

SERPENTS OF SIVA
by Maxwell Grant

As originally published in "The Shadow Magazine," April 15, 1938.

The Shadow is ensnared by the mystic power of the East, when Serpents of Siva entangle him in their deadly coils!

CHAPTER I

WALLS OF DEATH

THE taxicab swung from the avenue, rolled past the lighted front of a big apartment house. With that, the bleak darkness of the side street engulfed it, save for the twinkle of the cab's tail-light that formed a feeble, fading dot.

A chill wind swept that forgotten street, like the icy fingers of a death-devil clutching for human prey. The gust whistled, whimpered through the open windows of the cab, but the lone passenger did not notice it.

He was too busy, craning toward the blackish tomblike fronts of brownstone

houses. His squinty eyes were looking for a number, while his pudgy lips muttered oaths because he could not see it.

They were all alike, these houses - old, dingy, almost-forgotten, in a portion of Manhattan so neglected that even the street lamps were inadequate.

Then, like a rift in that monotonous wall line, came the spot that the passenger wanted. He snarled for the driver to stop the cab. It halted in front

of a door that had a light above it. That glow came through a glass transom that

bore the house number.

The passenger alighted. He paid the driver and ascended the high steps. Fumbling in the darkness, he found a bell button. When he pressed it, his ears caught a melancholy response from a distant bell. There was something ghostly in its tone; it seemed as rusted as the clank of ancient chains.

A chill caught the visitor. He glanced along the street; the lights from that back corner looked far away. He was impressed by the grim solitude of these steps; for only that light above the door showed life. The houses on each

side were stark and vacant; ghoulish vaults that squeezed this ancient mansion between their barren walls.

There was the grate of a bolt, the screech of hinges. The door swung inward; though the way was partly blocked, the visitor shouldered through. Anything was better than that chilly outside darkness, where the wind warned with its whispers.

Reaching the hallway, the visitor stood in the light. His peaked face showed sallow, with its squinty eyes and twitchy lips. Those marks, however, were due to dissipation; for the visitor was youthful. In that last quality, he

differed from the man who had admitted him.

Turning toward the vestibule through which he had shoved his way, the visitor saw a white-haired man with wrinkled face, whose eyes made little beads. Lips were withery beneath a high-bridged nose. The old man's attire was of simple black, including the thin bow tie that showed against his pointed collar.

The sallow visitor managed a smile.

"Hello," he greeted, in a hoarse voice. "My name is Jack Sarmon. I've come to see Morton Mayland."

The old man gave a dry smile. It didn't please Sarmon. He had no liking for flunkies who thought themselves important. He squinted shrewdly, waiting his chance to show this fellow his place.

"May I inquire," clucked the old man, "just why you wish to see Mr. Mayland?"

"Sure," returned Sarmon. "I want to talk to his granddaughter, Lucille. I've heard the old man raises a squawk about people coming to see her. But he won't, in my case. Not when he knows why I'm here."

The white-haired man made no reply. He reached for the visitor's hat and coat, hung them on a hook beside the stairway. Beckoning, he conducted Sarmon up the stairs. Steps creaked as they ascended; along the way, Sarmon saw clusters of cobwebs. Then came a long hall; finally, a door.

The old man knocked; held his head tilted, until he received a reply. Opening the door, he motioned the visitor through.

JACK SARMON stepped into a well-lighted, comfortably furnished living room, to face a girl who had risen to receive him. She was alone in the room - a fact that puzzled Sarmon, particularly when he recognized her.

The girl was Lucille Mayland. She looked beautiful when Sarmon faced her; in fact, her appearance was more striking than he had remembered. That, perhaps, was due to her well-chosen costume.

Lucille Mayland was a pronounced brunette; her black hair had a ravenish glisten, against which her skin showed very white and clear. Her costume, tonight, consisted of black lounging pajamas with sandal slippers to match. That get-up was admirably suited to her.

Sarmon saw darkish eyes beneath thin-penciled brows; a nose that was thin but well-formed; lips that had just the right ruddiness, above an oval chin. There was calmness in Lucille's manner; she evidenced it in her low-modulated voice.

"Hello, Jack!" Lucille placed a long, black cigarette holder to her lips, puffed a slow curl of smoke. "You have come to tell me something about Courtney Renshell?"

Sarmon nodded. He couldn't find his voice right then.

"Whatever it is" - Lucille was frigid - "I do not care to hear it. I am no longer interested in anything that concerns Mr. Renshell!"

"I am, though!" blurted Sarmon. "I've got a lot of things I want to talk to Court about. He's a good friend of mine -"

"Then why not see him yourself?"

"Because he's disappeared! I just found it out, yesterday, when I came in unexpectedly from Chicago."

Lucille shrugged. She turned away, to extinguish her cigarette in an ash tray. Sarmon followed her, speaking in persistent tone.

"You've got to listen, Lucille!" he insisted. "You were engaged to Court. What's broken it up, I don't know - but, certainly, you ought to have some regard for him. Matters aren't right, I tell you!"

The statement did not change Lucille's attitude. Sarmon became excited.

"Something's happened to Court!" he added. "His apartment is cleaned out

- empty - and something more." The young man lowered his tone. "There was a big box shipped out of there. The janitor said it looked like a coffin -"

A sound interrupted. It was the click of the door. Sarmon turned about, to view the white-haired man who had admitted him. The fellow approached, chuckling

to himself. Sarmon protested to Lucille.

"What's the idea of this?" he demanded. "Does this flunky have to butt into our conversation?"

There was a flash of Lucille's eyes as she turned.

"This gentleman," she told Sarmon, "happens to be my grandfather. We have no servant in this house."

Sarmon gaped. He tried to mumble an apology. Old Morton Mayland did not seem to want one. He chuckled, as though he regarded the mistake as a joke. With clawlike hand, he clapped Sarmon on the back.

"Come along, young man," said Mayland, dryly. "I can explain this problem for you."

THEY went out, closing the door to leave Lucille alone. On the stairway, Mayland produced a folded paper. He opened it, with the comment:

"A letter that Courtney Renshell wrote to me."

Sarmon read the letter. It was dated a week ago, from Havana. It stated bluntly that Renshell had not visited Lucille before his departure, because he felt that she did not care to see him.

"Just another tiff," cackled Mayland. "They have had them frequently, you know."

Sarmon nodded. He spoke reflectively, as they descended the stairs.

"Havana," recalled Sarmon. "Court was there six months ago. I wonder why he went back?"

"The climate," suggested Mayland. "Or perhaps -"

Sarmon caught the wise chuckle in the old man's tone.

"A girl down there?" Sarmon shook his head. "No, I don't think Court would

go for a Cuban senorita. Listen, Mr. Mayland; you heard what I said upstairs. I

still think that something is wrong. I'm going to find out more about that box that was shipped from Court's apartment."

They were at the foot of the stairs. Mayland smiled and bowed good-night. Sarmon went to the rear of the hallway, to get his hat and coat. He heard the old man's footsteps shuffling upward.

Evidently, Mayland wanted him to show himself out. That didn't bother Sarmon; what did trouble him was the fact that he couldn't find his hat and coat. He thought that he had seen Mayland put them on a hook; but they were no longer there.

Groping in the darkness at the rear wall, Sarmon found nothing but the smoothness of the woodwork. He turned about, intending to go to the stairs and call up for Mayland. He changed that intention before he had moved three steps.

A sound caused Sarmon's shift of policy. It was much like the sound that he had heard upstairs: the click of a door. But there was no door in this rear hallway; none that the visitor could see. The fact puzzled him, and his bewilderment was the beginning of a final confusion.

Something slicked from the darkness behind him. A lash, thinner than the slenderest of whips, slithered about the young man's neck. He sped his hands to

his throat, but Sarmon's sallow lips could not give the cry that his vocal cords sought to produce.

The thin cord tightened. Sarmon's eyes bulged. His gargle was almost soundless, for it was deep in his tortured throat. His knees caved; his body sagged to the floor, slumping softly.

With one last upward look, Jack Sarmon saw a darkish face, barely distinguishable in the hallway gloom. He heard a hiss, low, snakish, fearsome. An instant later, all went black; the victim's ears were tormented with a roar that split his head. Those were his last living sensations.

The snakish hiss was repeated.

Hands came from an opened panel at the rear of the hall. The dead form of Jack Sarmon was eased through. With padded tread, the murderer followed, his

body contorted in reptilian fashion.

THERE was a brief interval. A man stepped from the panel, muffled in Sarmon's coat, the victim's hat upon his head. With direct stride, the man went out through the hall and opened the front door. He slammed it, as he stepped out into the night.

Timed to that slam came the click of the closing panel, as unseen hands drew it shut.

The door slam must have been heard upstairs. Old Morton Mayland came down with brisk steps. He reached the front door, opened it an inch. Outside, he discerned the man in hat and overcoat, under the dim glow of a street light, beckoning for a cab at the corner.

Mayland closed the front door and bolted it. His smile was cryptic as he returned upstairs.

Walls of doom had taken their toll. In this sinister mansion, isolated by the companion houses that sided it, Jack Sarmon, the unwanted visitor, had found swift death.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Courtney Renshell, the missing man's friend would not investigate them!

CHAPTER II

ACROSS THE SOUND

THE reserved manner that Lucille Mayland displayed was not caused by the somber setting of her grandfather's home. She showed the same pose elsewhere; even when a member of a gay group.

That was evident the next afternoon, when Lucille sat by the rail of a trim yacht that was slicing through the waters of Long Island Sound.

There were a dozen in the party; and their chat was trivial. The talk concerned the dory races that they had watched from the Regatta Club, on the north shore. Most of the other spectators had gone back to New York by car or train; but this crowd had accepted the yacht owner's invitation to return by way of Long Island Sound.

Seated almost alone, Lucille seemed ignorant of the fact that she made a most attractive picture. Though her manner was the same, her appearance was quite different from the night before. She was wearing a white yachting costume, instead of the black attire. She seemed out of place amid this talkative group.

There was a young man who observed that fact.

He, too, was silent and restrained; and with good reason. He had not taken this trip for fun. Serious matters lay at stake; he was hoping for a glimpse of them.

The young man's name was Harry Vincent. He was the trusted agent of a personage called The Shadow, mysterious crime-fighter whose very name struck terror to the underworld.

Conversation was not turning the way that Harry wanted. That was why he had taken a gradual interest in Lucille. She seemed the sort who would respond if serious subjects came under discussion. Those subjects, however, were the very ones that remained taboo on this occasion.

The yacht veered; spray splashed across the rail. Someone pointed toward a smaller craft that was plowing some distance ahead, almost lost in the hazy dusk

that was settling over the Long Island shore.

"There's Rodney Welk," remarked the pointer. "He's been pacing us all the way across."

"He's showing good speed in that little cabin ship of his," came another person's comment. "No wonder! He's traveling alone."

There was a bitterness to the comment that did not pass unnoticed. It opened a brisk discussion concerning Rodney Welk; brought out facts that Harry Vincent already knew.

Welk was a wealthy young man who had a distinct aversion to companionship; probably because he had been bothered by money-seekers who claimed to be his friends. He had been at the boat races during the afternoon; as usual, he had embarked alone in his little cabin cruiser.

Rumor had it, too, that Welk cared as little for his relatives as he did for his friends. All that, however, was understandable to the persons in Harry's group. Most of them had money and were anxious to keep it. At heart, they sympathized with Rodney Welk, who had more than they and, therefore, encountered greater problems.

There was a pause; then someone added:

"It is dangerous, though, for a chap like Welk to travel alone. One never knows when accidents may occur."

A HUSH gripped the little group; after it, subdued whispers passed. Those whispers rose to murmurs, that developed into conversation. With the tension broken, persons were discussing the very subject that they had avoided. Harry Vincent was hearing what he wanted.

These people were mentioning recent accidents, wherein members of their own social set had met with death. One man, wealthy like Welk, had been killed in an automobile crash. Another, older, and also wealthy, had been found dead at his Berkshire hunting lodge. That death had been due to the accidental discharge of the man's own shotgun.

There was also the case of a wealthy widow, who had made a trip to inspect an old house that she owned. A stairway had collapsed, plunging her to death.

Mention of those cases chilled the yachting party. Some members became uneasy, tried to change the topic; but the talk had advanced too far. There were a few who found a thrill in this discourse of death.

Harry Vincent was a silent listener. He hoped for some rift in the conversation; some suggestion that something might lie behind those supposed accidents. That idea, however, did not occur to the group.

It had occurred to The Shadow. That was why Harry was aboard the yacht.

Back at the Regatta Club, The Shadow, himself, was sounding the opinions of other persons. The Shadow was there in the guise of Lamont Cranston, a reputed millionaire. In fact, it was Cranston who had introduced Harry to this smart set.

Long ago, Harry had identified The Shadow with Cranston; but he had also deemed that the personality was simply a disguise. Who The Shadow actually was, remained a mystery to Harry; but there was never any question regarding The Shadow's theories.

The Shadow suspected crime behind those recent deaths. The motive would logically be profit, since all the victims were wealthy. It happened, however, that the affairs of the dead persons were in excellent order. The only people who had gained wealth were legitimate heirs, who had no connection with the deaths.

One point, nevertheless, had impressed The Shadow.

The principal heirs, in each case, were persons of a similar type. All were quiet, reserved; possessed of a self-sufficient manner. They were persons like Lucille Mayland. Nothing could disturb the calmness of their pose.

Woven through the fabric of this social set were others of that sort; human threads who shared some common secret. The Shadow, with Harry aiding, intended to learn what subtle cause lay beneath that surface.

CHANCE had placed Lucille under Harry's observation. This was his opportunity to learn more regarding the girl. Already, Lucille was showing definite reactions. While others either gloried or shuddered at the talk of death, Lucille remained calmly indifferent.

Harry saw the girl produce a cigarette case from a pocket of her yachting jacket. Another object came with the case; it slipped from Lucille's fingers and fell on the seat beside her. Harry reached over to pick up the object. Lucille clutched it first.

That object was a tiny golden image, as curious as any that Harry had ever seen.

No larger than a small paperweight, the little figure had three heads, each studded with several jeweled eyes. A dozen arms gave the body a spidery appearance; about the figure's triple throat was a carved chain that looked like a miniature necklace.

Before Harry could make out the details of the necklace, Lucille had dropped the little image in her pocket. She brought out a long white cigarette holder; turned to Harry and asked for a light.

While he was flicking his lighter, Harry questioned, in tone as quiet as Lucille's:

"What of these accidents? Do they trouble you, Miss Mayland? Some of our friends" - Harry smiled slightly, as he spoke - "seem to think there is a hoodoo close at hand."

Lucille puffed her cigarette. Her eyes met Harry's with a gaze that penetrated. In low, precise tone, Lucille declared:

"Death is feared only by those who do not understand it."

"True enough," agreed Harry. Then: "You understand death, Miss Mayland?"

"I understand that fear brings evil consequences," responded Lucille, "of the very sort that one wishes to avoid. That can apply to death. Therefore, I neither fear death, nor discuss it."

"That must take a lot of effort," remarked Harry, lightly. "I would need something to help my mind fix itself on that idea. Some lucky charm, for instance. I used to carry one of those things, once -"

Harry paused. It wasn't the closeness of Lucille's gaze that halted him. Harry had seen something farther away, beyond the yacht's rail. It was a white shape, yawing crazily against the darkened background of the Long Island shore.

Somebody else saw the same sight; exclaimed the very thought that had struck Harry.

"Look out there!" came the cry. "Welk's cruiser, running in circles! What's come over the fool? He'll capsize before he knows it!"

THE yacht's captain had spied the cruiser's behavior. Bells clanged; the yacht made for the veering craft. Previous talk was forgotten; everyone was agog, except Lucille. They could hear the beat of the circling cruiser's motor,

when they neared it; but the tiny deck was vacant.

The yacht's crew put a small boat overboard. It cut through the choppy sea, trying to clip the cruiser's course. Harry heard the comment, that Welk must have gone down into the cabin. That seemed probable; but foolhardy.

The thought gripped Harry that something much worse could have happened. That proved true.

The boat crew boarded the cruiser, after a lucky grab. They stopped the motor; kept the cruiser broadside to the waves, while the yacht arrived close

enough to hook alongside.

Harry was among the first to clamber over the yacht's rail and drop to the cruiser's deck.

The next task was to find Welk. They headed down through the cockpit, into the little cabin. There, they saw empty bunks on each side. Toward the bow was an entrance to a little forecabin, where a lantern hung above a stack of boxes.

"Canned goods," Harry heard someone say. "Welk stocked up for a cruise."

None of the boxes was very large. They were stacked squarely against the front of the forecabin, with no space beyond them. There wasn't a place where Welk could be. The searchers went on deck to report.

There was only one answer to the mystery: Rodney Welk had gone overboard from the tiller of his cruiser. Someone recalled that there had been a rope on deck, attached to an anchor. That equipment was absent. It could account for Welk's disappearance.

The yacht's radio was flashing the news ashore, while the crew took the cruiser in tow. Harry and a few others remained on the cruiser's deck, discussing the theory that Welk had accidentally entangled in the anchor rope, to take an overboard pitch.

Standing with his arms upon the cabin, Harry looked ahead, toward the stern of the towing yacht. Through his mind thrummed the ominous conversation that had preceded Welk's disappearance. Those persons who thought Welk unwise to cruise alone, had spoken prophetic words.

Among those figures on the yacht was Lucille Mayland. She was too distant for Harry to see her face; but he remembered the look she had given him, when she disclaimed her own fear of death. Harry wondered what Lucille would say now.

For the disappearance of Rodney Welk was another case of death - as sudden, as awe-inspiring as those other fatal occurrences which had been classed as accidents. So strange, in fact, that Harry Vincent could not regard it as an accident at all.

Welk's death was murder, the latest in an insidious chain. Somehow - Harry could not shake the belief - it linked with something that concerned Lucille Mayland, and the tiny, three-headed image that the girl carried.

Only one living person could solve such a maze of riddles.

That being was The Shadow!

CHAPTER III

SERPENTS HISS

WHEN Welk's cabin cruiser docked beside an old, weather-battered pier, a swarthy man of stocky build was waiting there. He had an official appearance and Harry Vincent recognized him. The man was Inspector Joe Cardona, of the New York police.

This portion of Long Island was within the New York City limits. The yacht's wireless call had been relayed to police headquarters. Cardona had made a quick trip here from Manhattan.

Cardona was something of a crime detector, in his blunt, direct fashion. Any report of strange death struck him as murder, until he had investigated it.

Harry saw him craning as he walked along the pier.

In the dusk, Cardona examined every portion of the cruiser's hull, from the sharp-cut bow to the wide stern, where the name Wanderer appeared in shiny

gilt letters.

The ace inspector came aboard, to quiz the men who stood there. He recognized Harry Vincent; recalled that he was a friend of Lamont Cranston. Since Cranston, in turn, was a friend of the police commissioner, Cardona was pleased. He figured that he would acquire reliable testimony regarding Welk's disappearance.

Harry and the others answered Cardona's questions. No one had seen Welk go overboard. The cruiser had been too distant, the visibility too poor. All statements began with a description of the boat's odd behavior.

Accompanied by Harry, Cardona went down into the cabin; then into the lantern-lighted forecabin. He studied the stacks of boxes; looked into every cranny. That done, he returned to the deck and made some notations in a little book. Abruptly, the ace asked:

"What was it somebody said about an anchor rope?"

Harry explained the theory. Cardona examined the deck and made measurements. The theory satisfied him.

"All that's left," said Cardona, bluntly, "is to drag for Welk's body."

That work was already under way. Out in the Sound, tiny lights were bobbing amid the rising mist. Prompt grappling should bring good results, if coiled ropes had dragged Welk to the bottom. There would be plenty of opportunity for the hooks to catch the rope, if not the drowned man's body.

Cardona boarded a little boat with an outboard motor. The craft chugged out to join the grapplers.

HARRY VINCENT found himself alone on the pier beside the Wanderer.

The others had gone back to the yacht, which was moored some fifty yards from shore. It was silent along the rickety dock, and very dark, for night had set in rapidly. The lick of wavelets disturbed the stillness; twinkling lights showed from the Sound.

But Harry was oblivious to those impressions. All about him, he felt silence and blackness.

From far out on the Sound, a searchlight cut the mist, its path dimmed before it reached the shore. Some other craft was coming across the Sound, perhaps bringing new passengers who had attended the boat races.

Harry did not notice it, but the incoming power boat was making a wide circuit to another old pier, nearly two hundred yards away.

Two ideas gripped Harry Vincent. First, that he should remain close to the

Wanderer, on the chance that The Shadow would soon arrive; second, that even Cardona's belief that Welk's death was accidental, might not be correct.

Those two ideas linked. By staying near the Wanderer, Harry could assure The Shadow that nothing had changed aboard the little cruiser since Cardona had

inspected it. To Harry, that vigil promised to be nothing more than mere routine.

Harry was mistaken.

The boat from the Sound was docking at its remote pier, when Harry became conscious of something very close at hand. There were sounds past the stern of the Wanderer; thumps that indicated a low-lying boat moving in from the darkness.

Scrapes followed; enough to tell that persons were climbing to the pier.

A flashlight blinked; its glow was instantly stifled. Harry heard a low-growled curse.

Whoever these persons were, it might not be wise to meet them. There was no time for Harry to hurry to the shore end of the pier, even if he had been inclined to do so. A hiding place was a logical preference; and Harry knew a good one. That spot was the cabin of the Wanderer.

One minute later, Harry had finished a silent scramble across the cruiser's deck and down the steps to the cabin. He was hunched behind an open door at the end of one of the sleeping bunks.

Cabin and forecandle both had small portholes. They were open; but they produced no sounds nor lights, either from the dock or the water. Harry decided

that the scraping boat had touched at the wrong pier, and was moving on its way.

He started to come from his hiding place.

A sound stopped him. It was from the deck - an evil, ghoulish noise that sounded far from human. As nearly as Harry could picture it, the sound was a snake's hiss.

THE venomous tone riveted Harry's mind, although he instinctively shifted back into his hiding place, glad that he had not been discovered. The hiss was repeated, as snakish as before, but this time, Harry was convinced that a first impression was correct.

That hiss was not a chance challenge from the darkness. It was a signal; repeated for some definite purpose.

A few seconds later, the sibilant call was answered. The muffled reply came from the one spot that Harry least expected: from the forecandle, where the lighted lantern hung!

It seemed incredible that anyone could have sneaked aboard the Wanderer. Duty, plus the sensation of a hidden menace, urged Harry to creep from his hiding place. He kept well away from the cockpit door; near a porthole, he fancied that he heard a movement on the dock. Satisfied that the man on the deck had shifted away, Harry concentrated on the forecandle.

Peering from the darkness of the cabin, he saw the forecandle as empty as before. There wasn't a spot where even a snake could be - not with those boxes packed so close against the front wall.

Harry was ready to doubt all that his ears had heard, when his eyes produced new evidence.

There was motion in the forecandle; it came from a stack of boxes. One container was shifting upward, under pressure from beneath. The motion lay in the lower box. Harry thought of snakes again, for the walls of the box quivered

as if pressed from inside by coils.

The end of the box swung outward on a hinge. Something brownish wriggled into the light. Harry was treated to a sight so incredible that only his knowledge of danger made him credit it.

The thing that came from the box was human; it became more so, as it unlimbered. Spidery arms clutched the box front; long gangling legs stretched to the floor; bare brown feet padded softly. A spindly figure stretched to its full height.

The creature from the box was a Hindu; so emaciated that his scanty garb looked baggy. His wasted face was apish, with lips so drawn that the hiss must have come from between his teeth. He was, in a sense, a human reptile, for his thin limbs were as restless and as twisty as those of a serpent. His eyes, moreover, had a snake's glitter. Harry noted that when the creature turned.

The Hindu had literally packed himself into the special box, with a skill that outmatched any contortionist that Harry had ever seen. The man's egress from the box was another marvel, so astonishing that Harry was too amazed to budge.

Had those snaky eyes looked into the cabin, they would have spotted The Shadow's agent. Fortunately for Harry, the uncoiled Hindu was otherwise concerned.

The snakish creature turned about; pressed the front of the opened box back into place. He was making it appear to be an ordinary box of canned

goods,

from which the contents had for some reason been removed.

The Hindu did that task carefully, with no degree of haste. That was a break for Harry.

Shoving his hand to the hip where he carried an automatic, Harry eased back toward the door beyond the bunks. He was crouched there when the snakish Hindu came creeping through the cabin. Harry heard hissed breath, scarcely audible, when the fellow stopped close by the door.

This man was Welk's murderer!

OF that, there was no doubt. In this emergency, it was Harry's job to apprehend him. Caution, alone, compelled Harry to await the Hindu's next move. Harry saw gritted teeth glisten in the dim reflection of the light from the forecandle.

Those teeth ejected another hiss. The sound was not answered. The Hindu crept toward the companionway.

Satisfied that the man on the deck had gone, Harry made a lunge from his hiding place. It was a silent surge; but the Hindu sensed it. He spun about, rapid as a dervish, made a wide fling away from Harry's clutch. A sleek arm slipped from Harry's fingers.

Given a larger space, the coily Hindu would have easily nullified Harry's attack; but the cabin was too small for the snakish tactics to succeed. Pouncing sideways, Harry trapped the wiry man beside a bunk; he jabbed the gun muzzle against the Hindu's thin-skinned ribs.

It seemed a sure capture, until Harry heard a padded thud behind him. It was his turn to wheel; too late.

A second Hindu, almost the twin of the first, had sprung from the steps. He was the one who had produced the outside signal; he had not departed, as Harry supposed. He was making a long spring, his scrawny arms above his head forming an oval frame for his grinning monkeyish face. Between his hands he held the ends of a slender cord.

The Hindu by the bunk made a grab for Harry's gun hand. Before The Shadow's agent could fire, the man from the deck finished his swoop. The thin cord looped around Harry's neck; he felt the same effects that had been Jack Sarmon's, only the night before.

There was a gurgle deep in Harry's throat. His hands numbed; the gun went from his grip. A crackle roared through his ears; his bulging eyes seemed to view those murderous attackers as brown-faced demons. With all that, a hideous thought beat through Harry's brain.

He knew what these murderers were. They were dacoits - fanatics who strangled victims without mercy. Each was a follower of Hindu thuggee, of that evil caste who consider murder by the cord to be a deed of virtue!

Harry's head went backward. His eyes were fixed upon that short companionway that led down from the deck. Like Jack Sarmon, last night's victim, Harry experienced a surge of blackness, that swept upon his vision like

a blotting being of life.

It was the forerunner of death, that blackness; but doom was not for Harry

Vincent. As Harry's tortured eyelids went shut, he heard snarls in the dizzy whirls about him. He slumped; but the pressure from his throat was gone. His fingers could feel his flesh; the cord was no longer there!

Lashing bodies struck Harry's shoulder. He rolled sideways, toward a bunk; opened his eyes, in the direction of the forecandle. There, he saw the dacoits struggling viciously with a black-cloaked fighter who was swinging them

about like puppets. Harry remembered that downward surge of blackness.

That had been a living attack, directed against the murderers who held Harry in their clutch.

It had marked the advent of a rescuer.
The Shadow!

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE FROM WITHOUT

In those first quick minutes, Harry had no strength to aid his chief against the dacoits. Even the stuffy air of the cabin was sweet to Harry's lungs. He needed long drafts of it, to revive sufficiently for battle.

Dimly, Harry groped for his gun; he found it while The Shadow whipped back

and forth, flinging the wiry dacoits from side to side. They were tenacious fighters, those Hindus, even against The Shadow's power.

For some reason, The Shadow did not fire. He preferred silent conflict, as

he swung a gun from one gloved fist, while his free hand plucked at wriggling foemen. The dacoits, in their turn, wanted escape; and all the while, they were

dodging sudden swings from The Shadow's gun.

At last, one Hindu flayed at The Shadow's arms, while the other dived to make an attack from The Shadow's back. On his feet, Harry wobbled in to give aid. It proved unnecessary.

The Shadow's gun hand came downward from the grip of brownish fingers.

The

weight of an automatic glanced from the dacoit's skull, sent the murderer slumping., With a quick twist, The Shadow whipped clear of a cord that was flicking about his neck. He caught his second opponent with a downward grab; straightening, he pitched the fellow backward over his shoulders.

Harry had seen that whip-snap move before. With it, The Shadow could send a two-hundred-pound man on a long, hard plunge. The dacoit, with only half that

poundage, traveled like a thing of straw.

Arms flinging wide, he sailed through the door to the forecabin; crashed headfirst against the stacked boxes. The containers tumbled; they buried the dacoit in a deluge.

That crash made The Shadow forget the dacoits. In quick-rasped whisper, he

gave a command to Harry; then headed for the companionway, with his agent close

behind. There were pounding noises on the deck; flashlights shone, as The Shadow reached the cockpit.

Men from the little boat - that Harry had heard scraping while on the dock

- had listened to the finish of the battle in the cabin of the Wanderer. They had boarded the cruiser to aid the beaten dacoits.

They were battlers of a different sort, this crew, as their oaths told. They were mobbies from the Manhattan waterfront; and, like The Shadow, they wanted silent battle when they recognized their foe.

Knives flashed in the glow; went out of sight as flashlights were extinguished. Those blades were slashing for The Shadow.

Attackers thought they had a sure victim. They had not reckoned with the speed of The Shadow's upward surge. As knives went wide, he was out of the cockpit. On the deck, he was slugging into the midst of scummy battlers, dropping them right and left.

Sounds told the result to Harry, when he reached the cockpit. He knew that

it would be useless, perhaps suicidal, to enter that fray. The Shadow had an advantage; for every man was his foeman. Crooks, meanwhile, were at loss with

their knives, fearing that they might down their own clan-members, instead of The Shadow.

Harry's chance was to cut off reserves. He sprang for the dock; landed upon a crouching enemy and gave the hoodlum a blow that sent him sprawling from the dock. There were splashes, too, from the other side of the cruiser, as The Shadow sent men reeling overboard.

A minute more, the battle would have ended, when a flashlight suddenly flickered on the dock. The beam showed a pair of sweated rowdies; they sprang for the person with the light. Harry heard a gasp as the glowing torch went upward. In the light's focus, Harry saw a face.

The newcomer was a girl. Harry recognized Lucille Mayland!

HARRY did not stop to wonder why Lucille had arrived here. Nor did he reason that the mobsters had no need to harm the girl, once they had deprived her of the flashlight. He gave a warning yell, as he took a long bound forward.

Both enemies flung Lucille across the dock, then turned to deal with Harry. In the last flick from the flashlight, they saw Harry's gun. They yanked revolvers of their own.

An automatic tongued from the Wanderer's deck. It was The Shadow's gun; picking his aim in the last instant of light, he winged the first of Harry's attackers. As Harry grappled with the other water rat, The Shadow followed to the dock.

Slashing hard with his own gun, Harry felt the stroke go wide. Down came the crook's revolver; blinding stars cluttered around Harry. Above him, he heard a report: The Shadow's gun again. This time, it was a bullet for the killer who had downed Harry and was about to riddle him with slugs.

Guns crackled from the deck of the Wanderer. With gunfire started, the remnants of the boarding crew cared no more for silence. They were out to get The Shadow; but finding him in that blanket of darkness was too much for them.

The Shadow shoved Harry against the side of the Wanderer, to keep him away from bullets. With a weird, lowtoned laugh, The Shadow voiced an answer to the wild barrage; though the mirth taunted their ears, the attackers could not guess the direction from which it had come.

Their first knowledge of The Shadow's actual location came when his big guns spoke. He was a dozen yards along the dock, well away from their misguided aim. But his enemies were clustered where the whiteness of the deck made a background.

There were howls, groans, as crooks spilled under The Shadow's withering fire. The rest hurtled to the far side of the Wanderer, where their low-lying boat - a rakish power boat - had pulled alongside. That craft roared away, keeping the hull of the cabin cruiser as barrier, through which The Shadow could not fire.

Changing direction, The Shadow arrived beside Harry. He looked through the portholes of the Wanderer. The lantern showed the forecabin; The Shadow used a flashlight to view the cabin. Both were empty.

The bounding dacoits had recovered from the hard treatment that The Shadow had given them. They had wormed out through the tiny portholes, to drop aboard the power boat. They were away with the survivors of the waterfront crew.

HARRY VINCENT was too groggy to realize all that followed. Those events were handled entirely by The Shadow. A boat came sweeping up to hail the pier; a loud voice shouted "Ahoy!" as someone suddenly switched on a searchlight.

The flooding glow showed Harry, as it swept along the side of the Wanderer; but the gleam never reached The Shadow. He had recognized the raucous

tone of the shout; he knew, too, that the boat's arrival was a ruse.

If that crew had come along to help matters, they would have followed the fleeing power boat. This was a cover-up outfit, acting with the crowd that had fled. The Shadow spoiled their game by a single shot squarely for the searchlight's glowing orb.

The light was extinguished by that bullet. Loud-ripped oaths accompanied the clatter of glass. The Shadow's laugh responded; his guns spurted for the darkness, lower than the spot where the light had gleamed.

The second boat whipped away, while its crew fired useless bullets against

the sides of the Wanderer and into the rotted planking of the dock.

There were new shouts, from other sources. Calls from the yacht moored in the Sound; cries from along the shore. Lights bobbed from the mist, where Cardona and others on the water had heard the burst of battle.

The Shadow readied Harry for a quick departure. As Harry rallied, The Shadow's keen eyes noted the other side of the dock. There, a white-clad witness to the fray was coming from shelter. Lucille Mayland had found a spot of safety, to remain there throughout that last battle.

The girl groped for her flashlight. Finding it, she played it on the very spot where she had seen Harry, close beside the Wanderer. Harry was gone.

Lucille turned the light shoreward; she flickered it there, too late. There was no one at the land end of the pier. Guided by The Shadow, Harry had left the scene.

Calmly, Lucille swung the light toward the dock itself, then to the deck of the cabin cruiser. She saw sprawled figures there; heard savage snarls as wounded men tried to rise. Then footsteps pounded the planking of the dock. People from the shore had arrived to learn the cause of trouble.

SHORTLY afterward, Lucille Mayland was star witness when Joe Cardona arrived to learn what had happened. Her story was convincing and direct.

She had come ashore from the yacht, she said, and had been passing by the dock when she heard a scuffle there. She had started out to investigate the trouble, and had walked into the thick of gunfire.

"You were lucky, Miss Mayland," declared Cardona, in a tone that showed admiration for the girl's nerve. "It looks like a couple of mobs were on the job. What they were after, is something I've got to find out."

Cardona boarded the Wanderer with a pair of detectives, to gather up the wounded prisoners. Lucille, on shore, received the congratulations of the group

from the yacht. They agreed with Cardona, that her escape had been fortunate.

Lucille accepted those congratulations with her usual calmness. Of all those present, she alone was not excited. Coolly, the girl surveyed the group, noting all persons present. Her lips showed the slightest of smiles when she noted that Harry Vincent was not among her friends.

As they waited on the shore, Lucille Mayland drew an object from her pocket, held it concealed between her fondling fingers. She retained her smile, unnoticed in the darkness.

The object that Lucille held was that tiny, three-headed image with the jeweled eyes and many arms.

That curious golden figure linked with the battle that Lucille had witnessed. The fact that the girl owned such an image, was to tell much to The Shadow.

CHAPTER V

HARRY MAKES PLANS

IN his check-up of matters along the shore front, Joe Cardona learned that a speed boat had docked shortly before trouble began aboard the Wanderer. Cardona decided to learn more regarding that unknown craft; he headed for the pier where it lay.

To his surprise, Cardona found Lamont Cranston aboard; with the millionaire was Harry Vincent.

Cranston, it seemed, had made the trip across the Sound. He had heard the firing that took place along the dock beside the Wanderer; but he had lacked opportunity to reach the cabin cruiser.

Cranston was a hawk-faced individual, whose features were almost masklike.

His manner, like his appearance, was impassive. Sometimes he had a way of implying statements, without making them. That was true on this occasion. He let Cardona believe that Harry Vincent had arrived at the speed boat immediately after it docked.

Cardona asked no questions on that score. It was apparent that he did not suspect Harry's part in the battle on the Wanderer. That, in turn, gave The Shadow cause for some keen speculation.

The Shadow knew that Cardona had already talked to Lucille Mayland. The girl had seen Harry during the fight. Possibly, she had not recognized him. It was more likely that she had recognized him, but had chosen not to mention the fact.

The latter situation, if it existed, could prove of value to The Shadow; particularly as he had received a complete report from Harry, before Cardona arrived.

They walked along the shore with Cardona. Harry showed no ill effects from

the recent skirmish, although his head was aching badly. He felt steadier when they joined the group beside the Wanderer; he smiled, as he nodded to Lucille.

The girl's dark eyes fixed upon Harry. That glance was observed by Cranston. The Shadow knew instantly that Lucille was keeping silence. In Cranston's quiet tone, he mentioned that to Harry as soon as they had stepped aside. With that information, The Shadow gave brief instructions to his agent.

Most of the wounded mobsters had been removed; but there were two, less scathed than the others, who had been kept here at Cardona's order. The inspector quizzed them, while Cranston stood by. The story that they gave fitted with Cardona's theory regarding rival mobs.

THEY had been told, so they said, to pick up a cargo from a boat at this old dock. What was in the cargo, they didn't know; but Cardona suspected that the pair belonged to a crew of opium runners, though they wouldn't admit it.

They testified that they had run into unexpected trouble; and held to the opinion that they had been brought here by a hoax.

As they put it, there was always rivalry along the waterfront, with one outfit holding a grudge against another. Since Cardona knew that to be a fact the statement satisfied him; particularly after he completed a thorough inspection of the Wanderer.

Although some of the tumbled boxes were empty, none had been removed. In the midst of a hurried flight, no one would have wasted time unloading dope in parcels.

Though Cardona had a marked ability for playing hunches, he did not show it on this occasion. He apparently regarded Welk's death and the subsequent

trouble on the Wanderer as coincidences. Working from the facts, that opinion was a logical one. From the size of the empty boxes in the forecandle, Cardona never guessed that one could have housed a murderer.

Moreover, boats were coming in from the Sound when Cardona completed his inspection. Grapplers had reclaimed the body of Rodney Welk, enmeshed in the anchor rope. They placed the corpse upon the pier, where a physician went through the formality of pronouncing the death a drowning case.

Only Lamont Cranston saw evidence of another cause, as he viewed the body in glare of electric lanterns.

Across Welk's bloated throat was a hair-line that carried a ruddy tinge. It was the fading trace of the mark made by a dacoit's strangle cord.

Members of the yachting party had left for Manhattan. Only two remained. One was Lucille Mayland, closest witness to the battle on the dock. The other was Harry Vincent, who had stayed because of Cranston's presence.

Occasionally, when glancing at Lucille, Harry had a feeling that the girl had something to say to him alone. Cranston had observed the same; it was he who paved the way to that opportunity.

He remarked that the police commissioner was coming to Long Island; that he would like to wait for him. So he offered Harry and Lucille use of his large limousine, parked near the landing place.

The two went aboard the big car. As soon as it pulled away, Cranston made a telephone call for a taxicab. A low laugh whispered from his lips, as he followed the same route into Manhattan. That repressed mirth was the tone of The Shadow.

IN the smooth-running limousine, Harry and Lucille were discussing the very topic that The Shadow expected. It was Lucille who opened the subject.

"I owe you thanks, Mr. Vincent," she expressed, in a musical tone. "Your arrival on the pier was most fortunate."

"The thanks should be mine," returned Harry, politely. "I didn't want to be mixed with that brawl. You helped me out of a lot of bother by avoiding mention of my part."

"Let us say then, that our thanks are mutual."

"Yes. Our thanks to each other."

Lucille gave a mild laugh when she heard Harry's statement. They were riding along a lighted boulevard; Harry could see her head shake.

"Not thanks to each other" - Lucille's laugh had ended; her tone was serious - "but thanks from both of us, to Siva."

"To Siva?" Harry spoke as though puzzled, to cover his eagerness. "Who is Siva?"

"A strange and mighty power," replied Lucille, "who holds the keys to life and death. You saw the image of Siva, this afternoon, upon the yacht."

"You mean that little token that you dropped?"

"Yes. Here it is. Be careful of it."

Lucille placed the golden curio in Harry's hand. As he examined it, Harry remembered comments that Cranston had made, after hearing a description of the tiny figure. Cranston had identified it as a replica of the Hindu god Siva; a miniature of the many idols that represented that Oriental deity.

Not only that. In the fashion of Cranston, The Shadow had told Harry more.

Lucille Mayland was not the only person who carried and valued one of these golden tokens. The Shadow had met others who seemed to regard them as mystic talismans.

"I spoke of death," recalled Lucille, in a far-away tone. "Of those who do not understand it. We, who follow Siva, know the truths of life and death."

Harry was so interested in the image, that he scarcely caught Lucille's

words. He had noted the jeweled eyes and spiky arms; but he was puzzled over the carved necklace beneath the three heads of Siva. Lucille saw his interest.

"The necklace," she remarked, "consists of serpents and skulls. They represent life and death."

Serpents and skulls!

The contrast struck home to Harry. Those creatures on the Wanderer were like human serpents! One had disposed of Rodney Welk. The skull of death could stand for Welk!

Did Lucille recognize the grim significance of those symbols?

Harry looked toward the girl, in hope that she might betray an answer.

Her

eyes showed no flinch. Her lips were forming their half smile, as she plucked the Siva image from Harry.

"I am sorry," spoke Lucille, almost sadly, "to learn that you are not interested in Siva."

"I am," affirmed Harry, earnestly. "My apologies, Miss Mayland. I was so intrigued by the image, that I scarcely heard your comment. You spoke of life and death -"

"Yes. Siva controls them. We, of Siva, are guarded against death. I was protected tonight, and so were you."

"But I carry no image of Siva"

"This one was sufficient. Its charm fulfilled my wish that you - like myself - would experience no harm."

LUCILLE spoke the words with full belief. Harry hated to show agreement with such superstition; but it was his only course. His present duty was to learn all he could, in reference to the Siva cult, of which Lucille was obviously a member.

"It amazes me," spoke Harry, "that those who carry a miniature Siva can protect anyone they wish -"

"Only when the other person is close at hand," interposed Lucille. "The danger must be recognized, and visible."

"Then, unless we are together -"

"Siva cannot protect you. Unless you carry a charm of your own.

Otherwise,

you may become like -"

Lucille paused. Her lips showed bitterness. She glanced toward Harry, saw that his expression was sympathetic. Abruptly, Lucille asked:

"Do you know Courtney Renshell?"

Harry could not recall the name.

"He was my fiancee," explained Lucille. "It was Courtney who first took me to see Siva. I learned, later, that he considered the whole matter as a jest; but that was not until I had gained the belief which Courtney pretended.

"We quarreled because of Siva. Since then, I have not seen Courtney, nor have I heard from him. But I have seen Siva - often. I mean the real Siva."

The big car was rolling easily along a Manhattan avenue; for some reason, the chauffeur was making the trip a slow one. Harry noted the fact; guessed that it was at Cranston's order. The Shadow was giving Harry ample time to talk

with Lucille.

"You have seen Siva!" Harry faked an awed tone. "The real Siva! What a privilege that must be."

"You would like to see Siva?" questioned Lucille. "Do you think that you could believe?"

"What else?" queried Harry. "After tonight, when I was rescued by some strange, mysterious power -"

"You heard it, too," put in Lucille. "That tone from the darkness - the voice of Siva!"

Harry nodded, realizing that through her blind belief in Siva, Lucille

had

supposed the laugh of The Shadow to be a manifestation of some supernatural presence. With that nod, Harry captured Lucille's full confidence.

The limousine turned a corner; it slid past the lighted front of an apartment house. Entering the obscurity of a blackened street, it halted before

a grim old house, where a number shone from a dim transom over the huge front door.

"Tomorrow night," whispered Lucille, her fingers pressing Harry's hand. "Come here, alone. We shall go together, to see Siva. But say nothing to my grandfather!"

They stepped from the car. Harry accompanied Lucille up the brownstone steps, helped her unlock the big door. When he returned to the limousine, Harry

felt a chill. Perhaps it was the rawness of the night; but, somehow, the sensation was linked with that somber old house, clamped between two dismal untenanted mansions.

When the limousine had gone, blackness glided from the obscurity of a house wall. A cloaked shape showed momentarily, near a street lamp; then merged

with the night. The presence of that figure supplied another reason for the limousine's slow trip in from Long Island.

Harry Vincent had approached the home of Morton Mayland, a mansion where doom existed. During his brief pause there, he had been under a protection that

had already proven itself more potent than the supposed power of Siva.

Harry's safety had been assured by The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI

PATHS IN THE NIGHT

INSPECTOR JOE CARDONA was a man who balanced speech with silence. Once he had voiced a theory, he became a clam. Cardona had found that such a system worked two ways. If his opinions proved correct, he could point to them. If they turned out wrong, the less that he had said the better.

That policy had become a habit with Cardona. He applied it to the death of

Rodney Welk. The case was an accidental drowning; that settled it. As for the battle on the Wanderer, two mobs of water rats had chosen the cruiser's dock as

their skirmish ground for the settlement of old scores. That was all.

It remained for the newspapers, particularly the tabloids, to see mystery behind the double event. They played up pictures of Welk, the Wanderer, and the

pier; even the dory races at the Regatta Club. They went into the past histories

of crooks who had been wounded in the gun fight.

All that was a laugh to Joe Cardona. He had spent a full afternoon at the hospital quizzing bandaged hoodlums, only to get the same answers that two of the lot had given him the night before. Nevertheless, Cardona was a trifle irked.

If the newspapers kept up all this hullabaloo what would the public think?

Cardona didn't like rumors that had no facts to back them. It was tough enough,

having unsolved crimes on the books, without a bunch of news hounds faking situations that did not exist.

Worst of all, when Cardona said nothing, reporters always took it that he

knew a lot he did not care to tell. It made a bad mess while it lasted; still, silence was the only way to handle it. All this newspaper hokum would fade out after a few days. But, meanwhile, it was a nuisance.

Cardona had proof of that just before dinner time, when he received a message from the police commissioner. The commissioner wanted Cardona to call on some old fossil named Phineas Leeth, who lived at the Ritz Plaza. Leeth, it appeared, had bags of money, and was worried over what he termed the "Welk case."

As Cardona analyzed it, the old boy probably had the notion that wealthy people were getting a suicide complex, and wanted to be talked out of it.

IT was half past seven when Cardona sat with Leeth in the latter's richly furnished hotel suite. Leeth was a stoop-shouldered chap who sat crouched in his chair, a big walking stick close at hand, in case he wanted to hobble anywhere.

His face was long and droopy, his head completely bald. But his eyes, when they could shake their weariness, had a sparkle that made him look like an old eagle watching from its nest.

"About this Welk case," insisted Leeth, in a crisp tone. "Is there nothing, inspector, to support these newspaper rumors regarding it?"

Cardona shook his head; made a gesture with his hands.

"Odd. Very odd." Leeth didn't seem fully satisfied. Then: "Those wounded men, aboard the cabin cruiser - were they all Americans?"

"I guess you'd call them that," grunted Cardona, "although they've got a lot of funny names."

"Were any of them Orientals?"

"You mean Chinese? No, there wasn't a chink in the bunch. They don't run dope, Mr. Leeth; they smoke it."

Leeth shook his head wearily.

"I wasn't thinking of Chinese," he said. "I was interested in Hindus."

The thought struck Cardona as an odd one; so unusual that it interested him. He had seen enough of Leeth to recognize that the old man was no dummy. Joe put a direct query.

"We didn't run into any Hindus," he declared. "But what makes you ask about them?"

Leeth gave a relieved smile.

"That settles my chief worry," he declared. "Still" - he stroked his parchment chin - "I wonder about Renshell, and Sarmon."

"Who are they?"

Leeth explained. Renshell was a man whom he had met on several occasions; his full name was Courtney Renshell. Only recently, a young man named Jack Sarmon had visited Leeth. Claiming to be a friend of Renshell's, Sarmon declared that Renshell had disappeared.

"And today," finished Leeth, "Sarmon was to call here, without fail. He did not arrive."

Cardona was writing down the names. Suddenly, he asked: "Where do the Hindus fit into it?"

"They have no real connection," replied Leeth, "considering that you have no reports on them. It merely happens that I knew Courtney Renshell through our

mutual interest in a cult devoted to the Hindu god, Siva."

From a vest pocket, Leeth produced a tiny Siva image, the exact duplicate of the one Lucille carried. He passed it to Cardona, who held it under lamplight, where the tiny jeweled eyes twinkled with a dazzling glitter.

"That talisman," announced Leeth, soberly, "protects any person who carries it. So we have been told by Singhar Bund, guardian of the mighty Siva statue."

"You mean that Singhar Bund runs the outfit?" demanded Cardona. "That

he's

got one of these three-headed freaks built on a large scale?"

Leeth nodded, wincing as he did. He didn't care for Cardona's description of Siva. Joe noted it; decided not to repeat the mistake. He asked where the cult met. Leeth told him the address. When Cardona asked when the next meeting was scheduled, Leeth replied:

"Tonight."

That news enthused Cardona. He asked Leeth if visitors could attend the meeting.

"They are always welcome," declared the long-faced man, "if they are brought by members, like myself. I feel sure that Singhar Bund will welcome you, inspector. I shall be pleased to introduce you."

"As myself?" queried Cardona. Then, answering his own question: "Not a chance! That would queer everything. You wait here half an hour, Mr. Leeth, until I come back. Then I'll be ready to go to that meeting with you."

WHILE Cardona was obtaining a short-cut direct to the Siva cult, another investigator was busy elsewhere. The Shadow was in his sanctum, studying a stack of information. That data included reports from agents, newspaper clippings, photographs, together with an assortment of other items.

Beneath a bluish light, long fingers inscribed outstanding facts concerning a list of names.

First were the names of persons who had died in supposed accidents, like Rodney Welk. With them were names of heirs who had received legacies from the wealthy victims. In every case, one heir was a person whose manner resembled that of Lucille Mayland.

Since Lucille was admittedly a member of the Siva cult, The Shadow checked

on Morton Mayland. Here, the case differed. Lucille's grandfather was not wealthy. He spent money in odd fashions; but apparently curtailed other expenditures by doing so.

One quirk was his desire for isolation. He owned the house in which he lived; also those on each side of it. He refused, however, to rent or sell the adjacent houses, claiming that neighbors annoyed him.

Morton Mayland had an income that amounted to a few thousand dollars yearly. It came from a royalty on patented electrical appliances that he had invented. The patents were controlled by a manufacturer named Louis Bolingbroke, whose wealth ran into millions.

That, reports told, was a sore point with Mayland. The old man believed that Bolingbroke had swindled him. Old clippings told of lawsuits instituted by

Mayland; in every case, they had gone against him.

Facts jotted down, The Shadow plucked earphones from the wall. A tiny light glowed; a methodical voice came across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

Burbank, another secret agent of The Shadow, was his contact man.

"Instructions," then whispered The Shadow. "For Vincent -"

The instructions followed, to be relayed by Burbank. They included names and descriptions of persons that Harry might meet at the Siva meeting. Such word given, The Shadow hung up the earphones, snapped off the light.

There was a whispered laugh within the blotted sanctum: The Shadow's tone of departure.

WHEN Harry Vincent called at the Mayland residence, a half hour later, he was admitted by Morton Mayland, in person.

Like Jack Sarmon, Harry made the mistake of thinking the white-haired man was a servant, particularly when Mayland took his hat and coat, to hang them in

the rear hall.

Those tiny eyes, peering from beside the high-bridged nose, made Harry wonder why so shrewd a person could be content with a menial position. He had the answer, when Lucille appeared from upstairs, to introduce her grandfather.

Mayland's manner changed instantly.

"May I ask you, Mr. Vincent?" he inquired, crabbedly, "where you and my granddaughter intend to go this evening?"

Lucille's dark eyes sent a warning look from past Mayland's shoulder. Harry scarcely noticed the glance. He had expected this question. He produced a pair of tickets to a theater. Mayland inspected them; sourly smiled his approval.

"I am pleased," he told Harry, in cackly tone, "to learn that Lucille has new and lighter interests than those which have previously attracted her. I hope that you shall call here often, Mr. Vincent."

Mayland's reference was a veiled hint regarding the Siva cult; for Lucille had forewarned Harry that her grandfather disapproved of her interest in that group. The old man's tone showed guardedness, as if he hoped that Harry had never heard of the Siva worshippers.

Opening the front door, Mayland bowed; then noted that Harry did not have his hat and coat. With beady eyes, the old man looked toward the cab that awaited Harry and Lucille. He remarked that he would escort Lucille to the cab, and wait there until Harry joined them.

The front door closed. Harry was alone in the shuddery hall. He felt its ominous clutch as he stepped to the deep recess, where his hat and coat hung. Alone, Harry turned abruptly when his ears caught a stifled click.

Harry saw nothing except blackness; but as he took his hat and coat, a panel moved behind him. A slight draft swept Harry's neck; the chill ran along his spine. Arms bundled in his coat, he swung roundabout.

Harry was unready for attack; at that moment, his position was worse than Sarmon's had been, two nights ago. Fortunately, no thrust came. The panel was shut; blackness alone occupied the corner near it.

Nervously, Harry headed for the front door, letting his coat settle on his shoulders as he went.

Half a minute after Harry's departure, the big door reopened; from outdoors came the throb of the starting taxi. Old Mayland stepped through the portal, closed it, and gave a canny look about the hallway.

Sharp though his tiny eyes were, Mayland saw nothing in that gloom. In shuffly fashion, he ascended the stairs. When the final creak of his footsteps had faded, there was motion in the hall below.

A figure took shape from the blackness, emerged to the center of the hall.

Above cloaked shoulders were eyes that peered from beneath the brim of a slouch

hat. They were keener eyes than Mayland's.

Again, Harry's visit to this house had been screened from danger. The lurker in Mayland's mansion was The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII

THE TEMPLE OF SIVA

THREE dozen persons were assembled in a fantastic room, where brass walls formed the background of a magnificent setting. The place was a veritable product of the Orient, transplanted to New York for the amazement of all who might view it.

Chairs and settees were of teakwood. Brass iota jars stood upon carved tables. Most bizarre of all was the huge bronze statue, raised upon a dais, that overlooked the room.

The statue was an idol of Siva, larger than a life-size figure. Its three heads faced toward the assemblage; and each bronze countenance possessed a half-dozen jeweled eyes. The many outstretched hands held tridents, axes, sheaves of grain. Those symbolized that Siva was a power of both creation and destruction, who ruled on sea as well as land.

The necklace that adorned the mammoth Siva was composed of skulls and serpents. The death's-heads were nearly full size; the snakes were so realistic that their brass coils appeared to writhe, if a person watched them steadily.

Presiding over this temple was a steady-eyed Hindu, who wore a golden robe. His turban, of the same rare cloth, was marked by a diamond crescent: the symbol of Siva.

Harry Vincent was looking toward the Hindu, when he heard Lucille Mayland whisper the name:

"Singhar Bund."

Though Singhar Bund conducted the Siva cult, he was not the only Hindu present. There were half a dozen others; they were attired in baggy garments that covered scrawny bodies. Harry was not certain, but he believed that two of

these could be the foemen who had battled The Shadow aboard the Wanderer.

"They are the yogi," undertoned Lucille. "Through meditation, they can unite with Siva, to gain power over all material things."

Harry was getting a rapid insight into the set-up of the Siva cult. The whole affair was a fake, despite its splendor; and for nerve, Singhar Bund could outmatch any swindler that Harry had ever met.

Not one so-called yogi was genuine, in Harry's opinion. The Shadow had correctly classed them as dacoits; despite their fancy garb, they looked like murderous stranglers. But the camouflage was good enough to deceive all persons

whose knowledge of India depended solely upon what Singhar Bund told them.

Singhar Bund was speaking; his words were in English, smooth and persuasive. He was describing miracles of the Orient; wonders that would be reproduced within this temple. The listeners were persons of intelligence, many

of them Lucille's friends; yet they drank in the statements of Singhar Bund.

The promise that lay behind the gorgeous sham was that of life and happiness; freedom from all danger, to those who believed in Siva.

WHILE Singhar Bund continued his languorous lecture, Harry studied the surroundings. The temple had been easy of access. It was located on the second floor of a building that had stores on the street level. Perhaps some of the ground floor belonged to Singhar Bund; certainly, there was more space on the second floor than the area that the temple occupied.

Though the portals stood wide open, Harry observed that they were equipped with gates of solid brass; once shut, those would turn the place into a stronghold. There were corridors outside the temple; where they led, Harry had been unable to learn.

One curious feature of the room was that of alcoves in the walls. There were four of them: one in each side wall, the other pair separated by the platform where the Siva statue rested.

In the alcove in the left wall, Harry observed a long wide board, its surface studded with spikes that pointed upward. The alcove in the right wall housed a small platform with a large rod extending vertically from its center.

In the alcove to the left of the Siva statue. Harry saw a huge metal

casket that looked like a sarcophagus; but it was upright, instead of lying flat, as coffins usually did. The casket had a huge lid, which at present seemed to be a door; for it was hinged at one side and equipped with hasps and padlocks at the other.

Singhar Bund ceased his discourse. The group began to buzz among themselves. Harry mentioned the alcoves; Lucille explained the objects that were placed there.

"The bed of spikes," she said, referring to the nail-studded board. "I have seen a yogi lie there for hours, unharmed by the sharp points."

Harry was not impressed. He had seen that stunt at sideshows. The greater the number of spikes, the less weight each received. Even a heavy man could lie on a hundred spikes without feeling jabs from the points.

"Tonight" - Lucille pointed to the alcove in the right wall - "Singhar Bund has promised a demonstration of Hindu levitation. A yogi will rise in the air above that little platform."

"What about the big casket to the left of the statue?" asked Harry.

"It is for the samadhi, or living burial," replied Lucille. "That will be the final test in the course of instruction. It will be demonstrated at a later meeting."

Harry looked to the right of the statue. The fourth alcove was empty; but its inner wall had a brass door.

"That leads to Singhar Bund's own sanctuary," declared Lucille. "It is where he spends his time in contemplation."

Harry's guess was that Singhar Bund spent part of his time counting the contributions that the cult received; the rest, in studying new lists of dupes.

It was wise, however, not to mention that opinion to Lucille. She was completely sold on the Siva cult.

Taken at face value, the cult racket would be a hard one to break. People had a right to believe what they wanted, and to contribute funds if they so chose. But if murder lay behind the game, the story would be different.

In that case, Singhar Bund could be exposed as a criminal; and his flimflam would be ended. The one flaw was that murder had not yet been pinned on Singhar Bund. To make it a positive conviction, his dacoits would have to be caught in an act of crime, and their actions traced back to Singhar Bund, himself.

ONE of the Hindus had entered the alcove in the right wall. While Singhar Bund was announcing the yogi's coming test, Harry asked Lucille about the other persons present. The girl knew the names of most of them. Some that she mentioned were on The Shadow's list.

One, in particular, was a pinch-faced woman who watched proceedings through a lorgnette. Her name was Madeline Selvin; though Lucille did not seem to know it, the woman was a relation of Rodney Welk. Information that had reached The Shadow, indicated that Madeline Selvin would receive a large portion of Welk's money.

Lucille also pointed out an elderly, stooped man, whose face was droopy and tired-eyed. His name was Phineas Leeth, and he was very wealthy. His money, so Lucille said, had come from mines in Mexico. Leeth was one of the largest contributors to the Siva cult. In fact, he was one of very few cult members who had money in his own right.

There was another man who interested Harry; but Lucille did not know his

name. He was old, with white beard and flowing hair, that gave him the appearance of a patriarch. Though he sat silent and huddled, his eyes were keen and watchful.

Harry was positive that he had seen the old codger somewhere before. He was still wondering about the bearded man's identity, when Singhar Bund called for attention.

Two Hindus had been holding a cloth in front of the alcove in the right wall. They removed it, to show a yogi seated in mid-air. His legs were crossed beneath him; his right hand rested lightly on the post that stood in the pedestal.

Awed gasps came from the throng when Singhar Bund took a sword and dramatically passed it all about the seated man. The curtain was replaced; soon afterward, the Hindu came from the alcove.

The trick did not baffle Harry. He had read up on the methods of Hindu fakirs, at The Shadow's order. Harry had noted that the Hindu wore a long-sleeved jacket, different from those of Singhar Bund's other helpers.

That sleeve hid a rod connecting with the post. Passing along the Hindu's arm, the rod enlarged into a supporting cradle at the Hindu's back. The trick was an old one in India; but it was still mysterious, when performed with all the claptrap that Singhar Bund knew how to provide.

The meeting had ended. One by one, the Siva believers were approaching the huge statue, each waiting at a respectful distance until the one ahead had gone. Lucille told Harry that this was a usual ceremony. She took her turn among the rest.

Harry observed that the scrawny Hindus were awaiting their turn. When the others had gone, they filed toward the Siva statue. One bowed; went his way. Another did the same.

It struck Harry that he could establish himself more firmly with Lucille, if he performed the ritual. Seized by a bold urge, he approached the statue, just as the final Hindu reached it.

Harry was less than ten feet distant when the Hindu bowed. He was close enough to catch a sound that others had not noticed. From the lips of the bowing Hindu, Harry heard a hiss. Though subdued, it had the exact tone of the signal that had been given aboard the Wanderer!

HARRY was right. These Hindus were dacoits. One of them was the man who had pitched Welk overboard. Whether the final Hindu was that killer, did not matter. Harry wanted to know why the fake yogi had given the dacoit's call on this occasion. The fellow was still bowed before the statue; he had a listening attitude. Harry took a step forward.

Instantly, his arm was gripped by fingers that had an iron clutch. A hand drew him backward with surprising strength. In contrast came a velvet voice, that purred in Harry's ear; but its tones were so close that Harry could not hear sounds from elsewhere.

"Good evening, my friend," spoke the voice. "You are a neophyte, a newcomer in our midst. But you are one, my vision tells me, who chooses to believe in Siva."

Harry turned to face the smooth-tongued Singhar Bund. He met eyes that shone with glistening stare from a well-formed countenance of oval shape. Thin, brownish lips had parted in a friendly smile; but Singhar Bund's expression was his usual sham.

The grip relaxed from Harry's wrist. Had he been alone with Singhar Bund,

Harry would have expected the Hindu's fingers to reach for his neck. Under present circumstances, Singhar Bund was forced to retain his oily pose.

The Hindu's eyes sidelonged toward the Siva statue. The last dacoit had gone. With a bow of his turbaned head, Singhar Bund conducted Harry to the image. After they stood in contemplation, Singhar Bund presented Harry with a miniature Siva figure, like the one that Lucille carried.

Harry rejoined Lucille. She was pleased because he had received a token from Singhar Bund; but she was anxious to reach the theater before the show ended. She was sure that her grandfather would question her regarding the play.

They reached the street and took a taxi. It was difficult for Harry to realize that he was really in Manhattan, after the spell of the Siva temple. But as they rode along, he weighed the facts that he had gained.

Harry would have a real report for The Shadow, regarding both the Siva cult and its controller, Singhar Bund. Harry had learned much tonight; but chance had provided him with a highlight - namely, that signal given at the Siva statue.

Though Harry could not guess the reason for the dacoit's murderous call, he was confident that The Shadow would divine its purpose.

CHAPTER VIII

SINGHAR BUND SPEAKS

ALL the members of the Siva cult had not left the upstairs temple at the time when Harry and Lucille departed. Among those who remained was Phineas Leeth; bent low over his cane, the mine owner was chatting with others of the group.

Another person present was the white-bearded man who had captured Harry's attention. He was much interested in the temple. With slow gait, he went from alcove to alcove, peering with his quick-darting eyes.

The bearded man was looking at the big casket near the Siva statue, when a person approached him. He turned to meet Singhar Bund. The Hindu showed the same suave pose that he had used with Harry.

"The burial tomb," spoke Singhar Bund, referring to the casket. "Imprisoned there, an ordinary mortal would soon die for want of air; but a yogi, placed in the hypnotic state that we term samadhi, can live indefinitely.

"The trance state represents the highest form of yogi concentration. That is why I have reserved the living burial for the final demonstration in this series of meetings. I hope, sir, that you will be present to witness it."

The old man nodded, as though he anticipated the event. Motioning toward the casket, he wheezed a question:

"Why the padlocks?"

"To prove that the yogi never leaves his tomb," smiled Singhar Bund.

"There are always skeptics who doubt that these demonstrations are genuine. We find it necessary to convince them."

While his smooth voice purred, Singhar Bund kept steady eyes upon the bearded man. The visitor had no other question, so Singhar Bund put one of his own.

"Would you like to see some authentic photographs of yogi miracles?" he asked. "I have a collection, brought from India. They are in my private grotto."

He gestured toward the doorway beyond the Siva statue. The bearded man nodded his acceptance of the invitation.

The grotto lay beyond a heavy brass door. It proved much smaller than the temple, although its paneled walls were also of metal. The ceiling was arched,

but low; the room was packed with exquisite furnishings.

Singhar Bund motioned the bearded man to a chair that looked as ornate as a rajah's throne.

"Why should we deal in pretense?" purred Singhar Bund. "You would be more comfortable without your disguise, Inspector Cardona!"

THE bearded man gave a start. A grunt came from his lips. After a moment's hesitation, he plucked away the white whiskers. Peeling the shocky wig from his head, he revealed himself as the person named by Singhar Bund.

"How did you figure who I was?" demanded Cardona, abruptly. "I've never met you, so far as I can remember."

"Your beard was obviously a false one," replied Singhar Bund. "I would advise you to obtain a better one. The wig, though, is excellent."

"You haven't answered my question," persisted Cardona. "I'll admit that the Santa Claus outfit looks like a fake. But that didn't tell you whose face was behind the bushes."

Singhar Bund smiled placidly.

"Much is known to those who serve Siva," he declared. "Should you be too skeptical to accept that explanation, let us say that I solved your identity through simple deduction. You will grant that any person coming to this meeting

in disguise, could logically be taken for a police investigator."

Cardona granted that much.

"Very well," concluded Singhar Bund. "But why should such an investigator need a disguise at all? There is but one answer. He would have to be a person so definitely in the public eye, that he would fear recognition.

"There are very few police officials to whom that would apply. You are one of those few, inspector." Singhar Bund bowed with smug courtesy. "Moreover, you top the list. That is why I named you."

The explanation satisfied Cardona. While hearing it, Joe was choosing his next step. He had, at least, gained one benefit. He had penetrated to the private room that formed Singhar Bund's headquarters. Cardona decided to press that advantage.

"There's some questions I'd like to ask," he declared, "about this racket of yours."

"A racket?" Singhar Bund arched his thin eyebrows, as though he had never heard the term. "I do not understand, inspector. My Siva cult is a legitimate organization. Its meetings are not only orderly, they are attended by persons of culture and refinement. If you have come here on a complaint, I can assure you that it is unwarranted."

"I've come to inquire about two people," put in Cardona, bluntly. "One is named Courtney Renshell; the other is Jack Sarmon. I'd like to know where they are."

Singhar Bund pondered.

"I recall Renshell," he declared. "For a while, he was a chela - the name we give to true followers of Siva. But worldly matters interfered. Renshell became a skeptic. He has not attended the past few meetings. As for Sarmon, the name is unfamiliar."

SINGHAR BUND lifted a small, padded hammer; he tapped a bronze gong. A scrawny Hindu appeared from the temple; Cardona heard Singhar Bund babble words in Hindustani. Among them was the name of Phineas Leeth.

The Hindu servitor was gone for nearly a minute; when he reappeared, he ushered Leeth into the grotto. Pausing in his hobble, Leeth stared at Cardona. His tired eyes showed surprise, then chagrin, when they noted the absence of Cardona's disguise.

"Be at ease, Mr. Leeth," purred Singhar Bund. "I am not angered because you brought Inspector Cardona here. I merely wish to know whether he came at your request, or his own."

Leeth admitted that he had called Cardona. Singhar Bund inquired if the matter concerned Courtney Renshell. Leeth replied in the affirmative. Singhar Bund opened the deep drawer of a thick-legged table. He found a typewritten card, that he handed to Cardona.

"This is all that I know regarding Renshell," assured Singhar Bund. "His name; his address; his attendance record. But the other man - Sarmon" - Singhar

Bund looked through his files - "is not listed here."

Leeth put in an explanation. Sarmon was not a member of the Siva cult; he was merely a friend of Renshell's. Cardona remembered that Leeth had stated that fact in the hotel suite. The whole trail was leading away from Singhar Bund and the Siva cult.

Cardona was silently classing Leeth as an old fool for bringing him here, when Singhar Bund provided a helpful remark.

"I cannot understand why Renshell left us," he declared. "For a while, he followed Siva ardently. He even brought a new student, who has become a true chela. I have her card here: her name is Lucille Mayland."

Cardona riveted. His thoughts snapped to an instant connection. He was right, he decided, regarding last night's trouble on Long Island. Welk's falling overboard had nothing to do with the brawl on shore.

Hoodlums had been on their way to Long Island before Welk's accident. There was a reason why they could have picked the dock where the Wanderer was stationed. Lucille had been there!

It fitted like a glove. Somebody had gotten rid of Courtney Renshell. To clinch his disappearance, other persons had to be hushed. One was Jack Sarmon, Renshell's close friend. Another could logically be Lucille Mayland.

"The girl was Renshell's fiancée," mused Singhar Bund. "She should know facts concerning him. Miss Mayland was here tonight; but she left immediately after the meeting."

Cardona hadn't seen Lucille. He had been too busy watching Singhar Bund and the yogi. Singhar Bund remarked that a young man had accompanied Lucille to the meeting; but he was a stranger, and Singhar Bund had not inquired his name.

Meanwhile, Cardona had reached for Lucille's card. He read the girl's address. He asked Singhar Bund who else lived there. The Hindu was not certain.

"She lives with her uncle, I believe," said Singhar Bund. "Or perhaps her guardian."

"Her grandfather," corrected Leeth. "His name is Morton Mayland. Sarmon mentioned him. In fact" - Leeth rubbed his chin reflectively - "I believe that Sarmon intended to call at the Mayland residence, to inquire regarding Renshell."

THAT was enough for Cardona. He bundled his false beard and wig; stuffed the disguise into his pocket. Reaching for his hat, he told his companions that

he was going directly to the Mayland home.

Phineas Leeth nodded approvingly from his chair; he smiled when Cardona assured him that he would soon hear more about the Renshell matter. Leeth remained in the grotto, while Singhar Bund conducted Cardona out through the deserted temple.

There, Cardona shook hands warmly. He owed thanks to Singhar Bund; also an apology for having mistrusted him. Singhar Bund made light of the matter. He was serious, though, when he presented Cardona with a tiny Siva image.

"Carry this," urged Singhar Bund. "Regard it as a token of my friendship and good will. Whether or not you believe in the power of Siva, this little charm will assure your safety and will bring success to your present venture."

Cardona thrust the little image into his coat pocket. When Joe had left the temple, Singhar Bund stood alone. A glint came to the Hindu's eyes; his lips parted, to form a contorted smile. Stepping to the giant statue of Siva, Singhar Bund delivered an audible hiss.

The tone was different from the serpent signals that Harry Vincent had heard. After he had hissed, Singhar Bund spoke to the faces of the statue. His words were cryptic, although he uttered them in English:

"All has gone well. The time has come for the one required deed. Let it be done."

Singhar Bund stepped away from the statue. The insidious smile faded from his lips as he opened the brass door to the grotto. Singhar Bund was rejoining his pupil, Phineas Leeth, to discourse on the ways of Siva.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOW'S TRAIL

EVER since Harry's departure from the Mayland residence, The Shadow had been investigating the old mansion and the houses that adjoined it. The task had proven an exacting one.

In effecting his first entry, The Shadow had come through a next-door house, hoping to find a route across some connecting roof. He had struck luck in a lower hallway of the adjoining house, before he even reached the stairs.

There, The Shadow's flashlight had shown a panel in the wall, open half an inch. Following it, he had found a passage that led behind the stairs in Mayland's house. That accounted for The Shadow's presence, when Harry came to meet Lucille.

Inspecting Mayland's house, The Shadow had gone everywhere except in the second floor sitting room. That was where Morton Mayland had retired; it was unwise to let the old man know that the premises were being scoured.

Returning to the lower passage, The Shadow went back to the first house; searched it without finding anything of importance. Then, moving along the secret passage, he had made a valuable discovery.

The passage ended in a rough-hewn trapdoor. Beneath was a ladder, that led down into a blocked-off portion of the cellar. The far wall showed a gap in the masonry. The opening led to the farther house in the group of three.

Searching the cellar of the empty house, The Shadow found streaks in the dust outside a whitewashed coal bin. Working on the boards, he easily loosened them. There were boxes on the floor of the bin; shifting them, The Shadow uncovered a huge stone fitted in the floor. Its iron ring proved it to be the entrance to some subterranean chamber.

The thick slab was too heavy for one man to lift. The Shadow met that difficulty by a system of leverage. Loose bricks were available; he set them as a fulcrum, then applied a long piece of iron pipe that he found in the cellar.

The slab was budging under The Shadow's prodding effort, when the cloaked worker suddenly ceased his task.

A sharp sound had knifed its echoes into this hidden bin. It was the unmistakable tingle of a telephone bell.

That ringing could come from only one source: Mayland's own house.

The Shadow had seen a telephone in the lower hall. If the old man did not have an extension line upstairs, it would take him a few minutes to answer the call. There was a chance that The Shadow could listen into Mayland's conversation.

The Shadow heard the tingle again, as he emerged from the coal bin. His trip, though, was a long one, even with the guiding beam of his tiny flashlight. He had to travel across one cellar, through the broken wall to Mayland's own house, up the ladder to the passage.

WHEN The Shadow finally reached the panel that opened into Mayland's hallway, he found himself too late. Inching the panel open, he glimpsed Morton Mayland at the front door. The old man was wearing hat and overcoat. He gave the door a hasty slam, an instant after The Shadow spotted him.

Stepping into the hall, The Shadow closed the panel. He followed the same route that Mayland had taken. Edging the front door open, The Shadow spied Mayland beside a street lamp, beckoning toward the apartment building at the corner. Mayland received prompt service. A taxi wheeled up.

The Shadow took advantage of that interval to ease through the front door.

Closing it, he descended the steps. He was against the blackness of the brownstone building front when Mayland entered the cab. The Shadow caught the old fellow's hasty order to the cabby.

"Riverbank Apartments," cackled Mayland. "It's on West Eighty-eighth Street. I'll give you the number -"

The cab had started, with Mayland fumbling for the paper on which he had written the number. His destination was evidently one that had been given him over the telephone.

Another taxi detached itself from the corner and rolled up toward the brownstone house. The Shadow expected that. He had a cab of his own, manned by one of his agents - a clever hackle named Moe Shrevnitz - that he had stationed close at hand.

In his orders to Moe, The Shadow had stated that if anyone came to Mayland's or left there, Moe should cruise the street, watching for a signal.

The signal was to be a series of blinks from The Shadow's flashlight. It happened that The Shadow did not give them.

Just as his thumb was about to press the button, The Shadow observed that the cab was not Moe's. It was an extra taxi that had been stationed near the apartment house. For some reason, it had followed the first one, so promptly that Moe had been unable to start.

The strange cab halted squarely in front of Mayland's house. The Shadow could see the driver's face, muffled in the collar of his overcoat. The fellow hunched beside the wheel and waited.

Although this cab was worth investigation, The Shadow could not spare time

for it. The cab's arrival on the scene was proof that something special lay behind Mayland's mission. Looking toward the corner, The Shadow saw Moe's cab. It hadn't budged from its station. Moe was smart enough to await The Shadow there.

A quick trip to the corner would enable The Shadow to board Moe's cab. By speedy driving, he could reach the Riverbank Apartments ahead of Mayland. That chance was too good to lose. The Shadow edged from darkness, preparing for a swift glide past the street lamp. He waited a moment, at the sound of footsteps.

A stocky man came out of the darkness; stopped short at Mayland's steps. He looked toward the dim house, then turned toward the cab. That was when The

Shadow saw the arrival's face. The newcomer was Joe Cardona.

The ace detective had decided to question the driver of the mystery cab. This was worth observation by The Shadow. He drew closer in the darkness.

"WHO are you waiting for?" The Shadow heard Cardona say. "Anybody from this house?"

The cabby didn't reply until Cardona flashed a badge. Seeing the emblem of authority, the fellow became voluble.

"I ain't waiting for anybody," he growled. "I'm sore, that's what, at the way I was gypped out of a fare! An old gink comes hopping out of this house, see? He gives the high-sign, and I wheel up.

"Then another hack cuts in front of me, and the old geezer takes it. Leaving me here, with nobody! That was just a minute ago - and here I am, still talking to myself."

The cabby had lied regarding the incident; he had also lessened the time interval, for Mayland had been gone fully five minutes. The Shadow sensed that something else was due. It came, when Cardona questioned:

"Where did the old gent go? Got any idea?"

"Have I?" snorted the cab driver. "Didn't he holler it loud enough to wake

the neighborhood? He said he wanted to go to the Riverbank Apartments, on Eighty-eighth Street. And besides that - this is a funny one - he was so excited that he gave the apartment number instead of street address. 5 B was what he said."

Cardona yanked open the door of the cab.

"Get going," he told the driver. "To the Riverbank Apartments."

From that conversation, The Shadow had come to prompt conclusions. It was plain that Cardona's driver was hooked up with some curious game. He had arrived here close after the other cab, knowing beforehand where Morton Mayland

intended to go. Hence he had told Cardona the address, without having overheard

it. Moreover, he had specified an added detail - the apartment number - that Mayland had not mentioned to his own driver.

Just what the game promised was a riddle; but The Shadow saw its likely connection with the past. This was the sort of thing that could be the build-up

to a fake accident, like the death of Rodney Welk.

If so, it indicated the coming presence of dacoit murderers at the Riverbank Apartments.

Cardona's cab was gone. The Shadow's flashlight blinked. Moe sped up from the corner; the moment that The Shadow had given him the address, the cabby reported:

"I don't know who sent that second hack here. It shoved into sight just about five minutes before the old guy came out of the house."

THE cab was whipping along an avenue. The Shadow gave Moe another order. The cab halted; Moe hurried into a cigar store to make a telephone call, that took him only two minutes. That was time lost; but it was necessary.

The Shadow had not forgotten that cover-up crews worked with the dacoits. He had ordered Moe to call Burbank, instructing the contact man to send agents to Eighty-eighth Street. If it came to widespread battle, The Shadow could find

use for capable reserves.

Moe was back at the wheel; the taxi was bowling northward. A low laugh throbbed from the darkness of the rear seat, as Moe cut in and out of traffic.

Cars jammed the avenue ahead; Moe hooked a left turn at the last flicker of the green light. He was cutting through to another avenue, where the going would be faster.

Lost minutes would mean little to The Shadow, by the time this ride was completed. He could count on Moe to cut down the distance gained by those cabs ahead. The Shadow was confident that he had already overtaken Cardona. He might not catch up with Mayland, but he would be very close, by the time the first cab reached the Riverbank Apartments.

Beneath the folds of his black cloak, The Shadow gripped the cold steel that represented a brace of automatics. His laugh was a tone of whispered prophecy.

Those big guns would again be needed, before tonight's adventure reached its finish.

CHAPTER X

MURDERER'S THRUST

THE Riverbank Apartments, while not on the shores of the Hudson, were close enough to allow for the name. A squatly warehouse flanked the western courtyard of the apartment building.

The top of that warehouse came on a level with the fifth floor of the Riverbank Apartments. To the rear was a row of old houses that fronted on another street. A medley of other buildings chopped the block into a maze of nooks and alleyways.

Morton Mayland was not concerned with the outside scene, when he stopped at the fifth floor door that bore the number "5 B." Raising a scrawny hand, Mayland knocked. A rumbled voice ordered him to enter.

Mayland stepped into a living room where floor lamps formed the only illumination. He closed the door behind him, looked across the room to see a figure seated near the opened windows. A head raised from an easy-chair; hands laid a book aside.

An instant later, two men were glaring in mutual recognition. Mayland was the first to cough the other's name:

"Louis Bolingbroke!"

The man in the chair was middle-aged, dark-haired, dark-eyed. His blunt face was a stubborn one; his lips, when they turned downward, showed as sour an expression as Mayland's. Bolingbroke was prompt in his response.

"So it's Morton Mayland!" His rumbly voice carried contempt. "Hounding me again! What brings you here, Mayland? I thought our disputes were settled in the law courts."

Mayland advanced. His fists were clenched; his wrinkled face was tigerish.

Those tiny eyes had narrowed; they flashed hate toward Bolingbroke.

"You brought me here," croaked Mayland. "You were not content with your spoils. This hoax was your idea, to gloat over your undeserved victory!"

"Come, Mayland!" rasped Bolingbroke. "This is preposterous!"

Bolingbroke tried to rise. His back gave him a twinge. He was half crippled with lumbago; but Mayland seemed to consider his pain a pretense. As Bolingbroke sagged deep into his chair, Mayland crouched above him.

"Have you forgotten what I promised?" The old man's words came in a hiss. "I warned you, Bolingbroke, that if occasion offered, I would treat you like the rat you are! I told you that these hands of mine" - Mayland extended his scraggly claws - "were itching for your throat!"

Bolingbroke forced himself up from his chair. Fear made him forget pain.

"You didn't really mean that, Mayland -"

"No?" Mayland was disdainful. "You will find out what I really meant, Bolingbroke. I have given you a chance to leave me alone. I have sworn, time and again, that I would not harm you if you stayed from my path. The fault is yours. You have brought this on yourself -"

Mayland completed the words with a quick swoop of his hands. They went for

Bolingbroke's throat; the dark-haired man made a clutch to prevent the throttling move. The pair locked in battle.

BOTH fighters were handicapped. Mayland's hate could not make up for his age. Bolingbroke's greater strength was offset by his crippled muscles. Mayland's clutching hands were seeking their mark. To avoid their grip, Bolingbroke rolled from the chair.

The battlers struck a floor lamp; it wobbled, almost fell. There was the clatter of an ash stand. With it, every light in the room was obliterated.

In the darkness, neither Mayland nor Bolingbroke cared about the matter. They were too busy to wonder why the lights had been extinguished. The floor plug that controlled all the lamps was beside an inner doorway, far from the fighters. Yet each thought that the other had caused the darkness.

Other sounds were lost as the strugglers lashed about. Mayland was cackling gleefully at Bolingbroke's shouts for help. The old man was clawing anew for his enemy's throat, when the cries reached a sharp finish.

There was a gurgle from the floor. It was Bolingbroke who gave it. Mayland's laughter shrilled.

Those sounds drowned the sudden clatter of the door. Light from the hallway showed the floor, but did not reach the strugglers. The glow that swept

them was the cleaving beam of a tiny flashlight, that spotted an astounding tableau.

Bolingbroke was crumpled on the floor, clutching hopelessly at his neck. Mayland was astride him; but it was not the old man who was responsible for Bolingbroke's torture. The cause lay with another creature, who had secretly entered the room.

Behind Bolingbroke's side-turned head was a Hindu dacoit, whose brown fingers were tightening a strangle cord flung about the invalid's neck!

The dacoit saw the flashlight's beam. A hiss came from his toothy mouth, as he stared toward the opened door. The hiss was answered by a weird laugh: the mockery that only The Shadow could produce.

With a snakelike twist, the dacoit sprang away, whipping the strangle cord from Bolingbroke's neck.

The murderous Hindu hoped for a more important victim; namely, The Shadow.

After that, he could return to Bolingbroke.

THE living room was ample for slippery tactics. With amazing speed, the dacoit avoided the flashlight's path. Like a whippet, he lashed through the darkness, driving for The Shadow. The flashlight blinked out as the strangle cord slacked through the air.

The murderer's noose missed The Shadow's neck. Before the dacoit could whisk away, The Shadow gripped him. The twisty Hindu squirmed toward the window, but he could not elude The Shadow's clutch.

Mayland's cackles, Bolingbroke's groans formed an accompaniment to that battle. Wriggling half through the window, the dacoit grabbed the slatted platform of a steel fire escape, gave a jerk that hauled his body through. The Shadow was upon him before he could slip away again.

There, by the rail, The Shadow's gun descended. The dacoit's quick arm movement broke the blow; with the same sweep, it lashed the cord around The Shadow's neck. Before The Shadow's eyes came the apish face. A hiss, more venomous than any serpent's, forced itself between the dacoit's teeth.

The strangler had tricked The Shadow!

The black-cloaked form was sagging, like others that the dacoit had handled. A few more twists of the noose, The Shadow's strength would be gone. The Hindu's fingers were eager with their ugly work; he heard the gurgle from The Shadow's throat.

Then came the counter movement.

Cloaked shoulder hoisted upward; gloved hands lifted the dacoit's knees. With every ounce of his remaining effort, The Shadow fought off his foeman's final move. That heave caught the dacoit unawares. Fingers lost the strangle cord; arms went wide. Grabbing for the fire escape rail, the dacoit shifted in the wrong direction.

Before The Shadow could stay the Hindu, the snakish man was gone across the rail!

There was a crash, three stories below, as the dacoit hit the roof of an extension behind the apartment building. The Shadow took long puffs of air, as he placed the dacoit's strangle cord beneath his cloak.

It had been a close pinch, that fight; and The Shadow needed time to recuperate. He wasn't worried about matters in the living room. Bolingbroke's groans were still audible, and Mayland's chuckles had lost their insane fury. The old man was apparently satisfied, once he had rendered Bolingbroke helpless.

Darkness was utter in the courtyard below, but The Shadow could hear the occasional hisses of the dacoit. Lightframed as a monkey, the defeated killer had survived his thirty-foot fall; but he was too crippled to make a prompt getaway.

There was still a chance to capture the dacoit. The Shadow arose beside the rail.

AT that instant, the lights in the living room came on again. Turned toward the window, The Shadow had an inward view that showed him the entire scene.

Bolingbroke, flat on the floor; Mayland, crouched beside him; they were not all.

A man had reached in from the next room, to press the floor plug back in place. He was no Hindu, that intruder; he had the look of a thug whose cap was drawn well over his eyes. His move was the forerunner of the sort that The Shadow had expected - a battle from a cover-up crew, after a dacoit's deed was finished.

The fellow was gone, into that other room, while The Shadow's hands were drawing forth their guns. But The Shadow did not halt his motion. He knew exactly what those lights could mean. Upon quick action with those automatics would depend The Shadow's salvation.

As he whipped the guns into play, The Shadow wheeled about to face across the fire platform's rail. Simultaneously, he was greeted with raucous shouts from the darkness opposite. The edge of the warehouse roof was lined with thuggish marksmen, who could not resist the joy of voicing challenge.

Their pal in the apartment had provided the very chance they wanted. The Shadow was their target, against a background of light.

If ever crooks had gained a full advantage in battle with The Shadow, this crew had found it.

Their cries were a promise of annihilation.

Death to The Shadow!

CHAPTER XI

THE TRIPLE TRAIL

HIS big guns spoke as The Shadow wheeled. Each .45 was aimed at random, although The Shadow chose the roof line as the stretch where bullets could count. He wanted to loose the first shots; he knew they would hurry the enemy's fire.

Revolvers answered. They were hasty. Bullets spattered the wall of the apartment house. The cooler marksmen were aiming for the lighted windows, fingers still on triggers, but they were few. The Shadow evaded them.

His spin did not stop at the full turn. The Shadow was sidestepping as he fired. His swerve carried him along the platform, away from the telltale windows. Two guns barked from the roof just as The Shadow moved. One bullet whistled past The Shadow's shoulder, the other skimmed his ribs.

The wound was stabbing, painful; at the moment, The Shadow did not realize that it was a light one. He flattened in the darkness, determined to continue his plan as long as he proved able. His guns spat again; this time, with results.

The Shadow had an uncanny way of picking gunbursts as his targets. His shots were accurate; howls came from the roof. They were drowned by a new rattle of revolvers. Crooks were shooting for The Shadow, knowing that he could not have traveled far, for the platform of the fire escape provided very little space.

Given a few seconds more, the outnumbering gunmen would have riddled The Shadow with well-placed bullets. It happened that The Shadow had strategy with which they did not reckon. Purposely, The Shadow had chosen what seemed a trap.

He had taken to the end of the platform opposite from that of the ladder. The sharpshooters never expected that he would try to reach a spot below.

That was why The Shadow took that course. The moment that he had delivered those shots from prone position, he rolled beneath the rail. Clutching both guns in one hand, he clamped the platform with his other fist and let his body sweep downward. That very motion gave him a sway; as he swung inward, The Shadow relaxed his grip, to plop upon the fourth floor platform.

Bullets pounded the metalwork above. The Shadow let that barrage subside. As sequel, he provided a chilling, mocking laugh. Before the crooks could guess the location of the mirth, The Shadow announced it with bullets.

Shifting back and forth along the rail, The Shadow forgot his wounded side, as he pumped devastation with his guns. Shooting upward, he was picking off the enemy like pigeons on a shooting-gallery rack.

Some were fools enough to fire back. They regretted it. The Shadow always chose as targets the last to shoot at him, as evidenced by his revolver shots. He reached the end of the platform that had a ladder; there were no lighted windows here to betray him. Giving the gunmen a respite, The Shadow descended another story.

THE battle ended more rapidly than The Shadow had expected. There were mobsters in the courtyard below; they began to fire upward, even though The Shadow was protected by the steel platform. They stopped promptly, when police whistles shrilled in the distance.

Other guns began to speak. Crooks were in flight, shouting that the bulls had arrived. Only The Shadow knew the real identity of the new attackers. His agents had arrived. Easing downward, The Shadow continued toward the courtyard.

Almost at the bottom of the fire escape, The Shadow sensed a muffled clatter above him. For the moment, he forgot the dacoit that he wanted to find.

This was the man from that other room: the trouble-maker who had switched on the lights!

Though ordinary hoodlums had shown ignorance when quizzed by the police, The Shadow knew that every mob required a leader. There were brains among those

cover-up squads; and any man smart enough to invade Bolingbroke's apartment, would certainly have intelligence.

That man who followed The Shadow was one who could tell facts regarding recent murders, as readily as any dacoit.

The Shadow waited. His quarry arrived. With a swish, the cloaked fighter was upon the fellow, smothering him in the darkness of that lower platform.

The thug had supposed that The Shadow was gone; nevertheless, he was alert

- enough so to put up a frenzied struggle, as he hit the platform. Ordinarily, such resistance would have been short-lived. Once The Shadow had the edge in a combat of this sort, an opponent seldom rallied. Tonight, the case was different.

Shifting to gain a complete clutch, The Shadow let his adversary writhe leftward. The Shadow swung in the same direction, jolting hard against the rail. The jounce came squarely on those ribs that had deflected a marksman's bullet.

The hard shock brought immediate agony; instinctively, The Shadow pressed his hand against his side.

The crook caught the rail, came upward. He felt The Shadow's slump, took advantage of it. The conflict underwent a swift reversal; the mobster had the superior position. It was his own luck that made him overeager, plus his ignorance of The Shadow's wounded condition.

Figuring that his advantage was temporary, the crook tried to end matters in a hurry. They were a single flight above the ground, battling close to the hinged steps that hung from the fire escape. The crook shoved The Shadow for the space below.

In those split-seconds, The Shadow showed quick strategy. Instead of fighting back, he let himself go. Flung backward to the ladder, he twisted to the right, to land on his unwounded side. He struck the ladder arm first; grabbed hard for a metal step.

It worked as The Shadow calculated. His sudden drop made the crook's forward motion a long one. The fellow couldn't halt himself; he came plunging for The Shadow. But The Shadow wasn't there when the thug landed. The ladder was swinging downward with the cloaked fighter's weight. The crook found emptiness.

Head first, the fellow pitched clear over The Shadow, clutching the air as

he went. He hit the lower steps, but his momentum was too powerful for him to catch a hold. He finished his plunge with a series of bounces that flattened him in the courtyard.

THE SHADOW changed position slowly, painfully. He was hanging head downward on the steps; he favored his wounded side as he eased around. Whistles

were shrilling closer when he reached the ground; the sirens of patrol cars had

joined the bedlam. There was not much time to lose.

The Shadow stooped above the silent mobster. Playing his flashlight on a flattish, tough-jawed face, he recognized his assailant. The fellow was "Lucky"

Belther, long a lieutenant of notorious racketeers. Lucky had a double reputation. He could frame victims, or put them on the spot - whichever the big-shots chose.

Lucky was senseless; that made his removal a problem for The Shadow. But the solution to the difficulty had approached. Someone was close by in the courtyard; a man spoke cautiously, when he saw The Shadow's flashlight blink. The arrival was Cliff Marsland, one of The Shadow's agents

The Shadow's tone came promptly:

"Report!"

Cliff gave brief word. He had another agent with him, in the person of "Hawkeye," a crafty little prowler who roamed the underworld gleaning information for The Shadow. Hawkeye had spotted the crippled dacoit crawling into an alleyway that opened from the next block.

Cliff, in turn, had picked a way out from the courtyard. It was the path by which he had entered, alongside a garage. As yet, the police had not closed it. They were busy chasing thugs who had fled.

The Shadow ordered his agents to carry Lucky through that route, leaving it to Cliff to talk to the fellow later. Cliff understood. He and Hawkeye departed with their burden. The Shadow took the more difficult route that led to the dacoit's trail.

He had reached the street when he saw police closing in on the very passage that Cliff had chosen. Pointing an automatic upward, The Shadow fired two shots. That brought the officers in his direction. They saw the gun spurts, but they did not spy the shape that took to a blackened stretch across the street.

When they arrived at the spot where the shots were fired, The Shadow was gone.

From the alleyway that Hawkeye had mentioned, The Shadow saw his agents lug Lucky past the garage. The patrolmen were too puzzled over the disappearance of the unknown gunner to look in the other direction. His agents clear, The Shadow sought the dacoit's trail.

Blobs of blood furnished the needed route. The dacoit had been badly injured by his long fall. The telltale splotches crossed the next street, entered a space between two buildings on the opposite side. Another block, and The Shadow saw the dacoit himself.

The Hindu was crawling into a taxicab; its number was that of the cab that had brought Mayland to the Riverbank Apartments.

Just before the taxi wheeled away, The Shadow leaped to the rear bumper. Pressed close to the trunk rack, he clung there despite the increased pain from his wounded side.

The cabby chose secluded streets, until he reached an East Side avenue. There, he sped several blocks beneath an elevated, made a turn and stopped on a side street.

The dacoit alighted; he began a huddled sneak into the darkness. The driver saw him depart; never guessed that the Hindu was badly injured. Close to the place he wanted, the dacoit was making a convulsive effort to reach it. The cab pulled away, leaving The Shadow on the street, unseen.

BACK at the Riverbank Apartments, the law had taken over. Joe Cardona was

standing in the living room of 5 B. watching a physician revive Louis Bolingbroke. Two policemen held Morton Mayland in charge.

Bolingbroke's eyes opened. Stretched in his easy-chair, the blunt-faced man stared toward Mayland. Rearing his head, Bolingbroke panted accusations.

"He tried to murder me!" Bolingbroke pointed to Mayland. "Here in this room! He had his hands on my throat -"

Bolingbroke sank back. Cardona looked at Mayland, who was standing subdued

and bewildered. Cardona demanded to know what Mayland had to say for himself. The old man gave an ugly chortle. His eyes flashed new hatred.

"Bah!" uttered Mayland. "I lost my temper, that was all. But when my anger

passed, I was satisfied. Bolingbroke hoaxed me into coming here - through Renshell."

"Courtney Renshell?" quizzed Cardona.

Mayland nodded.

"Where's Renshell right now?" demanded Joe. "Did you see him tonight?"

"No," replied Mayland. "The last time I saw Renshell was at my home."

"Then that's where we're going," snapped Cardona, inspired by a sudden hunch. "We'll hold the rest of the questions until we get there. Meanwhile, you're under arrest, on a charge of attempted murder."

In the back of Cardona's mind was his recollection of Mayland's old house, that loomed as gloomy as a silent mausoleum. Cardona had analyzed it as a likely place for murder. He wanted a chance to go inside that mansion, and Mayland's attack on Bolingbroke had provided it.

The triple trail was complete. Lucky Belther was in the hands of The Shadow's agents. The Shadow, himself, had followed the crippled dacoit to a hidden lair. Joe Cardona held Morton Mayland in custody.

Of those trails, two were The Shadow's own. The third, acquired by the law, was one that The Shadow could pick up whenever he might choose.

For the present, The Shadow was most concerned with the Hindu whose course he had pursued.

The Shadow had found a living Serpent of Siva!

CHAPTER XII

CRIME'S PROOF

Two hours produced big results for Joe Cardona. When the ace inspector worked on a case, he kept many men in motion. Once back at Mayland's house, Cardona displayed no hurry in his questioning of the elderly suspect. Joe was awaiting facts from other quarters.

He and his men were in Mayland's upstairs sitting room; frequently, Cardona was called downstairs to the telephone. Each time he made a trip, he left Mayland in the custody of stolid-faced detectives. The hostile looks of those watchdogs worried Mayland.

Meanwhile, Harry and Lucille arrived home from the theater. Cardona met them in the lower hall; checked on the fact that they had attended the meeting of the Siva cult. When Cardona mentioned that he had been there in disguise, Harry remembered the bearded face that he had seen.

To Cardona, however, the events at Bolingbroke's were most important. When

he told of all that had happened there, Harry was puzzled, while Lucille showed

horror. Cardona wanted them both to remain in the house for a while but he allowed Harry to make a telephone call.

That call was responsible for Cranston's arrival, just at the finish of the two-hour period. The Shadow came in company with the police commissioner, who had come in from the country.

The commissioner, Ralph Weston, had chanced to meet his friend Lamont Cranston, during a chance stop at the Cobalt Club, of which both were members.

As Cranston, The Shadow looked as calm as ever. His appearance was as usual, except for a slight bulge beneath the left side of his tuxedo jacket. The Shadow had found time to have his wound attended.

Cardona was pleased to see Weston and Cranston. The ace was ready to spring a surprise. He buzzed to a detective who was stationed in the downstairs hall. The fellow nodded. Cardona conducted the others up to the sitting room. Morton Mayland narrowed his beady eyes when Cardona entered. He scarcely noted Lucille and the others. Mayland could tell that Cardona was ready to release a bombshell. He tightened his lips in readiness.

"You've answered a lot of questions, Mr. Mayland," declared Cardona, steadily. "I'm going to repeat a few of them and let you answer them again." Mayland shrugged. There wasn't much threat in that assertion.

"WHEN did you last see Courtney Renshell?" demanded Cardona.

"A few weeks ago," replied Mayland. "When he called to see Lucille."

"And you next heard from him -"

"When I received this letter." Mayland produced it. "Renshell sent it from Havana."

Cardona brought out some papers from his pocket, compared them with the letter. Mayland smiled dryly.

"You will find," he declared, "that Renshell's signature is bona fide."

Cardona did not doubt the statement. The Shadow saw Joe stroke his finger along the top line of the letter, where the date was typewritten. There was a roughness there that Cardona had detected. The ace laid the letter aside.

"One more question, Mr. Mayland," put in Joe. "You say that you heard from Renshell since you received this letter?"

"Certainly," replied Mayland, crisply. "He called me on the telephone this evening. He wanted me to meet him at the Riverbank Apartments, in suite 5 B. So I went there, only to find Bolingbroke."

"Why do you suppose Renshell called you?"

"Probably because Bolingbroke put him up to it."

"But Bolingbroke declares he never heard from Renshell."

"Bah! Bolingbroke is not to be trusted!"

The Shadow was watching Mayland closely. The old man had certainly provided an explanation for a telephone call that he had actually received. It also could account for his hurried departure from the mansion. Nevertheless, the answer did not satisfy Cardona.

"You have tried to establish one fact," Joe told Mayland; "namely, that Renshell has been heard from within the past few weeks. You have a letter to prove he was in Havana a week ago; you declare you heard his voice over the telephone tonight."

Mayland nodded. Cardona beckoned to a detective. The dick brought an object that looked like a large flashlight equipped with an extension cord. Cardona plugged the wire into a floor socket. The device was a portable ultraviolet lamp from the police laboratory.

Cardona flicked the purplish rays on the letter. Under the revealing glare, the date line showed new features. Like ghostly images, other typewritten words appeared there. They showed a date a year old!

Cardona wheeled to Lucille, with the question:

"Did Renshell take a trip to Havana a year ago?"

"Why, yes!" exclaimed the girl. "I didn't know where he had gone until he wrote to me."

"That's when he sent this letter to Mayland," snapped Cardona. "And you kept it, Mayland" - Joe was concentrating on the old man - "so you could fake it later. You didn't have to forge Renshell's signature. You simply erased one date and put in another, to make the letter appear recent."

Mayland's face was a riddle. His tiny eyes retained their stare; his lips were tighter than before. He gave no answer to Cardona's impeaching statement. Joe added another charge.

"Maybe you did get a telephone call tonight," he asserted, "but it wasn't from Renshell. Listen, Mayland; I've just received a report from Detective Sergeant Markham; I sent him over to Renshell's place. He says a box was shipped from there - a long box, something like a coffin. What do you know about that box?"

Mayland shook his head. He did not specify whether the matter puzzled him, or whether he was totally ignorant of it. Lucille was the person who gave answer.

"That must be the box that Jack Sarmon mentioned!" exclaimed the girl.

"He was here - the night before the dory races when he spoke about it!"

"So Sarmon knew about the box?" Cardona had turned to Lucille. "Did he know where it was sent?"

"No. That was a fact he wanted to learn."

"It's one that Markham has found out. That box was shipped to this house!"

A HUSH enveloped the sitting room. Keen eyes watched from the calm face of Cranston; they were noting old Morton Mayland. The accused man was the first to speak. He licked his lips, emitted a cackly laugh, as he declared:

"Search these premises! From top to bottom! See what you can find!"

"We've found something already," retorted Cardona. "That back hallway behind the stairs is a pretty short one, Mayland. One of its panels sounded hollow when I tapped it."

The discovery did not perturb Mayland. He merely chuckled, as he turned to Lucille.

"The old side hallway," recalled Mayland. "Remember how drafty it used to be, Lucille? That is why I had the partition placed there. Of course, those panels would sound hollow."

"Especially the one that opens," jabbed Cardona. "You seem to have had use for that old hallway, Mayland."

Mayland couldn't seem to remember the panel that Cardona mentioned. To jog his memory, the inspector suggested a trip downstairs. When they arrived below, Cardona put detectives to work. They wedged the panel open.

Under the glare of flashlights, the sliding partition looked very crude, for it set a full inch deeper than the other panels. Cardona stepped through the opening, sprayed his flashlight to the left.

"Another panel, into the house next door," remarked Cardona. "You own that building, don't you, Mayland?"

The old man admitted it. Cardona investigated in the opposite direction; he found the trapdoor that led down into the cellar. The group was ready to go

in that direction, when another arrival joined them.

This man was Phineas Leeth. Cardona had left word for him at the Ritz Plaza. Leeth listened, gaping, while he heard all that had happened. Then:

"Most amazing; inspector!" expressed Leeth. "Ah! How wise you were to talk with Singhar Bund."

The Hindu's name brought a fierce outburst from Mayland.

"Singhar Bund!" spat the old man. "That faker who duped my niece! He and his Siva cult - bah! I warned you, Lucille, to stay away from there. No one can be trusted who believes in that tommyrot!"

"Sarmon was not a member of the Siva group," objected Leeth, seriously. "He was the one person who was troubled regarding Renshell's disappearance."

"It should have worried me," inserted Lucille, with a cold stare toward old Mayland. "But I was deceived. Not by Singhar Bund, but by my own grandfather!"

Detectives had descended through the trapdoor, to find their way into the next cellar. When they reported, Cardona decided to take everyone to the house next door. They made a roundabout course, using keys that Mayland reluctantly handed over.

Search revealed the empty coal bin, with the steel-ringed slab in the floor. The stone was raised; a ladder was disclosed, leading into a darkened pit. Cardona descended, followed by the commissioner and Cranston.

Detectives let down an extension cord. The glare of an electric bulb showed a squarish room. In one corner was a long box, nailed tightly shut.

That box bore Mayland's address, painted in scraggly letters.

Cardona told a detective to jimmy the box open. The ace had something else

to investigate: a metal door that looked like the mouth of an oven, set in the brick wall. Opening that door, Cardona saw a grating covered with ashes. The space reeked with the odor of burning.

"An incinerator," stated Cardona, "connected with the furnace above. Look, commissioner!"

Cardona was pointing to human bones among the ashes. As he pulled the door

wider, something slipped from beneath its hinge. The unwedged object thudded the stone floor. Cardona picked it up.

The object was a wrist watch, badly scorched; but the initials "C. R." were visible upon its back.

"Renshell's," declared Cardona. "He was shipped here in that box. This is where Mayland cremated the body. But why didn't he burn the box, too?"

The top of the box had just been ripped open. Inside lay the gory answer: the dismembered body of another man. Cardona saw a bloody wallet; opened it.

He read a name from an identification card.

"Sarmon," said Cardona, soberly. "Chopped up and stowed away, until Mayland could find time to dispose of him the same way. That might have been tonight, if the old man hadn't decided to take a whack at Bolingbroke."

WHEN Cardona left those premises, Morton Mayland went with him. The old man was piteous and huddled, his beady eyes staring, his lips muttering silently. Mayland couldn't seem to understand that he was charged with double murder of the most gruesome sort.

At the Cobalt Club, Police Commissioner Weston tried to forget the hideous

sight that he had viewed in the subcellar pit. He thought that Cranston was shaken, too, for his friend was silent and smileless.

Weston would have forgotten that impression, had he followed Cranston later. Leaving the Cobalt Club, the commissioner's friend stepped into his limousine. While the big car rolled eastward, Cranston donned garments of black.

It was the fleeting figure of The Shadow that finally approached a basement entrance in a squalid alley. The Shadow signaled with a low-toned whisper. It was answered by Hawkeye. No one had come to or left this spot within the past hour. Hawkeye, on a relayed order from The Shadow, had been guarding this place.

Sending his agent off duty, The Shadow used a tiny flashlight, while he probed the lock of a rickety door. Entering a dingy room, he found a figure stretched on a thin straw mattress. The scrawny shape was that of the crippled dacoit The Shadow had trailed from Bolingbroke's.

The Serpent was dead. His final spasms had brought him to this rathole where he dwelt. No one connected with the Siva outfit knew of this killer's fate. The Shadow's whispered laugh toned through that dank abode.

Dead, the snakish dacoit could serve The Shadow's plans; better, perhaps, than if the Serpent had remained alive. For tonight, The Shadow had received a full report from Harry Vincent.

The serpent's hiss that Harry had heard close by the Siva statue was factor upon which The Shadow could base his future measures.

The Shadow had gained insight into the ways of those who followed the commands of Singhar Bund.

CHAPTER XIII

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Two men were seated at a battered table in a squalid room, where the flickery light of a gas jet showed a bottle and glasses placed between them. The air was choked with cigarette smoke, for the windows were tightly shut.

Shades were drawn, also, although outside light trickled past the fringes.

Occasionally there came the muffled rumble of an elevated train, as it roared above the Bowery, only a half block away.

The room was the hide-away used by Lucky Belther. The trigger-man was entertaining his rescuer, Cliff Marsland.

Lucky's eyes showed admiration between their slitted lids. The thrust of his tough jaw was another proof that he considered Cliff all right. His expression went with the approving words that he growled.

"You're a right guy, Cliff," spoke Lucky. "You yanked me out of a tight spot. There's not many birds could've done it."

Lucky poured himself a large drink; shoved the bottle across to Cliff. In his companion, Lucky saw a man as stolid as himself. Cliff's rugged countenance might have been chiseled from rock. His expression was pokerfaced.

Cliff wrapped his fingers around the glass, poured himself a drink. It wasn't more than a swallow, but Lucky didn't guess the fact. Cliff's fingers hid the amount. Raising the glass, Cliff took the contents in one gulp.

"What gets me" - Lucky was bringing up a point that Cliff expected - "is how you showed up when you did. We weren't figuring on having an old home week."

"The coppers were in on it, weren't they?" returned Cliff, coolly. He thumped the bottle in front of Lucky. "So what was screwy about me being there?"

"The bulls were supposed to barge into the picture. That was fixed."

Cliff grinned as though he had heard news. He had another question, that would end Lucky's doubts.

"What about The Shadow?" demanded Cliff. "Did you invite him, too?"

Lucky spat an oath. He rubbed the side of his head, where he had taken a

crack against the cement of the courtyard.

"We didn't want The Shadow," he snarled. "How he got into it is something I can't figure. We thought we were ready for him, but -"

"But you weren't," supplied Cliff. "Only I was, until your gorillas queered it."

LUCKY stared; his eyes were blank at first; slowly, they lighted. There was a rumor in the underworld that one tough guy had guts enough to seek a feud

with The Shadow. Cliff was said to be that man.

Like others, Lucky had always supposed the story to be hot air, and had dismissed it. But here was Cliff, coolly advancing the claim, and behind it was

the fact that Cliff had actually been dogging The Shadow's trail.

Lucky was thinking over events of a few hours ago. He didn't know all about them; and Cliff regarded that as fortunate. Lucky's partial knowledge was

just enough to furnish a background for Cliff's bold bluff.

Lucky remembered his fall to the courtyard. He had waked up to find himself in a car driven by Cliff. His rescuer had asked him where to head. Recognizing Cliff, Lucky had told him of this hide-out.

After that, Lucky had gone groggy again. When he felt better, he found himself in his own quarters, with Cliff standing by. There had been no sign of The Shadow during that interval. Another fact in Cliff's favor.

"I guess the fireworks did queer it," admitted Lucky. "But how'd you trail

The Shadow, Cliff? I didn't know anybody could get away with it."

"The Shadow has stooges, hasn't he?"

Cliff's question brought a prompt nod from Lucky. It had long been conceded that The Shadow must have agents in the underworld, who tipped him off

to crime. Lucky shot an eager question:

"You know who the guys are?"

"I'd like to know," replied Cliff, sourly. "The best I could do, though, was mooch in on a phone call that came to a joint on Tenth Avenue. I'd heard The Shadow was over there; but he was gone when I showed up.

"I got the phone call instead. From some bird who said that Joe Cardona was heading for the Riverbank Apartments. I doped it that The Shadow must have got another tip-off, and was already on the way there. So I went."

Lucky was lighting a crumpled cigarette. His eyes had a glazed look, that wasn't entirely from the drinks that he had taken. He was gathering an idea. After a few moments, he expressed it.

"You've done good for yourself tonight, Cliff," declared Lucky. "You've cut yourself in on a slice of big dough. You know what I was going to do?" Lucky guffawed. "I was going to ask you to scram! Instead, I'm giving you a chance to get in on the racket."

Cliff considered; then shrugged.

"What's in it?" he asked. "A lot of slugs in the belly, like those gorillas of yours got tonight?"

"Not for a guy as smart as you are," replied Lucky. He pulled a watch from

his pocket, glanced at it. "Stick around about ten minutes - if you want to be counted in."

Cliff was still dubious. Lucky produced a big bank roll, peeled off a thousand dollars in fifties.

"How's that for dough?" he questioned. "A grand - on the cuff - just for coming in with me."

Cliff took the wad, added it to a roll of his own. He remarked that Lucky was talking his own language. He could be counted in.

THE ten minutes passed. There was a scratchy sound at the door. Lucky motioned for silence; approaching the door, he growled:

"Who is it?"

A voice answered; it came from the keyhole. It uttered two words, hoarsely:

"An Eye!"

Lucky stooped. His own lips came close to the keyhole as he rasped a low answer:

"An Arm!"

The man who entered was a scrawny, pasty-faced fellow, known to Cliff. He was "Gummer" Gilben, an underworld sneak.

Gummer wasn't any too popular in scumland. Everybody knew him, with his baggy trousers, turtle-neck sweater, and checkered cap pulled over one ear. Crooks were leery of Gummer, because they thought he was a stool pigeon.

Perhaps Gummer had acted as a stoolie. If so, it was a blind, to keep the police in ignorance of his real work. For the fact that Gummer was in cahoots with Lucky, was proof sufficient that the sneak was staging crime.

Gummer wasn't pleased when he saw Cliff. Darty eyes shot a questioning look at Lucky. The flattish-faced crook assured the visitor that Cliff was O.K.; to prove it, Lucky recounted the part that Cliff had played.

It wasn't until after he had poured himself a drink that Gummer made comment.

"What've you told Cliff?" he demanded.

"Not much," resumed Lucky, "but I'm set to spill the works. You know how we stand. You or me - either one - can take in any guy we want."

"I ain't needin nobody in my end of it."

"I wasn't neither, Gummer, until tonight. But my end's got more grief. I may need Cliff again."

Gummer swallowed his drink. He looked Cliff over, as if checking the story that he had heard. His objections faded. He decided that Lucky had the privilege of taking Cliff into it. Lucky lost no time.

"Here's the set-up," the trigger-man told Cliff. "There's a lot of guys called Eyes - only they don't know it - and Gummer, here, is the bozo who runs them. It's their job to spot certain boobs and see just what they do.

"Then there's another outfit, the Arms. They're clucks, too, that do just what they're told. I run them, see? Only I don't tell them what it's all about.

None except you, Cliff."

Cliff gave a short laugh.

"It sounds screwy," was his comment. Then, remembering something: "Except for the dough you handed me. All right. I've followed it so far. The Eyes and the Arms. For what?"

"So the Serpents can croak the stuffed shirts," explained Lucky. "They're another outfit, the Serpents. They do their stuff smooth. The guys they knock off are big-money boys. They do it so neat, everybody thinks it's accidents."

THOUGH Lucky didn't guess it, he was giving Cliff a lot of information that even he, Lucky, did not possess. Cliff had gotten facts regarding the Siva cult from The Shadow. He saw clearly how the whole game copied the symbolism of the Siva statue.

Some genius of evil was using the Siva cult to insidious purpose. Those dacoits were the Serpents who murdered wealthy persons, that their heirs - already members of the cult - could contribute huge funds to Siva. But the

Serpents, with all their ability as assassins, could do no more than commit the actual deeds of murdering victims.

Others had to inform when the stage was set, and be on hand to make sure that it stayed that way. They were the Eyes, controlled by Gummer. Still more were needed - strong-arm men who could cover up the flight of the Serpents and throw a false trail to the law. They were the Arms, who took their orders from Lucky.

Considering past deaths, Cliff saw clearly how the outside circle had worked. In the case of Welk, for instance, the Eyes had learned about the cabin cruiser; had seen that the right boxes were aboard. The Arms had shown up later, bringing a Serpent to contact the one who had hidden aboard the Wanderer.

Lucky was right, when he said the Arms had tougher going than the Eyes. Gummer's squad of Eyes - fake taxi drivers and their ilk - were as strong as ever. But battles with The Shadow had thinned the ranks of Lucky's Arms.

Lucky not only needed new recruits; he wanted a capable lieutenant. Cliff was the right man, for he had apparently proven himself in battle with The Shadow. Thus he had come into the outside circle of Eyes and Arms, on an almost equal basis with Lucky.

With Cliff's part established, Lucky and Gummer discussed matters that The Shadow's agent found valuable. Each had a separate hide-out; there, they received orders, by telephone, from an unknown source, and made reports, in return. Gummer had already made his report, tonight.

"The Serpent got clear," he told Lucky. "One of the Eyes took him in a taxi. That's why you haven't had a call, asking you what happened to him. I sent the dope through."

When Cliff left, after arranging to return at an appointed hour, Lucky and Gummer were still in conference. They discussed Cliff as soon as he had gone. "He's the guy I needed," commented Lucky. "He'll be worth his dough. There's a lot of ways I can use him."

"Looks that way to me," agreed Gummer. "Particularly, with this business of him gunning for The Shadow."

"That's what I'm counting on," completed Lucky. "I got a hunch, Gummer, that it won't be long before Cliff meets up with The Shadow."

Lucky was a better prophet than he guessed. At that very moment, Cliff Marsland was on his way to keep an appointment with The Shadow.

CHAPTER XIV

CRIME'S NEW NIGHT

HARRY VINCENT was seated in the lobby of the Hotel Metrolite, glancing over an evening's newspaper. Days had passed since the arrest of Morton Mayland, and Joe Cardona had been busy gathering loose threads in the case.

Like the public, the newspapers had gobbled the evidence that pointed to Mayland's conviction. Even though the old man had not yet come to trial, he was

classed as a fiendish murderer whose reign of horror was a monster's work.

Behind those headlines lay hidden, unknown facts; a tribute, if it could be called such, to the evil craft of Singhar Bund. Through subtle measures, the smooth-spoken Hindu had completely diverted suspicion from himself.

The Siva cult had never been a secret organization, although its existence

had been known only to a select few. Singhar Bund had always welcomed visitors; had been ready, at any time, to unveil his brass-walled temple to the law. He had chosen Cardona's visit as the proper time to do so.

Then, before Cardona had chance to inquire about the cult's membership, Singhar Bund had sent him scampering upon a gory trail that led to discovery of murder. A path strewn with deaths quite different from the supposed suicides in which the Serpents of Siva specialized.

Morton Mayland had been hoaxed into an attack on Louis Bolingbroke. But for The Shadow, Bolingbroke would have died from a hidden dacoit's cord; the blame to be Mayland's. The death thrust had failed, but it had gone far enough to put Mayland under suspicion.

There was a motive in Mayland's attack on Bolingbroke; that of hatred that had smoldered for years. Next, the finding of Sarmon's body provided a motive in an actual death. Sarmon had been killed because he was searching for Renshell. Bones among ashes, scraps of other clues, indicated the murder of Courtney Renshell.

So far, the law had found no motive to account for Mayland murdering Renshell. That was simply another evidence of craftiness displayed by Singhar Bund. Looking for that motive was keeping Joe Cardona busy. Once the crooked work of the Siva cult was completed, something would certainly come to light, to show why Mayland had wanted Renshell dead.

Meanwhile, the law had totally overlooked the fact that heirs of persons like Rodney Welk were members of the Siva cult. Silence was the main stem of the Siva creed. Those persons were pouring their new wealth into the coffers of Singhar Bund; all the while, they were marching about with placid faces, believing that calm contemplation went with the tiny golden charms they carried.

THE SHADOW knew all that. He had learned that the Siva cult had a member who was a relative of Louis Bolingbroke. If Bolingbroke had died, two desires would have been served for Singhar Bund. One was the framing of old Mayland; the other, the gaining of Bolingbroke's wealth.

Bolingbroke was safe. Singhar Bund could not risk another thrust against him. Even suicide would look bad. But there was no reason why Singhar Bund should not want the deaths of others, whose relations belonged to the Siva cult. New murders were due, to appear as fresh accidents.

So far, The Shadow had made no move against Singhar Bund.

Why?

Harry had gradually found an answer to that question. In the past, murders had been spaced well apart. Going over the schedules of the Siva meetings, The Shadow had learned that one always came before a murder. He could afford to wait until another meeting came.

Meanwhile, The Shadow had gained a double foothold. The Shadow himself was watching the nest where a dead Serpent lay, to learn if the dacoit's death had become known to his comrades. So far, no one had visited that dingy lair, with the exception of Hawkeye, who occasionally relieved The Shadow's vigil.

The Shadow had also learned of the Eyes and Arms. They would be needed in connection with new crime. Cliff was close enough to Lucky Belther to learn when the word was passed. So far, Cliff had gained no inkling of approaching trouble. That suited The Shadow's deduction, that crime would not start until the next meeting of the Siva cult.

Perhaps preparations were under way in moderate fashion, for The Shadow had no tabs on Gummer Gilben and the group of spies called Eyes. But their part was merely preliminary. They did no more than set the stage for crime.

Once word was flashed to the Arms, The Shadow could move despite the Eyes.

His task was to beat the Serpents to their goal. Harry was convinced that The Shadow had calculated some method whereby that could be accomplished.

At any rate, the suspense was almost ended. Tonight was the scheduled evening for a meeting of the Siva cult.

Harry was awaiting word regarding that meeting; there was a chance that he would be called upon to attend it, in company with Lucille.

The girl, unhappy over her grandfather's arrest, was living at a friend's apartment. Harry had seen her several times; on each occasion, she had doubted that she would go to the next meeting.

It would be up to Harry to persuade her either to attend the meeting or stay away, according to The Shadow's order.

THE hotel doorman came across the lobby, carrying a bulky package which he placed upon the desk. The name on the package puzzled the clerk. He shook his head; it had been delivered to the wrong hotel. The doorman took the package back to the messenger.

That incident was Harry's cue. He placed his newspaper aside, lighted a cigarette and strolled out to the street. He walked a few paces, saw a parked cab and stepped into it.

The cab was Moe Shrevnitz's. The Shadow sat shrouded in the back seat. The cab moved; as it rolled through neighboring blocks, The Shadow spoke in whispered tones to Harry.

"Remain away from tonight's meeting," came the voice. "Persuade Lucille to do the same."

There was a pause; then a low-pitched, mirthless laugh. The Shadow continued:

"Singhar Bund is attempting a bold policy. He has declared tonight's meeting public. Commissioner Weston will attend, taking his friend Lamont Cranston."

The cab rounded a corner, came to a side door of the hotel. Harry caught last words of instruction. He stepped from the cab. As he closed the door, he would have sworn that the interior was empty.

Yet Harry knew that the cab earned the living presence of The Shadow!

The last instructions had been brief. Harry was to call Lucille; to suggest a theater instead of the cult meeting. She was at the apartment, awaiting word from him. Harry knew that she would be guided by his decision.

Harry smiled at the thought that he and Lucille were temporarily out of the picture. After all, they were practically under the protection of crooks themselves, since both Harry and Lucille carried Siva charms that meant immunity to their bearers. So, for that matter, was Joe Cardona, who had the tiny image that Singhar Bund had given him.

Cardona, it happened, was very useful to crooked affairs, right at present. Without knowing it, he was puffing the smoke screen that covered criminal affairs.

Harry's main thoughts, however, concerned himself and Lucille. Apparently,

nothing had occurred to change their status. Even The Shadow regarded them as safe. That satisfied Harry. He did not realize that some chance occurrence might have changed the situation.

There was a message for Harry at the Metrolite desk. It was from Lucille; he was to call her apartment. Had Harry been less confident, he would have analyzed that message; as it was, he merely decided that Lucille was wondering what he intended to do about tonight.

Rather than waste time by going up to his room, Harry chose to make the call from a telephone booth. There were several of them in a quiet corner of the lobby, close to a long exit that led to another street.

Tossing a finished cigarette into a sanded vase, Harry failed to glance toward the darkish exit passage when he passed it.

STOPPING in the first booth, Harry dropped a nickel and dialed Lucille's number. He heard the girl's voice answer; the strain of Lucille's tone gave him

his first inkling of danger, but he thought the menace was Lucille's, alone.

"I called you, Harry" - Lucille's voice was striving for its usual calmness - "because I suspected that someone was watching here. I must have been right; for soon after that, the telephone rang. I thought, at first, that it must be you -"

Lucille's voice broke, breathless. Harry spoke encouraging words; he was tense, though he tried not to betray it.

"It was someone else," came Lucille's low whisper. "A voice that I recognized. Harry, that call told me something terribly important. It proved that my grandfather is innocent of murder! Innocent, because -"

A choke came across the wire. Harry heard a suppressed scream; then the heavy click of a receiver hook. Lucille's apprehensions were correct. She had been watched; listeners had caught the words that she just uttered!

Something had happened to Lucille, and only Harry knew the fact. The first move would be a call to Burbank. Hastily, Harry slammed the receiver on its hook; shoved his shoulder from the booth, as he dug in his pocket for another nickel.

A padded object thumped the back of Harry's skull. Murmurless, the young man slumped from the telephone booth, into the arms of the husky who had cracked him with the sandbag.

Two hard-faced men stepped sideways from the exit passage; turning their backs to the lobby, they screened all sight of what had happened at the telephone booth.

They and the slugger formed a trio that edged away from the booths, shifting Harry's limp figure ahead of them. Ten seconds later, they were hastening toward the street, carrying their burden.

Crime's new night had begun with the taking of two prisoners. Lucille and Harry were helpless captives, without the knowledge of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV

THE VOICE OF SIVA

"THE job's all set, Cliff. Here's the lay -"

Lucky Belther broke off his statement as he heard a buzz. It was the muffled telephone bell that was located in his hide-out. For a moment. Lucky's thin-slitted eyes glittered a suspicious look.

"The big boy called a while ago," he muttered. "It shouldn't be him again, so soon -"

The buzz was insistent. Lucky went to the telephone; lifting the receiver, he grunted a hello. Tough lips showed a grin of recognition. Lucky nodded toward

Cliff; sidemouthered the words:

"The boss, after all!"

A voice was coming over the wire. Cliff could catch no words; merely a clicky tone. It didn't fit with the purr that was supposed to be Singhar Bund's. Cliff wondered whether the Hindu was calling with disguised voice, or whether someone else gave orders to Lucky.

It was the first time that Cliff had heard that telephone in use. A while ago, it would have suited him. Right now, it spoiled plans. Lucky had just started to spill important details when the call interrupted. Cliff couldn't stifle the thought that this might change things.

It did. Lucky's face showed a different sort of enthusiasm, when the call was finished.

"The job's all set, Cliff," he declared. "Just like I said. Only, I'm handling it with a crew of Arms. Without you helping me."

"Yeah?" snapped Cliff. "How come?"

"You've got a different job," returned Lucky. "Some dame mixed into things. A couple of Eyes grabbed her; they're taking her to the big-shot, wherever he is.

"The moll started to spill some dope to a boy friend. But the Eyes were wise by that time. So they snagged him; and that's where you come in. You're to take him for a ride."

Cliff's dead-pan face showed none of the thoughts that flashed through his mind. Mention of a girl had made him think of Lucille. The fact that a man was in the picture, certainly meant Harry. To Cliff was being delegated the duty of putting his own friend on the spot!

"Stick here, Cliff," ordered Lucky, "until I get outside. I got a car there; I'll tell the wheeler where he's to go. I'll leave you a couple of gorillas to help with the rub-out. I'll be watching to see you start."

With that, Lucky made a rapid exit. Haste, not mistrust, was the cause; but it put Cliff in a bad jam.

IF Cliff had only learned where he was to go, his task would be easy.
Word

to The Shadow; delay along the way - Harry would be gone when the murder squad arrived. As it was, the important detail of route was to be in the hands of whoever drove the car.

Cliff had missed out entirely on learning what Lucky's job was to be; but that had dwindled to unimportance. The immediate problem was to save Harry. It took Cliff swift seconds of calculation before he could grab the only answer.

After the murder crew picked up Harry, matters would be in Cliff's charge. He could stall along them, directing the driver where to go. A roundabout route would not arouse suspicion. Cliff could pick a route that would go by a designated place.

Grabbing Lucky's telephone, Cliff dialed Burbank's number. Though he wasn't given to jitters, Cliff found himself telling the contact man the news in a forced, worried voice. Burbank's methodical tone actually pulled Cliff from the doldrums.

The contact man took the report as coolly as a routine announcement. He informed Cliff that Moe's cab would be at a certain corner, supplying a better location than the one that Cliff suggested. Word, meanwhile, would go to The Shadow. It was up to Cliff to handle the rest.

There was no time for Cliff to think things over, after he had finished the call. By this time, Lucky would be getting suspicious, down there on the street. Cliff slid out through the door; when he reached the sidewalk, he

paused to rub the back of his hands across his lips.

That would make Lucky think that Cliff had paused to take a swig from the ever-present bottle. Lucky belonged to that breed of thugs who invariably steeled themselves with a stiff drink. Cliff's adoption of that system would please him.

A touring car was waiting, a short way off. Cliff got in, grunted a greeting to the three men already there.

"Let's go," he told the driver. Then, to allay later chances of suspicion:

"Take it easy. We don't want any bulls to stop us and ask questions."

FAR from the tawdry district where Cliff's adventure had started, the Siva cult was going through its ceremonies for the benefit of a curious audience. Beside the three-faced statue with its jeweled eyes, Singhar Bund discoursed on Oriental subjects.

Less than half the persons present were members of the cult. Only one non-member might have been mistaken for a believer in Siva. That lone personage

was Lamont Cranston. His face was immobile, his eyes calm.

Yet those eyes had sized the situation. Certain persons were absent; they were the ones who had profited through deaths like that of Rodney Welk. In placing his believers on exhibition, Singhar Bund had wisely found excuses to keep those members away.

Moreover, Singhar Bund was avoiding demonstrations of trickery. He was talking of wonders that had been performed; of others that would be exhibited on later occasions. But with the police commissioner and other skeptics present, Singhar Bund thought it best to confine his activities to a mere lecture.

Finishing his talk, the crafty cult ruler became somewhat bolder. Seeing that listeners were impressed, he motioned toward the alcove that contained the upright casket. Singhar Bund invited all to inspect it.

"A yogi is preparing for that test," he declared. "He must spend a week in fasting, except for a diet of sheep's blood. He is also practicing the necessary breathing exercises needed for this greatest demonstration of samadhi, or perfect contemplation.

"At some future time, he will be placed in the confines of that casket; the locks will be shut and sealed. Days later, we shall remove him, alive and unharmed, from a space where no ordinary mortal could breathe safely for a dozen minutes."

The big casket was open. The commissioner looked inside, and was impressed. The interior had a decorative design, like the outside.

Cranston observed that in idle fashion; his eyes also studied the huge hinges that showed when the casket was open.

For a few moments, Singhar Bund seemed suspicious of Cranston's scrutiny. The Hindu suggested that the visitors resume their places, to witness the final

ritual. Singhar Bund asked Phineas Leeth if he would lead the procession past the statue of Siva. The droopy-faced man beamed.

"A rare privilege," said Leeth to Weston. "To be the first to salaam Siva is regarded as good omen. Ah, commissioner, we who believe in Siva find great contentment."

Weston looked to Cranston; as Leeth left them, the commissioner commented that the old man was badly duped. The statement brought a nod from Cranston. His eyes were elsewhere. He was counting the dacoits. All were present, except

the one that The Shadow knew to be dead.

These fake yogis had not entered until the end of the meeting; and Singhar

Bund had purposely failed to call attention to them. The fact that they were here at all was something that The Shadow understood; for his disguised lips showed traces of a faint smile that Singhar Bund did not observe.

In fact, Singhar Bund was a trifle perplexed when he counted noses for the first time. It was too late, however, for him to investigate the Serpent's absence. He could find out nothing by questioning the other dacoits. Like The Shadow, Singhar Bund knew that the Serpents did not meet outside the temple.

LEETH was back, happy because he had bowed to Siva. Other believers were continuing their slow file to the statue. Commissioner Weston did not look impressed; but Cranston salved Leeth's feelings by the inquiry:

"May others, not as yet believers, approach Siva and do homage?"

"Certainly" returned Leeth. "As soon as the procession has ended. Shall I conduct you there, Mr. Cranston?"

"I would appreciate the favor."

Leeth took Cranston's elbow. They reached Singhar Bund; Leeth announced Cranston as a new convert. Singhar Bund smiled, purred friendly approval. He had noted Cranston several times, and had half believed that this visitor was ripe for admission into the Siva cult.

"You may approach," spoke Singhar Bund, "as soon as the last yogi has passed."

His restraining hand was less pressing than it had been with Harry. There was no need for an iron grip; plushy pressure was sufficient in Cranston's case. That, alone, was sufficient to lull Singhar Bund into security. Cranston was not close enough to hear the hisses of the Serpents as they bowed before Siva.

The Shadow's real purpose was lost to Singhar Bund. It deceived him as effectively as did those masklike features of Cranston.

When the final Serpent had gone, Singhar Bund urged Cranston forward; then

remained to talk to Leeth. That was the great mistake of Singhar Bund. It was his turn to be out of earshot, at a vital moment.

As The Shadow bowed before the statue of Siva, his lips remained motionless as they delivered a hiss. Lowtoned, that snakish utterance was a perfect imitation of the sounds that The Shadow had heard the dacoits give. The

Shadow was speaking for the missing Serpent.

The Shadow waited, calm in his guise of Cranston. His clever strategy was rewarded. From the bronze lips of the Siva's central head came a response, low-spoken, its words a mingling of English and Hindustani!

The Shadow was hearing the voice of Siva!

CHAPTER XVI

WHERE MURDER LURKED

THE Serpents had withdrawn to obscure corners of the temple when Cranston rejoined Leeth. They were waiting until some of the visitors had withdrawn; but

soon they would be on the move. That was something that The Shadow knew.

Singhar Bund politely presented Cranston with a Siva token, remarking upon

the virtue that the charm possessed. Commissioner Weston showed puzzlement to find his friend so gullible. He intended to question Cranston on that score,

later.

For the next few minutes, Weston could not shake Leeth. When the commissioner looked around, Cranston was gone. Weston supposed that he had left with some departing visitors. He was right. Stepping from the temple, Weston saw his friend at the bottom of the stairs.

The commissioner hurried to the street. There were not many pedestrians; still, he couldn't see Cranston among them. Weston was still looking back and forth when a wiry young man stepped from a taxi, to give a cheery wave.

"Hello, commissioner," announced the newcomer. "Remember me - Burke of the Classic?"

Weston nodded. He knew Clyde Burke well enough. What he didn't know was that the supposed reporter was actually an agent of The Shadow. Clyde had been sent here by Burbank.

"What about the meeting?" questioned Clyde. "Is it finished?"

"Yes," returned Weston. Then, dryly: "We did not invite reporters."

Clyde ignored the comment.

"Who else was there?" he persisted. "Any prominent persons, beside yourself? Other members of the Cobalt Club?"

"Lamont Cranston was present," replied Weston. "He left, a few minutes ago. I am trying to find him."

Weston was treated to a new surprise - that of a reporter forgetting his assignment. With a mutter that the story wouldn't count for much, Clyde hopped back into the cab and rode away.

One block distant, Clyde dived for the nearest telephone booth.

Something was up, and Clyde knew it. Although Clyde had played a secondary part in recent events, he was well acquainted with their importance. He knew, for instance, what might be due tonight. Chances were that The Shadow could be reached indirectly, through Joe Cardona.

Tonight, the ace inspector was at his desk in headquarters, mulling over the latest clues in connection with the Mayland case. That was why Clyde telephoned Cardona.

The call did not go through. Cardona's line was busy. Worst of all, Clyde could guess the reason. He almost pictured the scene at headquarters.

THERE, Joe Cardona was riveted at a telephone. His swarthy face had lost its usual blandness. Cardona was nodding, gulping responses as he heard the words of a ghostly speaker. Joe Cardona knew those eerie tones.

The Shadow was on the wire!

The mysterious voice finished; the line cut off abruptly. Cardona remained motionless, as though his brain echoed with the news that he had heard. Coming to life, he slammed the receiver and sprang to his feet. He beckoned to a bulky detective sergeant who sat at another desk.

"Let's go, Markham!" snapped Cardona. "We'll need a pair of picked men - good ones - and a squad, besides. I'll tell you all about it while we're on the way."

They were out in the hallway. The telephone bell was tingling again; it was Clyde's call coming through. Cardona hesitated; shook his head.

"He wouldn't be calling again," declared Joe, referring to The Shadow. "Whoever else it is, can't be important."

Soon, Cardona and Markham were riding northward in a police car that carved traffic ahead of it. But they were not the first along that route. Blocks farther north, another car was speeding to the same destination.

When that first car halted, it stopped near a narrow, towering apartment building where the lights of a penthouse formed tiny specks, twenty-odd stories above the street. After that first car parked, a figure glided from it.

The shape was a living one, but too elusive for observing eyes to follow. It blended into darkness; came to a sheltered spot beneath the tall building. The tone of a whispered laugh was captured by a drift of breeze. Then, silence; complete.

Five blocks from the same building, the police car halted. Squad cars pulled up behind it. Cardona gave orders. With Markham and two others, Cardona flagged a taxi. He ordered the driver to go slowly.

Within a few blocks, Cardona noted roving cabs. He saw spots near the big apartment house that looked like lurking places. He had the cab pull up at the apartment house itself, but chose a spot so dark that he and his companions could make a guarded exit.

Telling the cabby what to do, Cardona and his comrades followed the very route that The Shadow had taken.

The cab driver lighted a cigarette. He was about to move ahead, when another taxi pulled alongside. Its driver hailed:

"Hello, hackie! Anything wrong?"

"Just lighting a smoke," replied Cardona's cabby. "Then I'm pulling into the feed line up ahead."

The second cab's motor stalled. Its driver was making sure that the other taxi was moving into the feed line. That part of the street was lighted. The cab showed empty when it arrived there. The roving cabby drove away.

THE doorway that Cardona found led to a service elevator. No one was aboard it. The group stepped into the car and rode to the top floor. There, Cardona told one of his men:

"Take the elevator down to the bottom. Then come up the stairs. It's a long climb, but it's going to be worth it. Stick outside the tower door."

That door was locked from the inside. Cardona opened it; stationed the second dick there. With Markham following, Joe opened an opposite door. He whispered for silence as they stepped into the hallway of the penthouse.

Markham gaped at the magnificence that surrounded them. There was a living

room thick with heavy Oriental rugs; its walls were adorned with Italian tapestries that must have cost a fortune. The furniture was of the finest mahogany that Markham had ever seen.

One doorway opened into a library, where rows of vellum-bound books lined the shelves. On the other side was the entrance to the bedrooms. Straight ahead, a door opened to a terrace that was tiled with marble, a tinkling fountain in its center.

Cardona had already told Markham what this place represented. The penthouse was the New York residence of Cuyler Selwood, mid-West motor magnate.

Its lavish furnishings were trivial, compared with those of his Michigan palace.

Selwood was in New York at present; usually, his penthouse was manned by a retinue of servants. Tonight, the place was curiously silent. Its tomblike hush

was disconcerting, even to Cardona. Though he represented the law, Joe would ordinarily have stopped on the threshold.

Right now, he was buoyed to a special duty by memory of that voice from the telephone. Cardona liked to play hunches; but it was more than a hunch, that call.

When The Shadow paved the path, Cardona had never known it to be a false

one.

The ace stole across the thick-napped rug, with the detective sergeant at his heels. They reached the terrace, where new splendor greeted them.

The parapets surrounded an Italian garden, transplanted from some Roman villa. There were benches beneath flowering arches. Beyond the central fountain

stood a group statue in marble, formed of carved mermaids and dolphins, raised above a mirrored pool.

Two huge vases in the nearer corners of the garden were the hiding spots that The Shadow had ordered. Cardona sent Markham to one; he was about to take the other station, when he heard a voice within the penthouse. Cardona peered through the crack of a partly opened door, to observe the speaker.

The man had come from the library. He was portly, baldish; wearing a rumpled smoking jacket. His pudgy fingers drew a cigar from lips that were topped by a close-clipped mustache.

"Raymond!" bawled the portly man. "Why don't you answer? Craig - where are you?"

The man was Selwood; his face was purplish with anger, because the servants did not answer. He turned toward the roof; paused as he heard a telephone bell tingle.

"Hello!" Selwood was savage; then his tone became sarcastic. "So it's you,

Eleanor. My favorite niece, because you are the only one I have... No, I'm not angry with you. I'm just annoyed by what you told me this afternoon...

"You must give up that foolishness. Spending money on that flimflam Hindu stuff is ridiculous! I knew something had come over you. I could tell it by the

way you kept a moony smirk on your face."

SELWOOD paused. His face showed a grimace. He pressed one hand to his heart; tried to speak over the telephone. It was half a minute before he found words. Then:

"No, no, Eleanor," he said. "I'm all right. I overexerted myself, shouting

for the servants... I remember now, that Raymond had to go for that prescription

of mine. Yes, and Craig has probably made his evening trip to the kennels, to look after the wolf hounds...

"Yes, the doctor was here this afternoon. Told me to go easy. Said I'd get

over this morbid complex of mine. Only sometimes, Eleanor - you're not the only

one who has heard me say it - I find that life tires me, in spite of all my wealth."

Whatever the niece replied, it must have been sympathetic, for Cardona could see a slight smile spread on Selwood's lips. The millionaire placed the telephone on its stand; removed his hand from his chest. He puffed at his cigar, as he came slowly toward the door where Cardona watched.

Joe was out of sight when Selwood entered the garden. He saw the portly man pace slowly past the fountain, then approach the side of the roof where he had the best view of the city's lights. The life that the glow offered seemed to soothe Selwood. His puffs on the cigar became more contented.

A figure writhed from the penthouse door. Neither Cardona nor Markham saw it, for both were watching Selwood. The thing crouched low as it crept along a pathway, like a human snake. Another serpentine figure came silently from the penthouse; took the same writhing course along the path where overhanging vines

hid the marble's whiteness.

There was a rustle from a window of the penthouse. Cardona looked up through the vines beside him. He couldn't trace the figure that twisted along the parapet, any more than he could have spotted a python in a jungle. But the sound told that danger was due; when it was suddenly repeated, Cardona waited no longer.

Fully alert, he spotted the first creatures that had crawled to the garden; for they were in back of Selwood, at a place where the blackness ended.

Cardona saw brownish faces with leering, monkeyish teeth. He heard the whistle of a sibilant signal.

Cardona answered that hiss with a shout to Markham. Joe was bounding out from cover; and the brawny detective sergeant followed him. With all their speed, they were too late. Cardona saw a brown man rise, whip a thin cord about Selwood's neck.

The millionaire went backward with a gurgle, into a mass of brownish arms that rose like viper heads, ready to hoist him from the parapet when his struggle ceased. They were working faster than Cardona could pull his revolver from his pocket.

The scene was a horrible nightmare, that needed some jolt to break its spell. The needed break came - more chilling, more fearful than the sight of Siva's living Serpents. And it came from a place least expected.

From the statuary group beyond the fountain pealed the weird mirth of a hidden avenger.

That tone was the eerie laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVII

BLACK FLIGHT

THE Serpents of Siva whirled at The Shadow's challenge. They needed mere seconds to dispose of Selwood; but they knew that seconds were not enough. Nor could they resist an answer to the cloaked foe whose identity they knew.

Selwood flattened inside the parapet, the torturing cord gone from his thick neck. The scrawny Serpents lashed out into fanwise formation, to attack The Shadow. The speed with which they found cover was amazing.

So, too, was the answer of The Shadow's guns. Muzzles spat flame from above the clustered statuary. Bullets sizzled the fringes of the quick-chosen hiding spots, huddling the dacoits in their cover.

Once that gunfire ended, the stranglers would have had their chance anew, provided that The Shadow had been the only foe who menaced them. But The Shadow

was counting on a pair of capable reserves, in Cardona and Markham.

They could see where The Shadow's bullets spattered the marble. The shots told them where the dacoits crouched. Though the snakish killers had wriggled from the sight of the headquarters men, they had not gained shelter from a rear

attack. Cardona and Markham blasted bullets into the vines that The Shadow's gunfire indicated.

One Serpent shrieked, came diving toward the fountain, clipped by a slug from Cardona's Police Positive. The others gave up their lurking tactics. They bounded from cover, sweeping out their strangle cords as they sped for Cardona and Markham. Murderers by instinct, the dacoits had a skill at self-preservation. They were taking the best course for it.

One brownish devil reached Cardona; another was making for Markham. They wanted to speed nooses around the necks of their antagonists; twist them, helpless, as shields against The Shadow's fire. With their rapid advance, the strokes could have been accomplished against any marksman, other than The Shadow.

Even his aim could not drop the dacoits as they sped for their prey; but The Shadow sent his shots when they reached their objectives.

There was a timely instant, when the first Serpent locked with Cardona. Joe's arms went wide as the noose coiled above his shoulders: but before the dacoit could twist behind Cardona, The Shadow fired.

The dacoit spilled, twisting like a crippled reptile. Before Cardona could pounce upon the writhing Serpent. there was a burst from The Shadow's other gun.

A clipping bullet literally slashed a dacoit from Markham's floundering grasp, just as the detective sergeant was losing the momentary grip that he had gained.

The last dacoit was loping through the penthouse. He was safe from The Shadow's fire; he thought that his fellow Serpents had disposed of Cardona and Markham. That was why the creature did not zigzag, nor look behind him.

The dacoit's mistake was his final one. Cardona and Markham were at the doorway leading from the terrace before the Serpent reached the passage to the elevator. The pair unloaded a barrage. Their bullets rolled the dacoit to the floor. Looking about, they saw that The Shadow's targets had ceased their writhing.

Serpents of Siva had been wiped into oblivion; and with the triumph, Joe Cardona had found crime's answer.

"I know where that bunch came from," snapped Joe, to Markham. "They belong to Singhar Bund - the Hindu that runs the Siva racket -"

A CLANG from the elevator interrupted. Into the penthouse came a flood of fresh fighters, headed by Lucky Belther. Cardona and Markham were ducking behind furniture when the Arms began their fire; but they couldn't stand a chance against those odds. They needed The Shadow as badly as before; and their cloaked ally supported them.

Lucky and his crew forgot the open path to the terrace, to deal with Cardona and Markham. Hardly had crooks aimed toward corners, before The Shadow's laugh reached them from the garden doorway. They wheeled, to see the cloaked shape silhouetted against the marble background.

They heard The Shadow speak again - with bullets.

Beaten to the first shots, mobsters sprawled. Those who fired, peppered wide of The Shadow, for they had no time for accuracy with their diverted aim.

Cardona and Markham supplied shots from their barricades. Hard upon that rapid fire came the flanking attack of the two detectives, posted at the top of the stairs.

One crook survived that scorching test. Lucky Belther again proved that his nickname was deserved; this time, without requiring aid.

He made a lone dash for the elevator; The Shadow triggered a bullet after him, but the shot was necessarily high. Cardona and Markham had sprung out to the middle of the room, forcing The Shadow's change of fire.

Lucky sprang between the two detectives. When their guns sputtered in his direction, the sliding door of the elevator received the bullets. Lucky was away, in flight.

The Shadow followed, taking the long stairway to the street; the delay did not disturb him, for he knew what was due below. The roar of battle was audible before he reached the ground.

Lucky had joined a reserve crew, only to find them harried by Cardona's squad. The police were closing a cordon, to hem in the crooks.

There was battle through that neighborhood. Police patrol cars had cut in

to deal with roving taxicabs, manned by Eyes who sought to relieve the hard-pressed Arms. The thugs were faring badly. They were heavily outnumbered; and the police knew where to look for them.

The Shadow had business elsewhere. He started for the spot where he had parked his car; his laugh pealed a strident challenge that brought fire from gunmen who were battling a batch of police.

Gunners couldn't find The Shadow. He jabbed timely shots that dropped a pair of them. The officers did the rest. The Shadow let them handle the scattered hoodlums. His path was clear.

Hand on the knob of the coupe's door, The Shadow sidestepped as a man flung up beside him. Recklessly, the fellow didn't care what happened, provided he reached The Shadow. Had he been a foeman, a sledged gun would have felled him. In the dark, he ran that risk. It happened that The Shadow's gun did not swing.

The approach told him that this was no hoodlum. Shoving out an arm, The Shadow blocked the panting arrival; half pushed him into the car. It was Clyde Burke, guided by The Shadow's laugh to the spot where his chief was stationed.

Clyde had gone to headquarters. He'd heard what was up. He was here, as fast as he could make it, to tell The Shadow what had happened to Harry. Clyde had inserted a call to Burbank, at the nearest telephone. Word was in from Moe Shrevnitz, telling where Cliff had taken Harry.

THE coupe was off, whipping for an avenue. It wheeled a corner, into the path of a big sedan. As brakes screeched, The Shadow clung too tightly to the wheel to roll himself from view. There were mobsters in that sedan - fleeing Arms of Siva - with Lucky among them.

The Shadow did not wait for battle. He swung the coupe clear; was away when crooks began their fire. A taxi shot into sight. Staring from its window was Gummer Gilben. He had Eyes with him. Like the Arms, they were bent on flight.

The Shadow had chosen a route that he had mentioned to Joe Cardona: a lone, twisty course that was to be left open by the police cordon. Crooks would never have found it for themselves. But it became theirs, thanks to The Shadow.

The Shadow was in flight!

So crooks thought; and they saw opportunity. They wanted to quit this neighborhood; and they liked battle, when the odds were their own. Outnumbering

The Shadow, emboldened by the false belief that he feared them, thugs took up the trail.

For that half dozen who pursued The Shadow, a full two-score had been left for capture by the law. But neither Lucky nor Gummer minded that. The small fry could take the rap. It would be victory, after all, if Lucky and Gummer could bag The Shadow.

Police had been told that a coupe should be passed unmolested. That ruling did not apply to a heavy sedan and a wildcat taxicab. Squad cars took up the chase, hoping to catch The Shadow's pursuers.

Clinging to the opened window of the coupe, Clyde heard the gritted laugh that rasped from The Shadow's hidden lips. Clyde understood. The Shadow was passing up an opportunity.

He could lose those pursuers in a maze of streets, and leave them to the law. That, however, would mean delay. Not a second could be lost in reaching Harry.

Moreover, The Shadow was increasing the odds that lay against him. Unless

he outdistanced the mobsters behind, they would be on deck when the goal was reached.

There was a chance that the squad cars might stick close. That would help, if it occurred. But the chase was spreading, with the crooks doing better than the police. Had Clyde been at the wheel, he would not have shoved that accelerator to the floor; for he could see the consequences far ahead.

The Shadow saw them, as well as Clyde; but he gave the coupe every ounce of gas. Cross streets whisked by so rapidly that Clyde could scarcely count them. Ahead, Clyde saw the big red neon sign that topped an old hotel. That was

where the route turned right, to the vicinity of Hell's Kitchen, where Cliff Marsland had finally completed his tour with Harry Vincent and the thugs who were waiting for him to be bumped off.

Like a thing of doom, the light was looming closer, bringing the moment when The Shadow would again be forced to stage a dangerous rescue.

Again, Clyde heard The Shadow's laugh; its whisper a prophecy of battle, that might prove The Shadow's last.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHANGED COURSES

THE alleyway was silent, except for a low-growled voice that gave continued threats:

"Not talking, huh? We've got a way to squeeze it out of mugs like you! How'd you like some heat - real heat?"

The tone was Cliff's; the threatened man was Harry. There were other listeners, though, who were irked by the delay.

"Let him have it, Cliff!"

The suggestion came from the man at the wheel of the death car; and gorillas added their approval. Cliff gave them answer.

"I'm making this lug blab," he announced. "Get it? Or don't you?"

"Lucky didn't say to make him squawk," returned an objector. "He didn't say to stall, either, getting here."

Cliff snorted his contempt - not for Lucky, but for the speaker.

"Lucky left it to me," he told the crew. "Where to bring the guy, and how to handle him. How do you know what Lucky told me?"

"Because he told us." The driver bulged over from the front seat, poked a gun toward Harry's ribs. "And if you ain't croaking the guy, we are!"

There was a slight thud in the darkness, as Cliff's automatic gave a downward drop against the fellow's gun hand. The driver withdrew his fist, with a snarl.

"There's one thing Lucky didn't tell you," snapped Cliff. "He didn't say who this guy was, did he?"

Growls responded in the negative.

"You're right, he didn't," added Cliff, "because he didn't know. So I'll put you wise." He was ready with his final argument. "This guy is a stooge that's working for The Shadow! That's why I want him to talk."

The argument brought delay. Cliff's effort to quiz Harry brought approval.

Gorillas were muttering among themselves. If Cliff was right, he was playing a good bet. Those mutters kept on, while Cliff resumed his probe of Harry.

In his turn, Harry said nothing. Talk wouldn't help Cliff's stall. Cliff had been doing well enough without it.

While he growled at Harry, Cliff was conscious of the mutters of the thugs

with him. They didn't quite suit him. A few words struck Cliff as sour. He

sensed their import. One thug had whispered the impression that maybe Cliff knew too much about The Shadow. The set-up sounded phony.

Pretending not to hear, Cliff reached beside him. He found the knob of the door; covered its squeak by raising his tone. His hand came back to his left hip; crossing beneath his right elbow, it shoved a spare gun against Harry's fingers.

Cliff's grip found Harry's forearm. Cliff jerked leftward; snatched Harry toward the door. Adding to the plunge, Harry went sprawling to the curb, as Cliff shouted:

"All right! Give it!"

SHOVING half out from the door, Cliff supplied the first shots, over Harry's head. Gleefully, the driver leaned from his own window, jabbed his gun toward Harry's rolling form.

Cliff sledged another gun-blow for the driver; but this was no gentle knuckle rap.

The automatic thudded the driver's skull, with a wallop that slumped the fellow deep beneath the wheel.

Right after that, Cliff was locked with two tough fighters, both to his right. One was jabbing a gun from the front seat; the other had a grip around Cliff's neck. It was a tussle that left Cliff very little chance, after the next thirty seconds. In taking out the driver, he had given the other pair the odds.

The door by the driver's seat yanked open. The slugged crook rolled inert to the curb. Harry came shoving through, to side with Cliff. He pitched on the front-seat gorilla. It was timely aid, but it brought a bad break.

Cliff, too, was occupied with that same fighter. The thug in the rear was twisted, with his gun hand high. He managed to squirm by Cliff; thwacked a cross-blow to Harry's head. Cliff stopped it partially, but not enough.

All was grim in that darkness. The next instant the situation was revealed, by a glare that swathed in from the mouth of the alley. Blinding light showed Harry, wavering above the wheel. It spotted Cliff, rolling for the

open side door, with glittering revolver barrels shoving toward him.

Crooks hesitated, in the brilliance of those flooding headlights. A big gun spoke ahead of theirs. Bullets from an automatic whistled through the open sides of the touring car, as a coupe rocketed alongside.

The light was gone; in its place came a fierce laugh, from a fighter whose right hand laid a gun across his left elbow. Still gripping the coupe's wheel, The Shadow pumped new shots into the touring car.

Gunmen had forgotten Cliff and Harry. They were turning to battle The Shadow. That move didn't help them. The Shadow's shots came first, put them out of the fray for good.

The Shadow shoved Clyde from the right side of the coupe; gave him the quick order:

"Get that car started! Bring Marsland and Vincent along! Keep beside me!"

The coupe was moving ahead when Clyde reached the touring car. Cliff piled into the machine when Clyde told him. Shoving Harry to the right, Clyde grabbed the wheel. The starter grated. The car was moving when two others wheeled into the alley.

Jouncing through the alley, the touring car and the coupe were open targets for Lucky and Gummer; but of the two machines, they wanted the coupe. They saw a body by the curb, but did not recognize it. They thought the dead man to be Harry.

As they sized it, The Shadow was trying to finish Cliff and his three gorillas, for they saw and heard the bursts of a gun. Side by side, the pursuers closed upon the coupe; they saw its door swing wide; their bullets began to drill.

The touring car kept onward, but the coupe careened. It took the curb and crashed a building wall. They were alongside, Lucky's car first, then Gummer's, when one of their band gave a raucous shout and pointed.

Up ahead, the touring car was swinging from the alley into the glow of the street lamp. Rising from the open car's step, they saw The Shadow. Doors were open on the right; two forms came sprawling lifelessly from within the car. The Shadow shoved into the rear seat. The doors slammed shut.

HOW the game had changed, Lucky and Gummer couldn't guess; but they weren't ready to call it quits. The Shadow was still in flight.

Motors roared, beginning a new pursuit. Once through the alley, they caught the touring car's trail; and they followed it, unmolested.

The crooks had shaken off the squad car, through sheer speed. Sirens told that the police were heading for a scene of finished battle: that alley where no living fighters remained, where chance for a trail was ended.

Of four available drivers, himself included, The Shadow had placed the least expert at the wheel. Clyde was doing a good job, but he couldn't get the distance that he needed to outpace the crooks, even though The Shadow guided him.

As the race continued, it became apparent that The Shadow did not want to end the pursuit. Between his steady instructions to Clyde, he told his agents what came next. They listened, almost rapt, as they heard The Shadow's plan.

Picking his streets, The Shadow gave word for a final spurt, to be followed by a sharp turn to the right. Accomplished, Clyde gave the brakes within a hundred feet. Agents sprang from the car and dived for a doorway to which The Shadow pointed.

They were inside when The Shadow opened fire back toward the corner. Mobster guns answered a few seconds later. By that time, The Shadow had joined his own followers. Through the door, The Shadow ordered it clamped shut.

They were in a little courtyard between two buildings, with thugs banging at the barring door. The Shadow picked a window, smashed its glass with a gun butt. The window came up; the four climbed through.

This was the interior of an antique shop, closed for the night. Evidently The Shadow had been in the place before. Uncannily, he picked a corner and ordered Cliff and Harry to shove aside a big chest of drawers.

Once the chest was clear, the agents saw a locked door. The Shadow finished the lock with a single bullet. They went through to a passage beyond. The corridor was leading them in the direction of an alley that Clyde had noticed, when he stopped the car.

The Shadow halted by a cobwebbed door. Again, he blasted a lock. The four emerged into a space that formed an air shaft. There was a window opposite. The Shadow smashed it in, took an inward dive through it before his agents could follow.

There was a scuffle within a room. When the three agents reached the scene, they saw The Shadow rising from above the figure of a bearded Hindu, whose turban had rolled to the floor. The Shadow had knocked the guard senseless.

It was Harry who realized where they were. This was the floor below the Siva temple! It was split up into secret rooms and routes, as Harry had supposed.

The Shadow had not been idle, during those times that he had let Hawkeye

relieve him. He had been gaining a considerable knowledge of these premises, through secret search.

THE SHADOW took keys from the Hindu's sash. He found the one that unlocked

a steel door in the far wall of the room. Stepping into a tiny cell, he emerged

with a prisoner. The captive was Lucille Mayland, bound and gagged.

While Harry and Cliff cut the cords that held Lucille, The Shadow was speaking to the girl in whispered tones. Lucille's eyes showed flashes of mingled understanding and amazement. When she was free, The Shadow pointed to another door

The agents were to take Lucille through there; out by the alleyway. Other moves were to follow; but not until the police arrived. They would be here soon, headed by Joe Cardona. Meanwhile, the path was clear. Lucky and Gummer and their mobs would not molest the get-away.

Proof of that was already coming from the air shaft. Mobsters had reached the last door that The Shadow had broken. The Shadow was remaining, to lure them on another trail. He waited in a passage just beyond the door through which the agents carried Lucille.

Lucky was the first thug through the window. He saw the flattened Hindu. The sight puzzled him, until Gummer arrived.

"Cripes!" voiced Gummer. "This is the joint where we brought the moll! Lamp that, Lucky" - he pointed to the vacant cell - "it's where we shoved her!"

"Yeah?" demanded Lucky. "Then where's she got to?"

"The Shadow's snagged her," snarled Gummer, "and he's taken her out the other way. Unless he's pulled another fast one. Maybe this guy can tell us."

The "guy" was the Hindu, who was showing signs of life. They brought him to his feet. He shook his head. He couldn't understand the questions that were asked him, let alone answer them.

Gummer opened the far door, gave a sudden shout. The rest joined him, as he dropped back. Gummer was pointing to a passage that ended in a solid wall.

"The Shadow!" he gulped. "I seen him there!"

Lucky believed where others doubted. He joggled the Hindu's shoulder; pointed to the dead-end passage. The bearded man reached to the wall, pressed a hidden switch. A panel slid upward.

Framed on that threshold stood The Shadow. Guns stowed away, he stood with

folded arms. From his lips came a new, mirthful challenge, that echoed its defiance to the startled horde of blinking crooks!

CHAPTER XIX

THE FINAL TRAP

LONG-HELD though The Shadow's position seemed to the enemies who viewed it, his stand was no more than momentary. Before a gun could be lifted against him, The Shadow wheeled. With sweeping stride, he appeared to vanish upward.

Where he had been, thugs saw the background of a metal stairway. They headed for it, with Lucky leading the chase. Tailing the gun crew came the bearded Hindu, his wits recovered. That guardian of the lower cell was babbling words that no one understood.

The stairway surrounded a squarish wall, that was far larger than any pillar. The Shadow was a turn ahead of the men who followed him. Lucky caught no more than a glimpse of a swishing robe at every corner.

A doorway was closing at the stair top. Lucky flung himself against it, then yanked the knob. The door opened; Lucky went through. He saw a corridor, a door to the right. It was a large, wide portal, and Lucky was sure The Shadow had gone through it.

What alarmed the crook was the blatant sounds he heard, from somewhere outside. He thought that he caught the shrill of police whistles. Stopping near the doorway, he looked toward a flight of stairs. The sounds came louder, up that broad stairway.

Gummer arrived, to recognize the sounds. He swung to Lucky, in alarm: "The bulls!"

Lucky nodded, glowering. It was the cops, all right; and there was no use in going back. That downstairs maze would only prove a trap. Lucky looked toward the open doorway; saw brass portals hanging on huge hinges. Turning to the crew, he pointed at the doorway.

"The Shadow's in there!" spat Lucky. "Come on - let's get him!"

This time, the hoodlums went first, for Lucky knew what might be due, and so did Gummer. Guns ripped from the instant the first thug entered. Bringing up the rear, the mobleaders stopped just inside the doorway.

For the first time, they viewed the temple of Siva.

Bullets were pounding those brass-faced walls. Crooks were dropping, with smoking guns in their fists. The Shadow had taken the alcove on the right. He was firing from cover.

Three fresh fighters made a dash across the floor. They were after a bead on The Shadow's vantage spot; but he had left it. He was following their course; cutting in, he flung himself into the trio, milling with his guns.

Footsteps were pounding on the outside stairs. Lucky grabbed a big door; Gummer took the other. They hurried the barriers shut. The bearded Hindu, babbling distractedly, did the only deed that remained to him. He dropped a big bar into place, to clamp the doors shut.

Lucky turned, expecting to witness The Shadow's finish. Instead, he saw the black-cloaked fighter dodging past the Siva statue, to the left. There was a door open to the right of the statue; from it peered the alarmed face of Singhar Bund.

The cult leader saw no more than gun smoke. He slammed his own door, blocking all entrance to his grotto.

"GET The Shadow!"

Lucky bawled the order. Half of his crew had floundered. The rest were diving for the side alcoves. The cry rallied a few to action; but The Shadow had the antidote for the poison they wanted to deal.

As Lucky and two others gained the angle they needed, The Shadow was away again, spinning deep into the alcove at the left of the statue.

Though momentarily out of range, he had put himself in a spot he could not

leave. It was Gummer who recognized it; he reached the Siva statue, thrust a revolver past a bronze arm that held a trident. The Shadow saw the pointing muzzle. He fired; Gummer ducked back.

Lucky and the rest made a sudden attack. The Shadow met them pointblank with a fire of three swift shots. With a backstep, he grabbed the door of the big metal casket that stood just behind him. Taking that last refuge, he hauled the door shut.

Lucky reached the casket. Panting, he grabbed the padlocks, snapped them into place. As he finished with the last, he sagged. Gummer reached him; heard his dying cough. Lucky had dared too much, in that last sortie against The

Shadow.

There was ominous silence beyond the big brass doors that Lucky and Gummer

had closed. Gummer spun about, snapped to the crooks about him:

"Why ain't the bulls ramming? They ought to be trying to get in here. Say"

- he turned to the bearded Hindu - "ain't there another way out of this joint?"

The Hindu was gesticulating, trying to explain something. It didn't register with Gummer. He nudged his thumb toward the casket in the alcove.

"Lucky boxed The Shadow," he told the Hindu. "You savvy that, don't you? He's as good as croaked, The Shadow is - but so are we, unless you get us out of here before"

Gummer was predicting trouble from the brass doors. It came before his sentence was completed. A dull explosion quivered the building. Gummer went staggering against the Siva statue. Reeling to his feet, he looked toward the doors.

Smoke was filtering through shattered brass. Joe Cardona had remembered those barriers. He had come equipped to demolish them, if Singhar Bund tried to block the police. What went for Singhar Bund, went double for the mobsters who had invaded the Siva temple.

Police were pouring through. Gummer rose to meet them with bullets, along with the remainder of the gang, who now accepted him as leader. They charged into a barrage from police revolvers. Gummer staggered, fell as he turned toward the Siva statue.

Some of the thugs had been gunned down with him; others were surrendering to the law. But the only man that Gummer saw, was the bearded Hindu.

He had gone berserk when the police crashed through. His hand was loosening from a knife handle. Like Gummer, he was through.

WITH dying motions, the Hindu pointed to the Siva statue. He moved his lips; used a hand to cup his ear. Pointing again, he lowered his fingers to touch his lips. His meaning at last was plain.

The dying Hindu wanted Gummer to perform a last task: to speak to the Siva

statue. Perhaps it was Gummer's own distorted mental condition that made him understand. Furthermore, he forgot his own plight, in his urge to do the Hindu's bidding.

Gummer began to crawl toward the statue. He toppled; planked his weight forward and clutched the bronze knees with his hands. Raising himself, despite the pain that caught him, Gummer choked the words:

"It's Gummer! I'm through - like Lucky. We got - we got The Shadow. He's through - The Shadow -"

Fingers slipping from the bronze, Gummer curled in a heap. His glazed eyes turned upward, toward a face they could not see.

Joe Cardona was stooping above the dead crook, wondering what quirk had caused Gummer to utter those last words.

Because of the big brass doors, Cardona had heard no sound of the battle in the temple. The thick barriers had cut off all communication. There was nothing to show that The Shadow had been here; not even the batch of mobsters upon the floor.

Cardona supposed that some of those hoodlums had been flattened by the explosion. In the smoke, the police had depended upon sheer force of numbers to riddle the opposition. The fact that so many defenders had taken bullets did not surprise Cardona. He credited his squad with having performed exceptional

marksmanship.

Nor did Cardona note the oddly satisfied expression on the faces of wounded prisoners who were filing outward. They were keeping mum; but they couldn't completely control their elation over The Shadow's finish. If the police didn't yank him from that coffin in a hurry, The Shadow would be dead for sure.

The police didn't know that The Shadow was in there! Even Cardona, the No. 1 detective, hadn't wised to it. The defeated mobbies didn't intend to tell him.

Cardona was concerned with the door that led to Singhar Bund's grotto. He was about to order another charge of explosive, when the door cautiously opened. Cardona sprang toward it, covered the crack with a revolver point. The door swung wide.

There stood Singhar Bund. He was wearing tuxedo instead of robe; but he still had on his turban. His hands were lifted slightly; his lips wore a forced smile.

"So it is you, inspector!" Singhar Bund tried to look pleased. "I heard the explosion. I am grateful. You have rescued me from a desperate situation."

"We'll see about that," returned Cardona. "Who else is in that grotto?"

"A few of my chelas. I was consulting the crystal. It clouded, just before

the trouble began. I remained calm; later, the crystal cleared, and -"

"And you stuck your nose out? That bunk is through, Singhar Bund. I'm arresting you, for murder!"

Singhar Bund stared, a horrified innocence forced to his face. From the room came others, who had attended the earlier meeting; among them was Phineas Leeth.

"You folks can go home," Cardona told them. "I'll take care of this faker."

"But I need witnesses!" protested Singhar Bund. "Those who can testify that I was here all evening."

Cardona agreed that those who wished could stay. A few of the less nervous

cult members remained; Leeth was among them. The rest had gone, when Commissioner Weston arrived to congratulate Cardona on his work.

Those congratulations brought a stolid smile from the ace inspector. Cardona was thinking of The Shadow's part. Joe's one hope was that he could return the favor to The Shadow. Sometime, perhaps, The Shadow would be in a plight where Cardona could really aid him.

While he considered that improbable prospect, Inspector Joe Cardona was staring at the padlocked casket wherein The Shadow had been entombed by men of crime!

CHAPTER XX

SYMBOLS OF SIVA

SINGHAR BUND stood with folded arms before the statue of Siva. His smile had gone; for he had heard a deeper accusation than he thought would come.

Singhar Bund was ready to shift blame for the deaths of Renshell and Sarmon; evidence still pinned them on Morton Mayland. But the names that Cardona mentioned made the suave Hindu quiver.

"And then Welk," completed Cardona. "He was the last of those fake accident victims. But you went after Bolingbroke, and, tonight, you made a stab at Selwood.

"Those dacoits needed to get Selwood worst of all, because he knew that

his niece was goofy about this cockeyed cult of yours. That finishes you. Singhar Bund."

The Hindu shifted. He saw Commissioner Weston was as firm-faced as Cardona. With them were two detectives, ready to clamp the bracelets on Singhar

Bund. Of the members who composed the Siva cult, all were gone, with one exception.

Phineas Leeth was present. He looked crushed. His eyes had reflected horror, as they viewed the twitchy face of the man whom he had once upheld.

Licking his dried lips, Singhar Bund tried to find some answer. Words did not come. He could not dispute that list that Cardona held: the one with the names of victims whose wealth had filled the coffers of Siva.

Where the list had come from, Singhar Bund could not guess. Cardona knew, but did not mention it. The list was from The Shadow.

Cardona had found it back at headquarters. The statement had borne The Shadow's signature when Cardona first read it; but that had faded, afterward. The incriminating facts, typewritten to the finest detail, had remained.

There was a knock against one of the shattered brass doors. Cardona turned, to see Lucille Mayland. Singhar Bund showed new worry when the girl entered. Lucille no longer had that self-sufficient air that went with the followers of Siva.

Coolly, Lucille told the story of her abduction; how she had been held a prisoner in a cell room below the temple. When she had finished, she looked past Singhar Bund. She was studying the statue, when she declared:

"Siva has many arms -"

Lucille paused. Cardona supplied the rest.

"Lucky Belther and his outfit," said Joe. "They were called the Arms. The strong-arm boys."

"And many eyes -"

"Gummer Gilben and his crew. We finished the lot of them."

Lucille studied the gruesome necklace that girded the throat of Siva.

"We know about that, too," stated Cardona. "The Serpents were a bunch of dacoits. They're finished. But the skulls were victims. They pin the goods on Singhar Bund."

LUCILLE still eyed the statue. She was remembering words that The Shadow had spoken. Not knowing the girl's thoughts, Cardona took another channel.

"We'll clear your grandfather," he told Lucille. "It's plain enough that he was the goat for this Siva stuff. Singhar Bund had to have a fall guy."

Lucille's eyes were still fixed upon the placid faces of the giant Siva. In emotionless tone, she stated another fact:

"Siva has three heads -"

Cardona looked at the statue, then at Weston. He started to say something;

the commissioner intervened.

"The girl's right!" snapped Weston, always intrigued by the unusual.

"There are three heads on the statue, inspector. The symbolism should certainly apply."

Dumfoundment held Cardona; then came the inevitable hunch. With a quick turn, Cardona looked at Singhar Bund, saw the alarm that the Hindu registered. Another half turn, Cardona spied another face that was trying to control itself. With a long stride, Cardona reached Phineas Leeth.

"You're in it!" snapped Cardona. "Sure, you're in it! Passing yourself as Sap No. 1, to lead on the suckers. Who started me on the phony trail, anyway? You did!"

"That's why you called me up to the Ritz Plaza, to ask me what I knew about Hindus. You were worried, weren't you? And when I went out to get my whiskers, you called Singhar Bund, to tell him I'd be at the meeting. That's

how he knew who I was."

Leeth was protesting, wildly. Cardona laughed him down. Joe was pleased because The Shadow had left him something to find out for himself, even though The Shadow had previously divined it.

"This racket needed dough to get started," snorted Cardona. "Not just a little; but a lot. That makes you the angel, Leeth; and Singhar Bund is the front. Only there's one more guy" - Joe was thinking hard, but finding no answer - "one more: the real brain!"

"I can name him," declared Lucille. "Gladly, too, because his connection with these crimes is strongest proof of my grandfather's innocence. Tonight, when I suspected I was watched, someone called me on the telephone.

"I recognized his voice; and he knew it. That is why I was taken prisoner. But I am free; and I can name the man whose voice I heard. Courtney Renshell - the third and central Head of Siva!"

ALL eyes were on Lucille. Ears heard a muffled sound that they scarcely noted, until it finished with a sudden clang. The stroke came from the Siva statue.

Turning, they saw uptilted sheets of bronze. The platform fronting the huge idol had lifted apart on hinges.

In the space stood a sallow, dark-haired man whose face blazed fury. His eyes were as vicious as those of the departed Serpents. The hiss from his lips was more snakish than their signal call. The revolvers in Renshell's fists were trained to cover all members of the group except Phineas Leeth and Singhar Bund.

Arms were stretched. Weston and Cardona glowered their chagrin. The dicks looked sullen, especially when Leeth and Singhar Bund helped themselves to the revolvers that the detectives carried.

Lucille's eyes remained steady. The girl felt no terror.

Oddly, she had expected Renshell to appear from some secret place. The square walls of the lower floor were explained. The metal stairway girded the secret room wherein Renshell had lodged after his disappearance.

"For once," sneered Renshell, "I can waste words. My methods, it appears, were learned by someone who calls himself 'The Shadow.' Since we have not heard from him, in person, I shall divulge the facts he learned.

"His process was so simple that I did not foresee it. He merely went on the assumption that Morton Mayland was innocent. Because of that, he suspected the letter with the changed date - the main evidence against Mayland.

"I wrote that letter, giving it a former date. I erased the false date myself; in its place I inscribed the correct one. That was for your benefit, Inspector Cardona. I supposed that you would test the letter with ultra-violet light.

"The bones and ashes of a dissecting room corpse, along with my wrist watch, were sufficient evidence to prove my demise. Of course, the box that I shipped to Mayland's was valuable. But the murder of Sarmon - done by my Serpents, in Mayland's own home - was best of all."

UNDERSTANDING of many things gripped Joe Cardona. It was Renshell, familiar with Mayland's premises, who had fixed the passages, by having them cut in from the empty houses.

Renshell, too, had known of Mayland's feud with Bolingbroke. Renshell had called Mayland, exactly as the old man said, to hoax him to Bolingbroke's apartment. There, again, The Shadow, convinced of Mayland's innocence, had taken the old man's testimony as proof that Renshell still lived.

Renshell had come back to his favorite theme, upon which he gloated.

"The Shadow!" he exclaimed, with lips that expressed disdain. "He was clever - very clever - particularly tonight, when he spoke for one of my Serpents. I learned that, when Singhar Bund told me that only four had come here. I, unfortunately, had given orders to five, through the loud-speaker in the Siva statue.

"Words spoken to Siva always reach my ears. That is why I know that all of you are doomed. Because only one person could save you; and he no longer lives.

Somewhere, along tonight's trail, my Arms and Eyes disposed of The Shadow!"

There was a grating sound, as scarcely noted as the clang that had announced Renshell's appearance. It came from the alcove to the left of the Siva statue. Singhar Bund happened to be on that side; chance turned the Hindu's gaze to the upright casket.

The sarcophagus had opened. Not from the padlocked side, but at the hinged

edge. From the outswung door was stepping a shape in black.

Singhar Bund tried to gulp a warning; he was too stupefied to turn his gun

toward The Shadow.

"The fake casket" - Singhar Bund was pumping words mechanically - "with the fake hinges, rigged so the yogi could come out! The air holes - to let him breathe - he could hear through those! He heard everything -"

There was no need for Singhar Bund to spout the identity of the person who

had heard. The Shadow declared it, as he took a long stride from the alcove. With one automatic covering Singhar Bund, he thrust the other straight for Courtney Renshell.

WITH a quick drop, Renshell went below the tilted platform edge, hoping that the brass square would serve him as a shield. The Shadow made a sidestep toward the alcove, then an evasive shift in the opposite direction.

Tricked, Renshell fired wide. He was keeping his guns close to shelter. Before he could aim anew, The Shadow was at an outer angle. Automatics spoke, their targets Renshell's gun arms. With those blasts came the blast of a revolver.

Flinging caution aside, Joe Cardona had whipped out the revolver that crooks had not bothered to take from him. Joe was doing his best to return The Shadow's favor. It helped his aim.

As Renshell's arms flopped from the slugs that clipped them, the mastercrook sprawled dead. Cardona's bullet had reached the schemer's heart.

Singhar Bund was aiming during that action. So was Phineas Leeth. But their belated efforts were hopeless. Chiming with the blasts delivered by The Shadow and Cardona, two other guns produced a staccato from the shattered brass gates.

Harry and Cliff had accompanied Lucille to the temple. They had held Renshell covered from the moment of his appearance. When The Shadow took on Renshell, his agents cared for Leeth and Singhar Bund. Both were sprawled wounded on the floor, their pilfered revolvers unfired.

Echoes were prolonged within that room of brass, as The Shadow left those lesser murderers to the law. Crossing the alcoved temple, the black-cloaked avenger reached the open gates. His laugh quivered, to add new echoes that threw back resonance from every wall.

When Lucille looked, The Shadow was gone. Weston and Cardona, too, were staring, amazed at the swiftness of their rescuer's departure. All eyes were startled, except those jeweled optics of the Siva statue, that shone - a dozen of them - with flashing brilliance.

The faces of the maligned image held their downcast gaze. They seemed to

beam with satisfaction upon the sprawled form of Courtney Renshell. He, the real master of the Siva Serpents, had paid his price for murder.

Only the power of The Shadow had solved the riddle of the killer who dwelt beneath the image of Siva. The Shadow's strategy had brought that murderer to light.

THE END