strained and tense. Then the girl saw the features of the visitor.

The sharp profile of Hatch Rosling was easily discernible. The girl had never observed that face before; but the hatchet features were ones that she knew she would not forget: Rosling's countenance was a vicious one.

The two men passed from view. Shoulder to shoulder, Rosling had followed only a pace behind Milton. The girl heard their footsteps turn. She thought that she heard a door open. She was sure that the two had taken a passage behind the stairs; one that led to the cellar.

Boldly, Phyllis arose from the step and hurried to the ground floor. The girl was wearing slippers; her footsteps were light, almost noiseless. She reached the passage that the men had taken. The door to the cellar was ajar. Opening it, the girl stared toward the little landing. Her gaze froze.

By the light that came from behind her - a dim trickle from the gloomy hall - Phyllis could see the entrance to the crypt. The door, a massive barrier of steel, was closed no longer. It stood half opened; beyond it blackness yawned.

As the girl remained staring, that blackness was replaced by a dull, yet mellow glow. Something had illuminated the cavernous depths of the crypt!

GASPING, Phyllis turned and hastened back to the hall. She knew where Milton and his unknown companion had gone - into the crypt.

If the inner door could be opened, so could the outer. The girl remembered the box that Milton had gained from his father's lawyer; the box that he had opened with the key that Vandrow had left with Lester.

Phyllis realized that the key to the crypt could have been in that box. A duplicate key, other than the one that had been destroyed. Her fear was realized. The crypt actually formed a passageway in and out of the mansion.

The girl reached the second floor. Impetuously, she turned into her own room. She stared toward the end of the extension which housed the crypt, trembling as she gazed from the window. She saw no one; but she realized that either Milton or his companion - perhaps both - could already have continued through and out into the night.

It was still possible that they were yet in the crypt; preparing to proceed upon their way. But the girl did not wait to see. Phyllis was terrified. She wanted aid. She dared not appeal to Lester. Already, the servant's actions had aroused her complete suspicion. There was only one person upon whom she could rely: Harry Vincent.

Phyllis pattered into the hall. She hurried along and tapped softly at Harry's door. There was no response. Phyllis tapped again. Then, fearing to increase the loudness of the raps, she opened the door and entered.

The room was bathed in moonlight. The bed was in plain view. It was made up. Harry Vincent had not gone to bed tonight.

Wildly, the girl looked about. She saw that the room was empty. With a sob, Phyllis sank in a chair beside the window. She was horribly afraid.

Fearful minutes ticked by. Phyllis dared not leave the room. Menace seemed to exist throughout the old mansion. The girl could only wait for Harry's return. She looked from the window. It opened on the side away from the crypt; it was toward the contour of the hill.

The whitened moonlight restored the girl's courage; but only for the moment. As she glanced appealingly toward the sky, the girl's eyes spied a bulky shape projecting above the trees along the slope. It was the top of the old bell-tower.

The slitted belfry; the topheavy cupola above it. The sight brought shivers to Phyllis Lingle. She remembered Lester's croak of ghouls within that tower. Then came the dull realization that midnight would soon arrive.

Staring in horrified fascination, listening with a tenseness that she could not loosen, the girl waited. Silent and motionless, she watched the top of the bell-tower.

The overwhelming dread that gripped her was inspired by one thought. Phyllis Lingle was awaiting a new knell from the bells of doom!

## **CHAPTER XIX. MURDERERS FOILED**

ABNER ZANGWALD was querulous. Standing in the center of his living room, the bushy-browed man was rasping harsh opinions. The listeners were prosecutor, sheriff and coroner; Louis Vandrow was present, in addition.

"Why should this conference be extended?" demanded Zangwald. "It seems as though I have been interrupted every time I sought the floor. You, Jornal" - he faced the prosecutor - "have jumped from one absurdity to another. You have talked too long.

"You two" - he looked at the coroner and the sheriff - "have also delayed our proceedings.. And you, Vandrow, have found several opportunities to break in before I could speak. It looks as though we are standing by again, standing by while doom may be falling."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jornal.

"I refer to last night," snapped Zangwald. "I invited Sheriff Locke here last night; also Coroner Thomas and Louis Vandrow. The sheriff and the coroner arrived late. Why?

"I shall tell you. Because Locke was busy up at that tower, taking out those infernal clappers that belonged in the bells. Useless folly on his part. Nevertheless, Locke finally arrived, bringing Thomas with him.

"Then Vandrow delayed us. He made a trip to see young Milton Claverly. Something that he should have avoided. He called us from there. He said that he would be over here promptly. But he delayed us by his slowness. Inexcusable!"

"Wait a minute," put in the sheriff, hotly. "Don't put all delay on Vandrow. What about yourself? You went up to your study after Vandrow called. You didn't show up for half an hour. Maybe more."

"I came down as soon as Vandrow arrived."

"Not right away," broke in the coroner. "It was five minutes, at least, before you appeared."

"That was the fault of my house servant -"

"Come, come," interrupted the prosecutor. "Who is quibbling now? We have given you an opportunity to speak, Mr. Zangwald. Let us hear what you have to say."

"Very well." Zangwald glowered. "Listen. Someone in this town is responsible for the deaths of Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp. Someone who had reason to be an enemy of theirs. The three men are dead. But perhaps" - Zangwald stared, archly - "perhaps new crime is contemplated."

"Why?" asked the sheriff.

"We can not tell," replied Zangwald. "There may be reasons. These deaths look like a scheme of vengeance. Dealing with an avenger, we may expect anything. That is why I demand action. I believe that there is one man whom we should question."

"Who is that?"

"Young Claverly."

The prosecutor nodded. He tapped the arm of his chair in speculative fashion. He made no comment; but Louis Vandrow did.

"On just what subject," he asked, "do you intend to quiz Milton?"

"Regarding his actions on the past three nights," retorted Zangwald. "Where was he? What was he doing when three men were murdered? Where was he when the bells pealed?"

"In his home," replied Vandrow. "I have already questioned him on those points."

"How lately?"

"Only this evening."

"You are sure he was in his house those nights?"

"I feel positive of it. I believe that he can prove that he was there. What is more, I am sure that he can be located there at present."

"Good," rumbled Zangwald. "You have anticipated my suggestion, Vandrow. Gentlemen" - he swept his fierce eye about the group - "let me propose a prompt visit to the home of Milton Claverly. A visit" - he paused to look toward the grandfather's clock, which was at the three-quarter hour - "a visit that will take place in just fifteen minutes. A visit at the hour of midnight."

THERE was silence. Then the big clock gave the three-quarter's chime. Men were pondering upon Zangwald's words. With a bristling frown, the selectman offered an explanation for his statement.

"Twelve o'clock," stated Zangwald, "would be an appropriate hour to discourse on the subject of murder. It was the hour when bells tolled doom. It would be the psychological time to begin our quiz. Particularly" - this with a deep chuckle - "if the bells should peal again."

"They can't!" blurted the sheriff.

"No?" questioned Zangwald. "You said that last night; yet the bells rang."

"Because someone else put clappers in them. They can't do that tonight."

"Because of your deputies, up by the tower? So you still have faith in your men. Even though they failed to prevent the death of Willis Beauchamp."

"I'm counting on my deputies," grinned Locke. "But not on what they're going to do. I'm counting on what they've done, tonight. While I was up there."

"What have they done?" demanded the prosecutor.

"They've taken out the bells," returned Locke, "that's what! I gave them the key. They brought the bells down from the tower. They stuck the bells on a truck and took them to the town hall. That's where the bells are now. Locked in a room, with two men guarding them."

"Forget the bells," rumbled Zangwald. "We are concerned with murder. Claverly's house is but a few minutes' ride from here. Let us pay that young man a visit. Are you agreed?"

All nodded with the exception of Vandrow. The lawyer came to his feet. His objection sounded like a plea. He addressed his companions as he might have spoken to a jury.

"It's unfair!" he exclaimed. "Unfair to go so soon. If we appear exactly at twelve o'clock, our action will place an undue strain upon Milton Claverly. We will come as inquisitors, not as friends."

"What is the difference?" rumbled Zangwald.

"Much." Vandrow wheeled to the prosecutor. "Don't you see that the suggestion is unfair? We have no evidence against Milton Claverly."

"That is why my plan should be followed," challenged Zangwald. "What do you think, Jornal?"

"I believe that you are right, Mr. Zangwald," granted the prosecutor. "If Milton Claverly is concerned in murder, we should take any advantage in quizzing him. If he is innocent, it does not matter when we call upon him. We will follow your suggestion, Mr. Zangwald."

Nods from coroner and sheriff. Louis Vandrow was overruled. The lawyer shrugged his shoulders and looked glum.

"Very well," he said. "But if events prove that we have acted unfairly, remember that you have acted against my protest."

Vandrow delivered the statement in an emphatic tone. It had almost the ring of an accusation. Zangwald glared; the others looked stern. Vandrow turned toward the door, to indicate his willingness to follow the majority, now that his protest had been made.

The lawyer stopped short. His eyes widened. The others, still staring at him, wondered what had caused his abrupt halt. Zangwald wheeled to face the door; the three officials copied his example.

Framed in the wide double-doorway were five masked men. Each held a glistening revolver. In wedge formation, they had chosen separate targets. Each of the intruders was covering a different man.

THE central invader growled an order. The tone of his voice made it plain that these five were mobsmen. Their rough clothing; the blue bandannas that served them as masks; the words of the temporary leader - all were proof that these were killers.

"Smart guys, eh?" rasped the middle gorilla. "Tryin' to make trouble? Well, we'll give it to you. There's one bozo in your outfit that thinks he can queer things. He's the guy we're here to get. So the best you mugs can do is stand quiet. There's four of you that ain't goin' to get hurt; but there's one that is. After we've plugged that gent, we're takin' it on the lam. Savvy?"

"We'll make a get-away, too. Don't worry about that. We ain't worried about none of you guys stoppin' us. We came out here an' got our orders. Rub out one of you, let the others ride. So don't squawk."

While five crooks held their living targets at bay, those covered men were staring. Each seemed to feel that he was the one toward whom the coming shots would be intended. The gorillas awaited their leader's command. When it came, they would copy his lead. Five killers would form a firing squad.

The leader was covering the prosecutor. But his eyes swung away, to move from man to man. It was not certain whom he would pick as the single victim. His finger was on the trigger of his gun. The lips beneath the bandanna spread to deliver a snarled order.

Crash!

A terrific smash came from the side of the room. Someone had hurled himself upon a pair of French windows that led to a side porch. The hinged barriers came hurtling inward from the fierce blow. Glass shattered with the concussion. Hinges broke away as a tall form came hurtling into view.

Crimson flashed from the lining of a sweeping cloak. Black replaced red as the unexpected figure whirled toward the double-doorway. Burning eyes glittered from beneath the brim of a slouch hat. Hidden lips delivered a mocking laugh. Gloved fists flourished their unlimbered automatics.

"The Shadow!"

THE snarl came from the central mobster. Revolver hands swung toward the cloaked intruder. But the startled gorillas were too late. The aiming automatics boomed with instantaneous precision.

Thunderous roars reechoed through the room while revolvers barked a wild, hopeless response. Thugs went crumpling before The Shadow's centered fusillade. Answering gats sent bullets winging wide of the dread avenger.

Two mobsters bore the brunt. Their blocking bodies were riddled as the others dropped away. A third man, firing viciously, sprawled as a slug reached his heart.

The last two mobsters, end men of the wedge, dived frantically away. One was wounded; the other unscathed. But both wanted freedom from that irresistible bombardment. As the two ruffians fled, The Shadow whirled and sprang back through the shattered windows.

The five men whom The Shadow had delivered stared bewildered by the fray. Then the prosecutor brought them to life as he swung about and followed the path that The Shadow had taken. The others came in back of him. They reached the porch. Off below the house, the moonlight showed the escaping mobsters, running for the cover of a stone wall.

An automatic spoke from the lawn. One mobster sprawled. A second shot must have clipped the wall that the other gorilla was hurdling, for the man dropped out of sight like a hunted rabbit. Then came the roar of a motor. A touring car shot away as the elusive gangster reappeared to board it.

The Shadow's guns were stabbing their staccato flashes through the night. The long range; intervening trees - these sufficed to save the mobsters in the car and the gorilla who had joined them.

The five men on the porch turned as one, to pick out the phantom shape in black. They could find The Shadow by the flashes of his guns.

An eerie, outlandish laugh. The Shadow whirled and swept across the lawn. They watched his shape pass from the sphere of moonlight, into a cluster of trees beyond a wall. The Shadow was lost from view; but the prosecutor was pointing in the direction that the weird avenger had taken.

Off beyond, dull lights appeared from lower windows of a moonlight-bathed mansion. Straight across an intervening hollow, in almost the exact direction that The Shadow had taken, stood the home of Milton Claverly.

"Come!" cried Jornal. "To Claverly's! It is almost midnight! Hurry - never mind a car -"

WITH one accord, the five dropped from the side of the porch. All were husky - even Abner Zangwald, despite his seniority in years. Panting, they dashed in the direction of Claverly's. As they ran, they could see the bell-tower, black against the sky.

Then, as they clambered up a slope, they lost sight of the tower. The house was their goal, a hundred

yards away. They neared it, in a cluster.

The prosecutor, first to reach the door, turned the knob and found the barrier unlocked. He waited for the others. They came up, puffing, ready to follow Jornal in the house. Then, in a trice, they stopped. They stood staring on the threshold, frozen to the spot.

Midnight had sounded during their mad dash. Chimes from a steeple had ceased their strokes. Now, through the silence of the moonlight air came a token of doom. Clanging from beyond the hill came the dull toll of the tower bells.

The monotone was solemn. It held five men rooted. Those strokes were a dirge of death. They were sounding a doom that had not fallen. They were donging for crime that had been frustrated by The Shadow.

Yet the five men stood, even though they knew that murder had failed tonight. There was reason for their stupor. All remembered what the sheriff had said at Zangwald's. The bells had been removed from the tower.

Clang! - Clang! - Clang! -

Mournful bells - hideous bells. More than that, they were solemn, ghostly bells. Like spectral messengers from the past, bells were ringing from the tower where there were no bells!

## **CHAPTER XX. IN THE CRYPT**

THE bells kept tolling. Ceaselessly, unending, they pronounced their dirge. As moments passed, standing men expected the knell to end. It continued, defiantly. The clamor from the tower was imbued with a hideous note of triumph as the baffling strokes kept on.

The whole air took on an affrighted quiver. Ghoulish discords drove their monotone with a clangor that remained unflinching. Bells of doom! They were ringing long and loud tonight!

Abner Zangwald rumbled fiercely. His voice brought the others to their senses. Scowling, the big man pointed into the house. His motion indicated that the answer might be there. Attention gained, Zangwald strode into the hall. The others followed his trail.

There they spread, searching through the doors of opened rooms. Louis Vandrow ventured into the hallway past the stairs. He spied the opening that led to the cellar steps.

Then someone approached the spot where the lawyer was standing. It was Zangwald.

"Come!" rasped the bushy-browed man. "Down to the cellar! It's open!"

Officials arrived. The prosecutor shouldered his way past Zangwald. He drew a revolver as he marched down the steps. The others followed; and all the while, the muffled dirge of the tower bells formed its dull accompaniment.

"Look ahead!" exclaimed Jornal.

He pointed to the opened door of the crypt. They could see the dull light from below. Its ghoulish glow was forbidding; yet the prosecutor did not falter. He led the way down the stone steps. He was holding his revolver. The sheriff had also drawn a gun.

A strange sight greeted the arrivals. The crypt was illuminated by hidden lights located in bowl-like



containers, one in each corner of the room. Revealed in the center of the twelve-foot square apartment were two men: Milton Claverly and Hatch Rosling.

A tile had been raised from the floor. The entering men could see a tiny light shining within the opening. Milton's hand was thrust into the hollow. It was holding a master switch pressed to one side.

Rosling was standing a few feet away. He was covering Milton with a revolver. Stooped by the opening in the floor, Milton was obviously obeying Rosling's command to keep the switch in place.

Rosling looked up as he heard the five approach. A grin showed on his hatchet face. He lowered his gun as he sighted the revolvers that Jornal and Locke were holding.

"All right," said Rosling, calmly, "I've got him. Got him with the goods."

ALL the while, the distant bells were tolling, bringing a muffled sound to the depths of the opened crypt. Rosling made a threatening gesture with his revolver. The young man released the switch. It sprang back from its position. Instantly, the sound of the tower bells was ended.

"What does this mean?" demanded the prosecutor. "Which of these men is young Claverly?"

"That fellow," growled the sheriff, pointing to Milton. "I've seen him before."

"And who is this man?"

The prosecutor had indicated Rosling. It was Louis Vandrow who responded. The lawyer stepped forward and waved his hand toward the hatchet-faced man.

"His name is Rosling," declared Vandrow. "He is a private detective who has been looking into these crimes. It appears that he has found the solution to the ringing of the bells.

"You knew of this?" demanded the prosecutor. "You knew that young Claverly -"

"Let me explain," interposed Vandrow, solemnly. "I must admit that this climax comes to me as something of a surprise. In order to make it plain, I must tell exactly what happened since Milton Claverly's return."

The lawyer gained the floor. He looked approvingly toward Rosling; then stared sorrowfully at Milton. While the heir remained silent, Vandrow resumed.

"The day that Milton Claverly returned to Torburg," he stated, "this man" - he paused to indicate Rosling - "came to my office and introduced himself. He had credentials that announced him as Charles Rosling. He proved to be a detective who has worked as special investigator upon international cases.

"Rosling informed me that he was watching Milton Claverly. He declared that Milton had been forced to leave certain countries because of criminal activities. I told Rosling that I doubted that Milton was actually a crook. Nevertheless, I felt - in all fairness - that I should give Rosling a chance to prove it either pro or con.

"So while I maintained a normal attitude toward Milton, I kept secret the fact that Rosling was coming in and out of town. Then came the murder of Maurice Dunwell. It worried me. But I could not bring myself to believe that Milton Claverly had stooped to such crime.

"The same after the death of Stuart Hosker - and Willis Beauchamp. I found myself torn between duty to the law and my position as Milton Claverly's attorney. Rosling came to my home. He had failed to gain the evidence he wanted. Therefore, I would not accept his opinion that Milton was the murderer.

"But now, the case is indisputable. Here we have Milton Claverly, in his own home, operating a special device that has caused bells to ring from the old tower. I suppose that it must be a set of duplicate bells. That, however, is beside the case. The important point is that Rosling has trapped a rogue."

Milton Claverly was about to speak. Words failed when they reached his lips. The prosecutor waved the accused man back. He looked to Rosling.

"Tell us the facts," ordered the prosecutor.

"ALL right," agreed Rosling. "Here they are. This fellow Claverly has a bad record, see? Mostly small stuff he pulled in the past. Slick gambling on board boats. Troubles like that. But enough to make people keep an eye on him.

"He came in from Calcutta to England on board a P O boat. A fellow named Messler was supposed to have been on that ship. Messler had a lot of jewels belonging to a rajah and he took a different boat. Some guys were pinched aboard the P O liner.

"In England, the jewels were insured for the trip across the Atlantic. Messler had arranged that by cable from Calcutta. The insurance company sent me to England to come in on Messler's ship - the Laurentic. I did. I spotted young Claverly.

"I talked to him in his stateroom. Pretended I was a crook, too. Told him I was after those same jewels. Well - I found out he was hooked up with some New York crooks. But thinking I might queer his game, he offered to let me in on a cut if I didn't spoil it.

"We got in to New York. I tipped off the police. They queered the jewel robbery. Knowing some racketeers, I got just what I wanted. Sworn affidavits from small-fry saying that they'd seen Milton Claverly with a crook named Mike Tocson. That guy Tocson was the one that tried to rob Messler's. Tocson got bumped."

Rosling pulled the affidavits from his pocket and handed them to the prosecutor. Grinning at Milton, he resumed his statement.

"I saw Mr. Vandrow here in town," he said. "He was kind of partial to young Claverly. So I went out on my own. Kept a watch on this house. I figured that since Claverly had flivved on the jewel robbery, he'd start something in this burg.

"Well, three nights ago, I didn't see him, but I thought I heard somebody sneaking around this house. Then I heard those bells ring. I wondered what was up. When I learned the next day that there'd been murder here, I decided to watch this house again.

"I did. I caught Claverly sneaking in toward the house, but he slipped away from me. Where he got to, I couldn't guess. Then the bells started in again. I figured I'd have to do better than before.

"Last night, I was here again. When the bells started to ring, I was outside this crypt. I'd seen the locked door. I'd figured it was the only way Claverly could get in once he was out. I couldn't watch everywhere; but I stuck here along at midnight.

"I heard somebody - made a grab for him - thought it was Claverly. That was right after the bells. But it turned out to be another guy. Some fellow stopping here in the house. I had to beat it. So tonight, I called myself a dummy. I tried something different."

Rosling paused triumphantly. He looked about the circle of listeners; then shot a contemptuous glance toward Milton.

"I came in through the front door," declared Rosling. "I spotted young Claverly heading out from his library. I followed him down here. I caught him, working on this switch. I figured the game. Somebody else doing his dirty work tonight.

"I could hear the bells begin to ring, muffled like. So I pulled out my gat and I covered Claverly. I kept him at the switch, hoping somebody would turn up. They did. There's my story. Here's your man."

THE prosecutor turned toward Milton. Jornal's gaze was withering. Yet Milton faced it. He was tense, fighting against fury. He hurled a denunciation.

"This is a lie!" he cried. "My past is clear. I tell you, it's a lie! I didn't arrange that job at Messler's. Rosling was the fellow who started it - on the boat. He forced me into it!"

"Hear him?" queried Rosling. "He admits he was in the job. That backs up those affidavits, prosecutor. I'll tell you something else. Those mugs that were bumped off last night on the Lewisport road - I'll bet you'll find out they were old pals of Mike Tocson, the guy that worked for Claverly."

"Let me speak," urged Louis Vandrow. "I must state something that I previously concealed. Milton Claverly has had an unfortunate past. He admitted it in letters to his father. I have those letters. I intended to destroy them. I told Milton that I had done so. Fortunately, I can produce them now that they are necessary.

"What is more, I gave Milton a box from his father. It is probable that the box contained the secret of this crypt; also the key that Milton needed to make entry here. Now that the truth is out, I must agree that Milton Claverly had cause to murder the three men who have died here in Torburg."

"You are wrong!" exclaimed Milton. "Rosling has duped you, Mr. Vandrow. He didn't find me in the crypt tonight. He forced me to come here at the point of a gun. He had the key to the place."

"Listen to him," sneered Rosling. "He was down here when I walked into the house. He can't prove otherwise."

"I can," blurted Milton, "if you will listen to me -"

"Silence!" broke in Jornal. "Sheriff, arrest this man. Rosling's testimony goes. Claverly can't prove that it is wrong."

"I can!"

The words came in a woman's voice. The prosecutor turned. Phyllis Lingle had entered the crypt. The girl was followed by Lester. Phyllis pointed accusingly at Rosling.

"This man has lied!" she declared. "Milton is right. The man came in here at half past eleven. I saw him and Milton come out of the library. I could only see their heads and shoulders as I gazed from the stairs.

"I wondered why Milton looked pale. I know the answer now. This man was close behind him. He must have been covering Milton with a revolver."

"That's right," blurted Milton. "Thanks, Phyllis. Maybe you'll listen to me now, prosecutor... You will? Thanks. Just hold that fellow Rosling until I've finished with him."

ROSLING had pocketed his gun. Locke was covering him. The hatchet-faced man shrugged his shoulders. He seemed to think that Milton's statements would collapse.

"Rosling had the key," declared Milton. "He made me come here. He forced me to raise the tile in the floor. I had never even been in this crypt. I was amazed when I saw the switch. Rosling made me operate it."

"What a story!" jeered Rosling. "I suppose next you'll be trying to deny that you were in on that job at Messler's."

"That's just what I'm going to do," declared Milton. "Listen, prosecutor. I did see Rosling on the boat. I did promise to aid with the jewel robbery - as inside man. But I double-crossed Rosling. I spilled the word to Augustus Messler. He brought detectives to his house. The robbery was foiled.

"I can prove it by Messler himself. I've talked with him by long distance. He'll come from New York any time I say; and he'll bring Detective Joe Cardona with him! I did meet Mike Tocson, because Rosling here insisted on it. But that was all part of the game. The law will square me; and the law is looking for Hatch Rosling! His affidavits are worthless."

Hatch Rosling stood stupefied. He had never expected this finish. All his sang-froid was gone. Wilted, the exposed crook stood muttering. He realized what his arrest would mean. Sent back to New York, he would go up the river for attempted burglary. But Rosling had a greater fear - the death chair.

"I - I didn't do no killing!" he pleaded. "Honest! I only rang these bells. I - I was wise to this layout down here. I sneaked in and worked the switch. But - but -"

Looking about the group, Rosling caught a sudden glare of eyes. He realized that he was getting into deep water. He tried to back out of it.

"It was just sort of a joke," he explained, weakly. "Trying to put something over on young Claverly, here."

"You were," challenged Milton. "Yes Rosling, I think we can believe you when you say that you were merely an accomplice. Someone else did those murders; and there's only one man mean enough. He's the one that pretended to be my father's friend. He stands there - Abner Zangwald!"

The bushy-browed man was glaring as others turned toward him. At first rage showed on Zangwald's face. In a moment, the anger died. Zangwald's bass rumble filled the crypt as he answered the accusing words.

"THIS is absurd!" he declared. "Totally absurd! This young man is entirely mistaken. I was his father's friend; as I can prove when the time demands. For the present, however, I shall limit my statements.

"Tonight" - Zangwald's brows knitted as he paused - "five of us were trapped by masked gunmen. We were told that one man was due to die. Three persons present were officials of the law. None of them had gained a clue to these amazing murders.

"That left two of us, Louis Vandrow and myself. The thought flashed through my mind. Which of us was to die? Vandrow or myself? I cannot see in light of what has happened here why crooks should have sought Vandrow's death. Apparently, Vandrow was ready to support this fellow Rosling, who appears to be the chief crook of the lot.

"Those who support crooks are sometimes crooks themselves. Moreover, I could gain nothing by Vandrow's death; but he could gain much by mine. Vandrow is the lawyer who controls my estate. He would manage it should I die. I have entrusted an important matter to Louis Vandrow. He could gain a million dollars - more perhaps - by my death -"

Zangwald wheeled toward Vandrow as he paused. Fierce accusation showed beneath bushy brows. Others turned; a cry came from the prosecutor. The accusation had come too late from Zangwald's lips. Stepping back, Vandrow had yanked a gun!

Only the sheriff had a weapon ready. He turned instinctively as he heard Jornal's exclamation. Instantly, Rosling pulled out his pocketed revolver and jabbed it against the sheriff's ribs. Locke let his revolver fall to the tiled floor.

Vandrow motioned with his gun. People backed away from him toward a corner of the crypt. Sheriff and coroner; Milton Claverly and Abner Zangwald - the four formed a group.

At Vandrow's next command, Lester and Phyllis backed toward the same corner. Only the prosecutor remained. His hands were raised while Vandrow and Rosling kept covering the others. Vandrow dipped his left hand into the prosecutor's pocket and brought out Jornal's revolver. He dropped it in his own pocket; then gave the prosecutor a shove and sent him back to the corner.

All were at bay while the lawyer and his henchman held them covered. An insidious chuckle came from Louis Vandrow's lips. The arch-crook had revealed himself. Here, in the depths of the crypt, a master of crime was ready to display his winning hand.

## **CHAPTER XXI. CRIME DISCLOSED**

"I SHALL be brief," asserted Vandrow, with an evil smirk. "The time for bluff is ended. Sometimes a game goes wrong. This one did; but the error will be easily rectified. However" - his dry tone carried a menace - "it will mean some deaths that could have been avoided.

"You have spoken of murder. It is my turn to speak. Murder is my specialty. Some time ago" - this was a chuckle - "I did away with David Claverly. Of course I had an accomplice - his physician, Doctor Humbrell. He made a slight alteration in prescriptions, according to my order. Poor Humbrell - he hesitated at murder; but I knew some facts that would have put him in the penitentiary. So he did the dirty work - and wound up in the canal.

"Yes, I saw that he landed there. That was another easy matter. But here is news for you. I was not alone in my enterprise of evil. There were three men who knew about it. I shall name them. Maurice Dunwell - Stuart Hosker - Willis Beauchamp. They aided and abetted my work.

"Why? I shall tell you. As David Claverly's lawyer, I knew that he had contracted with a great power corporation. Certain real estate near Torburg would be worth millions once the company was ready to buy it. As David Claverly's attorney, I could not profit in the deal. But I saw a way to gain a huge share.

"I talked with Dunwell, Hosker and Beauchamp. They liked my scheme. They started it off by undermining David Claverly's business. The real estate became his sole possession. He borrowed money on it. He died. As attorney for his estate, I saw that the real estate, not money, fell into the hands of the lenders."

"You crook!" rumbled Zangwald. "If I had known why you handled matters that way -"

"You knew nothing," interposed Vandrow, with a snarl. "No more out of you, Zangwald."

He turned to Rosling. The man approached. Vandrow spoke in a low mumble. Rosling nodded and shifted his revolver to Vandrow's left hand. With two weapons, the lawyer covered the helpless group while Rosling sidled up through the door that led to the cellar landing.

"There are twelve bullets in these two weapons," observed Vandrow, coolly. "More than enough to slaughter all of you. I am an expert marksman, as Sheriff Locke can testify. His gun, incidentally, lies here at my feet. I have the prosecutor's revolver in my pocket. Extra bullets, if necessary. Is that understood?"

No one dared move. Vandrow resumed his terse discussion.

"My three friends" - the tone was sarcastic - "did not want suspicion attached to themselves. So they sold their real estate at a small profit. To a dummy holding company that I controlled by straw men. The clean-up was to come later, I was to gain twenty-five percent.

"Not much for the man who was the brain. Moreover, you, Zangwald, held some of the real estate. David Claverly had placed it in your hands as security for a loan. I had to make you take it when I settled the estate. So that things would look on the level, so far as Dunwell and his two pals were concerned.

"Tell us, Zangwald" - the lawyer paused in ironical fashion - "just what did you intend to do with that real estate?"

"I HELD it as security for fifty thousand dollars," rumbled Zangwald. "I knew the power corporation would want it. I thought Dunwell and those other fellows were fools to sell to a holding company. I intend to sell for a million; to keep my fifty thousand and give the rest to Milton Claverly -"

"You should say 'intended,'" corrected Vandrow. "Not 'intend.' You didn't talk to young Claverly about it, because you wanted to make sure he was deserving. At present you are well disposed toward him. Too bad, Milton. Too bad.

"I discovered a way to gain all for myself. A simple way. It so happened that David Claverly had a fear of being buried alive. That is why he built this crypt. At the same time, he built the bell-tower. I alone knew that there was a connection between the two.

"Buried here, David could - if he came to life - cause bells to ring from the tower. It was I who had the bells tolled when David Claverly died. Then Lester spread the story that termed them bells of doom. Poor Lester! You were sincere, weren't you? But you unwittingly helped my cause along.

"I knew that Milton Claverly was coming back to Torburg. I hired Hatch Rosling, chief of my straw men, to get him mixed in crime when he reached New York. We knew that Milton's past had been none too good; we wanted a real crime pinned to him.

"We thought it worked - that stunt at Messler's. Then Rosling came here to work with me. I chose murder as my own prerogative. I gave Rosling the key to the crypt so that he could come here and ring the bells of doom.

"I killed Dunwell; then Hosker; finally Beauchamp. I was the man who called Beauchamp and advised him how to get out of town. I was in the garage. I shot him. The fool! He trusted me. Why? Because he, like the other two, had a guilty conscience. They all thought Milton Claverly was after them. They were afraid to talk.

"I now control the holding company. All I needed was the death of Abner Zangwald. As executor of his estate, I would sell his property to that same holding company. So I had to arouse Milton Claverly against Abner Zangwald.

"Those mobsters should have killed you, Zangwald. The rest of us would have come over here, to trap Milton with the goods. Well - it does not matter." Vandrow paused to calculate. "I shall kill you now,

Zangwald. You also, Milton. And all the rest of you. It will look like a gunfray. My word and Rosling's will be undisputed."

Milton Claverly was clenching his fists. He wanted to spring upon this fiend. Yet he realized that it would be hopeless. He would die; Vandrow would be forced to deliver a double fusillade. Even though all were doomed, Milton did not wish to speed their deaths.

Vandrow sneered as he saw Milton subside. Steady behind his guns, the master crook put a sarcastic question:

"Have I forgotten anything? Is there any detail which has escaped me? Ah, yes, I can guess your question, sheriff. You took the clappers from the bells; yet the bells rang. You removed the bells; still, they tolled tonight.

"A riddle, isn't it?" His words were gibing. "Too bad that none of you can answer it. Well, I regret that time is short. That riddle will have to remain unsolved -"

VANDROW stopped short. A sudden sound came to his ears. More terrible than the forgotten clangor of the bells, it filled this crypt with ghoulish echoes.

A sinister laugh, delivered from the outside entrance of the crypt.

Louis Vandrow turned his head. Slowly, his revolvers sank downward. The arch-fiend was trapped. There, just within the steps to the outer door, stood the shape that he had seen before. A figure cloaked in black. Burning eyes staring from beneath a slouch hat.

Looming automatics; big, ponderous deadly weapons - the same that had mown down Louis Vandrow's firing squad. This was the being whose presence at Zangwald's had seemed a lucky chance in Vandrow's mind.

The lawyer thought that he had tricked The Shadow. He had never dreamed that this black-clad master could penetrate the locked door of the vault. Louis Vandrow, supercrook, was trapped by the master of all avengers!

## **CHAPTER XXII. THE FINAL DEATH**

To those others who stared in the direction of Louis Vandrow's gaze, the sudden arrival of The Shadow was also an unexplainable manifestation. This crypt was like a tomb. The manifestation of so ominous a presence seemed incredible within the confines of the dimly lighted vault.

None knew that The Shadow had previously probed the locks of the crypt's door; that, on this occasion, his entry had been accomplished minutes ago; that his lurking figure had been waiting upon the steps from the outer door.

The Shadow had permitted Louis Vandrow to speak. He had wanted witnesses to learn the fiend's story from Vandrow's own lips. The lawyer's gloating words had become a confession. That was why The Shadow laughed.

The mockery was significant as it crept through the crypt. Those who heard it realized that The Shadow, as capably as Vandrow, could have recited these facts. For the mirth bespoke understanding. Now, The Shadow, dominant, took up the statement where the lawyer had ceased.

"You spoke of bells in the tower," hissed The Shadow. "But you have not told their secret. The secret that you learned" - his hiss was a sinister sneer in Vandrow's ears - "and the secret which I discovered.

Bells in the cupola; hidden bells, identical in tone to those in the belfry. Bells that could be heard through openings that formed when the switch was pressed within this crypt. Bells that would ring automatically, with the pressure of the switch."

A pause. The Shadow was stepping inward. His flashing eyes caught the dull light and returned it with a magnified sparkle. Lester found his voice.

"The spirit from the tower!" croaked the servant. "The one that was here last night. He knows of the bells! The bells of doom!"

"I divined that secret on the second night," hissed The Shadow. "I knew it then, in part. Another task - on the road to Lewisport - prevented me from coming here last night. But tonight, I arrived.

"I could see that three dead men had feared to speak. I knew that Milton Claverly was innocent. I have watched him; I witnessed his first conference with your henchman, Rosling."

Milton stared. The Shadow had been aboard the Laurentic. Through the young man's brain flashed that recollection of a wardrobe door that had not swung shut with the lurching of the liner!

"Someone in Torburg was responsible for crime," resumed The Shadow. "The murderer knew his ground too well. I knew that he had accomplices, that murderer. I was searching for Rosling as his tool.

"You or Zangwald. Both had the opportunity. You, Vandrow, were the one I chose. Your closeness to Milton Claverly. The insinuations that you drilled into his mind. Your visits here. Your opportunity for gain.

"Tonight" - The Shadow's tone was solemn - "I named you as the murderer. I marked Rosling as your accomplice. I looked for no crime from him. I knew where you would be. I was there, to prevent the death of your last intended victim."

ALL knew that The Shadow had reference to Abner Zangwald as the man marked for doom tonight. The echo of the whispered words brought new thoughts of death.

Louis Vandrow stood helpless; yet no one made a move. All were trusting in this one rescuer.

Vandrow snarled as he quailed. Oaths were on his lips. His face was whitened in the gloom. The lawyer saw death in the eyes before him. He expected a flash from an automatic. His curses ended. Still holding his useless revolver; pointed downward, he felt the paralysis of fear creep through his arms.

Cringing, the lawyer turned to escape The Shadow's burning gaze. He looked toward the door from the cellar; the one through which he had entered here. Then a mad cry escaped the lawyer's leap.

With a frantic endeavor, he sprang from the path of The Shadow's guns, off toward the corner where all the rest were standing.

A counterthrust had come. Through that doorway bounded the form of Hatch Rosling; behind him, three gangsters. One was the fellow who had escaped from Zangwald's; two were gorillas who had been waiting in the car that had fled.

Had The Shadow sought to cover Vandrow, the act would have made him a temporary target for those entering crooks. Rosling, as he leaped furiously forward, came unarmed. He had given his revolver to Vandrow.

The Shadow ignored Rosling. He aimed for the other three.



Shots roared through the crypt. Bursts of flame from automatics came with the flashes of the gangster revolvers. The Shadow whirled as he fired, away from the corner where helpless persons stood. It was a desperate fight at close quarters.

A bullet clipped The Shadow's hat brim. Another winged the folds of the cloak. A singing slug skimmed The Shadow's shoulder; a hit, though a slight one, for the crook who had fired it. But all the while, The Shadow's automatics thundered.

The last barks from revolvers came from sinking hands. While they fired, the gorillas were sagging. Useless shots ricocheted as they chipped the tiled floor. Then Rosling fell upon The Shadow. Madly, he managed to grasp the gun that was in the gloved left hand. He wrenched the weapon free and aimed.

Already The Shadow's right was swinging. Malletlike, the automatic was descending for Rosling's wrist. Swifter than the crook could find the trigger, The Shadow was ending Rosling's fight. Yet amid this duel came another stroke, more timely than The Shadow's.

A gun barked. The shot came from the steps to the cellar landing. A whining bullet found its mark in Hatch Rosling's brain. The crook slumped as The Shadow's gun thudded upon his wrist.

Harry Vincent bounded into view.

HARRY had finally managed to loose his bonds. He had scudded for the crypt, reaching there just as the fray broke loose. Clambering in as crooks were falling, Harry had done his part to aid The Shadow. His stub-nosed automatic was in his fist; a wreath of smoke was curling from its muzzle.

The Shadow and his agent turned toward the corner. Through the smoke they saw a grim unequal struggle. It was one that The Shadow had anticipated; one upon which he had counted when he had dealt with the crooks at the door.

Five men had launched themselves en masse upon Louis Vandrow. Those five were Milton Claverly, Abner Zangwald and the three officers of the law. The lawyer was fighting fiendishly. Hands were forcing his arms upward, so that he could not use his guns.

Yet, as The Shadow turned, Vandrow wrested free. He lost one revolver; he swung the other and dealt the coroner a glancing blow. He delivered a vicious punch that sent the prosecutor staggering. Leaping from the sheriff's grasp, he rolled against the wall and turned to aim his revolver at Abner Zangwald.

Harry Vincent could not fire; for Milton Claverly was in his path. Moreover, Phyllis Lingle was crouching in the corner beyond Vandrow; and a wild shot might have struck the girl.

But The Shadow, his left arm hanging limp, held Louis Vandrow covered. Despite the fact, The Shadow withheld his fire.

As Harry stood bewildered, a revolver spat its flame. Louis Vandrow slumped. It was then that Harry understood. The shot had come from the gun that Vandrow had lost. Lester, watching catlike for his chance, had bounded from the wall to seize it.

The Shadow had spied the old servant's action. Though ready with his own weapon, the cloaked warrior had waited. The last death had been in the making; to Lester belonged the privilege of its delivery.

Fiercely, the servant had gained vengeance. He had killed the man who had murdered his old master. The Shadow's shot had not been needed. Already, Louis Vandrow was sprawled upon the floor, coughing out his evil life.

Turning, The Shadow swept toward the outer door. His form blended with blackness as Harry Vincent came forward to join the others. Harry realized now that Lester had eliminated him purely because he had caught him spying on Milton Claverly. Harry's timely aid in the battle had squared matters. His part was to remain here, as Milton Claverly's friend.

Lester stood in the middle of the room. While others were half bewildered by the sudden end of the struggle, the servant still found a duty to perform. Dropping to the tiled floor, Lester fixed his gaze on the dying face of Louis Vandrow. Then, with a grim croak, the servant pressed the switch that was set deep in the floor.

Clang!

Muffled, far away, came the message of the bells. Louis Vandrow heard the distant sound. Those bells were meant for him!

Dong! - Dong! -

The dirge continued. Bells of doom were tolling the death of Louis Vandrow as they had marked a knell for the ears of David Claverly. With a final cough, the lawyer gave a writhe and then lay still. His career of evil was ended.

Yet the bells kept on as Lester held the switch. Triumph showed upon the servant's withered visage as his bright, sparkling eyes still stared toward the rugged face of Louis Vandrow, that countenance that death had frozen forever.

OUTSIDE the mansion, the moonlight showed a tall, spectral figure striding toward the road that led past the hill. Burning eyes reflected the sky's glow as they turned upward. The Shadow saw the cupola of the tower - that spot from which bells of doom were toning their final peals, a paeon of triumph that marked the death of a superfiend.

The clamor ended. Echoes faded from the summit of the bell-tower. Then a new sound rose clear upon the night. More strident than the brazen clangor of the bells; more terrible than the monotone that had preceded it, the laugh of The Shadow burst clear through moonlit air.

Sardonic tones rose to a weird crescendo. The laughter burst with shuddering mockery. The laugh ended eerily. The wooded heights above sent back their echoes in uncanny mirth. Seemingly, a final throb formed a ghoulish whisper from the tower itself.

Right had triumphed. Truth had gained its claim. A maker of evil had perished, hard on the heels of his evil henchmen. Crime had ended with the battle in the crypt. Bells of doom had rung forth their last message.

And The Shadow, victorious, had laughed in triumph!

THE END