



THE GETAWAY RING

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I

SPEED KIRKEL stood in front of the little newsstand and scowled at the life-sized photograph that glared from a printed placard. The picture was his own, and Speed felt that it didn't do him proper justice.

For Speed, back in Manhattan after a few weeks' absence, was rated as the city's Public Enemy No. 1.

Along with the portrait, the placard advertised a pictorial magazine containing action shots of the notorious public enemy. Speed tossed a dime on the counter, gave the newsy a contemptuous grin, picked up a magazine and headed for the steps leading to an East Side elevated station.

The newsy sat petrified behind his counter. The elevated train had rolled away again before the fellow came tremblingly from behind his stand, to look for a policeman. Soon, he was gulping to the officer:

"It was Speed Kirkel! When he looked at the picture on my stand, it was just like he was giving himself the once-over in a mirror! The next thing I knowed, he'd hopped the El. But it was Speed, I'm telling

you!"

During a brief ride on the elevated train, Speed read the magazine. The action shots were the real McCoy, and they gave Speed full credit. Captions stated that his speed in action was the reason for his nickname. Swift, daring, like a hawk after its prey, Speed had accomplished some of his boldest robberies under the very eyes of the police.

That wasn't all. Speed also had an uncanny ability at making a complete getaway. He never left a trail behind him, and Speed's success was causing other crooks to copy his system.

Such was the magazine's opinion.

The train had reached Speed's station; pulling his felt hat tighter, to hide his glossy jet-black hair, the public enemy sauntered from the car and descended the long steps to the street below.

The neighborhood was dark and dingy, particularly along the narrow street that Speed chose. Identifying a parked automobile by its rakish lines, he opened the door and eased inside, to be greeted by three crouched men who awaited him.

It was the driver who spoke for the trio:

"Kind of slow getting here, Speed."

"Sure I was, Hook," returned Speed, smoothly. "I never act swift until I need to. I've got a rep for it. If you don't believe it" - he was spreading the pages of the magazine, under the dash light - "take a look at what these guys have to say.

"They've got it all here, in black and white, with pictures to prove it. They've even figured out how I got my moniker: Speed. But this hooey about other guys being as good as I am, shows where they're all wet."

"If you're letting 'em travel your route, Speed," observed Hook, "maybe the bulls will get wise and box you some night."

"Not a chance," retorted Speed. "I wouldn't be back in town if the line wasn't clear. There's the diff between me and these other birds. They play a one-shot game; one big job, and they lam for keeps. But I come back. I've got a rep."

There were approving growls from the back seat, in which Hook joined. But Speed took it that the driver wasn't as cocksure as the other members of the crew.

"I'll take the chances, Hook," Speed purred. "I always do. That's why I use a new crew on each job. You and the boys here will get away just like the rest did. So what've you got to beef about?"

Hook swung the car through a maze of corners, across a lighted avenue, and into further darkness. They were rolling slowly along a straight street, when the driver gave his frank opinion.

"Too many guys know you're back," gruffed Hook. "Wrong guys, like stoolies. The grapevine piped the word this afternoon. Everybody knows you're staging another job tonight."

"Yeah?" Speed's tone was contemptuous. "But only you guys know what the job is, and where it's going to be. So what?"

"Somebody might make a good guess and spill it to the bulls -"

"And the closer the coppers get," interposed Speed, with a chuckle, "the faster I travel after I've pulled the job. Listen, Hook, when it comes to a getaway, I'm the one and original. Anyway, here's our alley" - he shoved his thumb toward the window on the right - "so swing in easy, and park deep."

WITH the car parked, Speed led the way into the rear of a dimly lighted building and up a flight of gloomy stairs. Names on the glass panels of darkened offices told that they were in the wholesale jewelry district, that the building itself was close to Maiden Lane.

A light shone from a third-floor office that bore the name: "Turbin Co." Coolly, Speed opened the door, beckoned for the others to enter. They were in an outer office; on the far side was a solid door with metal reinforcement, that bore the single word: "Private."

"Old Ned Turbin is in there," whispered Speed, "expecting a customer who won't show up. He'll be too foxy to open up" - Speed gestured toward a push button beside the door - "unless he gets the watchman's signal."

"You know it?" queried Hook.

"No." Speed shook his head. "But I know something better. I know what was done to that big lock once, by some smart gazebos who never finished the job they started."

The lock was an intricate one, set in a heavy circular plate. From his pocket, Speed produced a disk that had sharp needle points projecting from one side. Setting the disk against the lock, he found the exact spot he wanted. Speed pressed the needle points toward the lock.

To the astonishment of Hook and the others, the needles entered the solid plate!

It was Hook who suddenly understood. He'd heard of the stunt once before - drilling tiny holes to get at the tumblers. After that, the game was to plug the holes with wax and leave the lock for some future time, when chances for big burglary would be ripe.

Someone else had rigged this game, and Speed Kirkel had inherited it. He even had the needle disk that did the trick, when needed. Leaning forward, Hook heard the tumblers give a muffled click under Speed's sustained pressure.

The heavy door swung inward; Speed was the first across the threshold. He was swifter than his pals in another move, as well. Snakily, Speed whipped a revolver from his pocket as he took his first step.

His hand veering with a rapid twist, the public enemy swung the glittering .38 straight for a dry-faced, white-haired man who sat behind a desk that fronted a large safe.

In all his fifty years of business, old Edward Turbin had never found himself so nonplused.

Emergency reduced Turbin to his last resort. His desk drawer, half opened, held a revolver which he always kept at hand. But even his grab for the weapon was defeated.

Speed had the jeweler covered, and he backed the fact with a snarl that meant business. Turbin's hand stopped halfway to the drawer, trembled, then moved upward.

"Good enough," chuckled Speed, as he approached the desk. "Here, old-timer, take a gander at this." He slapped the opened pictorial magazine in front of Turbin. "You have heard of Speed Kirkel. Take a good look at his picture, then lamp me.

Turbin complied. He quickly convinced himself as to the raider's identity. Pocketing the jeweler's gun,

Speed gestured toward the safe with his own.

"Nice box you've got there, Turbin," purred Speed. "It would be kind of hard to dent it. But it wouldn't be tough to dent you" - he thrust close, pressing the gun muzzle against Turbin's ribs - "and if you don't want a gutful of slugs, you'll get busy with those dials!"

WITH a wince that almost cracked his dryish face, Turbin turned to the safe and began to manipulate the combination. Hook and his two pals spread out, ready with their guns, for they considered this a ticklish situation.

Not with Speed Kirkel.

The threats that he was purring in Turbin's ear had the tone of velvet, but the cut of a knife edge. When the old jeweler swung the safe door open, he shrank away fearfully, knowing that anything resembling a false move would mean his doom.

Pushing Turbin under the guns of the others, Speed helped himself to the contents of many jewel boxes, dangling necklaces before he pocketed them, showing fistfuls of rings to his pals, that they might estimate their worth.

"This haul will bring us fifty grand," chuckled Speed. "The fellow who fences this stuff for me has sense enough to pay plenty. He knows what's good for him, just like Turbin does."

As he spoke, Speed shot a glance at the old jeweler, saw the gleam of interest that came to Turbin's watery eyes. From what Speed had said, Turbin felt that the police might gain a clue to some shady jeweler who went in for peddling stolen goods. Speed saw the gleam, and grinned.

"By the way, Turbin," Speed remarked, "I need some dough, too. Got any handy?"

"Not much," began the jeweler, speaking through parched lips. "You'll find some in the safe -"

Speed was already looking for the cash. This time, Hook and the others were objecting. They wanted to be on their way, but Speed shook his head. Digging deep among papers and empty boxes, he came out with what he wanted - a small bundle of cash.

Calmly, Speed counted the money. It came to twelve hundred dollars, more than he expected. Laying the bundle on the desk, he pulled a wad from his own pocket and began to count off more. He stopped at a total of five thousand dollars.

"Five grand," chuckled Speed. Then, his tone cryptic: "That's for traveling expenses. Nice of Turbin, to cough over some dough to help."

Gripping the money in one hand, gun in the other, he turned about and motioned the remaining crooks toward the door.

"Get going, guys," Speed told them. He was covering Turbin as he spoke. "I'm going to give it."

Quivering, old Turbin began to beg for his life. His plea might have passed with Hook and the other listeners, but it didn't impress Speed Kirkel.

"You're a smart old geezer," snarled Speed. "I sounded you out, when I made that crack about fencing the sparklers. You're too smart, Turbin; that's why I'm going to rub you out!"

Turbin was listening. He was staring, with eyes that reminded Speed of a dying fish. But those eyes

weren't agonized, as they looked past Speed and the surrounding hoodlums. Despite their bulge, Turbin's eyes had a gleam again, and it expressed hope. So did the long-drawn sigh that escaped the old jeweler's parched throat.

Following a quick hunch, Speed wheeled about. He saw the sight that had produced the change in Turbin. Crooks were no longer alone with their victim. In the doorway stood a silent newcomer, a tall figure clad in black.

The intruder wore a slouch hat; his shoulders were draped with a flowing cloak. Of his features, only eyes were visible; they had a piercing burn that signified a mighty challenge. A challenge that this fighter could back, for in his gloved fists he held a pair of .45 automatics that dwarfed the revolvers of the opposition.

A snarl of recognition came from Speed. He knew the identity of the black-clad challenger. Speed Kirkel, past master of crime, was faced by the living power that conquered evil.

The Shadow!

CHAPTER II. TWISTED FLIGHT

THE laugh that throbbed through the strong room was more than another token of The Shadow's identity. It was a sinister tone of mirth, one that carried mockery with challenge. It reached the ears of Speed's followers before they saw The Shadow, and it held them quite as petrified as Turbin had been, earlier.

Hook, his gun hand trembling, looked toward Speed. He saw the scowl covering Speed's face, knew that it was an expression of mere bravado, for Speed's fingers were loosening, as if to drop the gun.

Speed had been in jams like this before, but always with the police. His vaunted swiftness wasn't enough to help him with The Shadow.

Guns were already thudding the floor, dropped by the two thugs who stood with Hook. Burlier, tougher than the others, Hook clung to his own weapon for a hesitating moment, then spread his fingers.

In the moment that it took Hook's gun to strike the floor, the unexpected happened. Old Turbin provided the step that produced the rapid change. Turbin's safe had an alarm inside it. Thinking that his move would aid The Shadow, the jeweler made a dive for the switch.

To reach it, he swung in back of Speed. With the skill that made him deadly in an emergency, Speed thrust one foot backward under cover of the desk. His foot locked with Turbin's; before The Shadow had a chance to drive forward, both men were rolling on the floor.

Turbin was rising, grabbing at the alarm lever, with Speed huddled beneath him, just as The Shadow lunged forward. Landing his forearm on the desk, The Shadow took a vaulting leap. Clearing the desk, he hooked his free arm around Turbin's neck and literally wrenched the old man to safety.

An alarm dinged as Turbin's hand made a last claw at the switch; then the jeweler was floundering in one direction, The Shadow diving in the other.

Speed was stabbing with his gun, finding nothing but the desk. Half squatted in the safe, he was wondering where The Shadow had gone. It would have gone badly with Speed if Hook and the others hadn't seen the direction of the cloaked fighter's whirling dive.

Roused by the alarm, further emboldened by Speed's shot, the frantic trio threw themselves bare-handed

on The Shadow, hoping to settle him through sheer brawn. They were met by flying automatics that served as heavy cudgels.

One thug took a skull-cracking blow that flattened him.

Launching from the safe front, Speed cleared the desk in a flying dive, carrying the lamp with him. The light went out as it struck the floor; then The Shadow's gun was tonguing at a target that had gone.

Once again, Speed Kirkel was trying the thing that had made him famous: rapid flight.

Speed reached the door to the outer office, Hook close behind him. A third man followed. He was Hook's remaining pal. He made the mistake of swinging about to take pot shots at The Shadow. Framed in the doorway, the thug jolted as a big gun thundered.

The Shadow was using bullets to lash one crook from the path, so that he could get at the others; but the thug floundered right in the doorway, his body making a temporary shield for the pair that had gone ahead.

By the time The Shadow reached the doorway and hurdled the slumping form that blocked it, Speed and Hook were outside in the hallway, making for the stairs.

The Shadow would have won that chase if Turbin hadn't made the mistake of sounding the alarm.

The moment they reached the ground floor, Speed and Hook were greeted by shots from the front door. The watchman was there, a couple of policemen with him. Their hasty shots ricocheted along the walls of the hallway.

Escaping the bombardment as they ran toward the rear, the fleeing crooks were doubly lucky. The gunfire served as a barrage that The Shadow could not pass to continue his pursuit.

More luck followed. As the officers dashed through the hallway, the watchman gave a yell and pointed to the stairway. Too near the bottom to turn, The Shadow was visible, a vague form on the steps.

Thinking him another foe, the cops sprang for him, shooting as they came. Their aim, fortunately, proved too high, thanks to The Shadow's own strategy.

Dropping as the guns blasted, The Shadow made a rolling dive straight down the steps, came up with a lunge beneath the flashing revolvers. A moment later, the officers were in a pell-mell tumble that carried them from the stairs, out to the middle of the hall.

The watchman was at the rear door, yelling and beckoning; more police were coming in from the front.

HARDLY had the clatter of heavy feet faded from the stairway, before a square door opened underneath the steps. Out from a little storage compartment came The Shadow.

He had hit the door of the closet while twisting from his grapplers; finding it loose, he had rolled inside, pulling the door partly shut behind him.

With a chase under way, The Shadow had seen no advantage in extending greetings, or giving explanations to the police. Having waited until the way was clear, The Shadow sped out through the front; there, he blinked a green-lensed flashlight, that promptly brought a cab.

The cab was The Shadow's own, piloted by Moe Shrevnitz, the speediest hackie in Manhattan. Knowing that Speed Kirkel was in town, learning that Edward Turbin had remained late in his office, The Shadow

had come here in his special cab on the hunch that trails might cross.

With Moe at the wheel, The Shadow was well equipped to overtake the rapid-moving Speed; for this cab was geared to travel at an unusual clip.

But the delay had given Speed a great start on one of his famous getaways. As the cab swung the corner, neither Moe nor The Shadow could sight the fleeing car.

All that they saw were police cars, swinging another corner a few blocks ahead. The only course was to follow the chase that the law had started.

Up ahead, Speed Kinkel was at the wheel of the fleeing car, yanking the rakish vehicle around corners. It was in accord with previous plans that Speed should take the wheel for the getaway; but Hook wasn't at all pleased by the arrangement.

Hook was growling for Speed to hit the straightaway, and step on the gas, claiming that the rakish car could outdistance all pursuit. But Speed kept to his twisting tactics. His purr carried a snarly note, as he told Hook:

"Keep your shirt on! And be ready with the gat. Only, don't start shooting until I say so. We're sitting pretty!"

"Yeah?" returned Hook. "I thought this was going to be a perfect getaway. What about the two pals we left back at Turbin's?"

"Pals?" queried Speed. "You mean palookas! They stuck their necks out, and got what was coming to them. I said that when we once started a getaway, we'd make it."

"O.K.," grumbled Hook. "But the chase is getting tougher. There's a cab just cut in behind us, to pick up the trail for the cops."

Speed shrugged, asked: "Has the cab got a couple of lights on the top - one at each front corner?"

"Yeah," returned Hook. "What's that got to do with it?"

"A lot," answered Speed. "Keep your lamps peeled and tell me what happens next. But lay off any shooting."

They were speeding past the open front of a small side-street garage, the taxicab close behind them. Hook heard a man shout, caught the roar of a motor from within the garage. Staring back, he saw a patrol car whip out into the street.

"Look!" gulped Hook. "The cops - they're in it! I gotta start shooting, Speed -"

By way of interruption, Speed reached across and yanked the gun from Hook's fist. Then, with a long sweep of the wheel, he swung the car around a corner. His face shoved half through the window, Hook stared goggly-eyed at what happened.

The taxi with the top lights kept straight ahead at full speed, with the patrol car whining after it. Shots rang out along the street; more sirens shrieked, as other patrol cars followed the chase. The sounds faded into the distance.

The intercepting patrol car had followed the decoy taxi, taking the chase in the wrong direction. Speed was driving calmly on his way, totally unfollowed!

IT was clever, that ruse, as later events proved.

Along the route of the false chase, guns were shooting from the front patrol car, the one that had sped out from the garage. Other patrol cars, farther back, couldn't see what happened up ahead.

Then, very suddenly, the front patrol car veered to the curb, acting as if disabled. The way was clear for the others, ones that had started the chase clear back at Turbin's building.

Seeing the speeding taxi up ahead, they overhauled it. When they fired at close range, the cab's brakes shrieked, the vehicle stopped at the curb.

In the cab the officers found a whimpering driver, who couldn't understand how he had gotten in such a mix-up. He said that he'd seen another car turn a corner, some distance back. Maybe that was the car the police wanted.

While the officers were quizzing the whimpering cabby, another cab pulled up. Moe was at the wheel, The Shadow was peering from a rear window. Hearing snatches of the conversation, The Shadow gave a calm-toned command. Moe swung his cab about and started back along the trail.

The Shadow had remembered the disabled patrol car. It was pulling from the curb as they returned. Noting the speed of Moe's approaching cab, the patrol car whisked away and turned a corner. The Shadow ordered Moe to do the same.

Half a minute later, a strange pursuit was in progress. A police car was in full flight, with a taxicab on its trail! Such an oddity would have been explainable had the patrol car contained wounded officers, but that wasn't the case.

Men were leaning from the fleeing patrol car, shooting back at the cab that pursued them. Leaning from the cab was a black-garbed figure, his cloak trailing in the wind, jabbing shots that came uncomfortably close to the patrol car's uniformed crew!

Other patrol cars happened to spy the pursuit. The fleeing car had taken to an avenue for the express purpose of attracting attention.

By the end of a dozen blocks, police cars were uncomfortably close behind Moe's cab, shooting for the black-clad gunner who was keeping close within the window.

Wails of the fleeing car's siren seemed to call for help. When the shriek was answered by a patrol car that cut in from up ahead, The Shadow's chance of further pursuit was gone. He was boxed in, instead of the fleeing car that The Shadow alone knew to be a fake.

Picking an alleyway, The Shadow pointed it out to Moe. The cab made a sudden swerve, whipped between two trucks and reached the narrow thoroughfare. Reversing his course at the next avenue, Moe eluded converging patrol cars and found a maze of helpful streets that he threaded in artful fashion.

When crime moved again, The Shadow would be ready to pick up its course along strange paths that would account for the mysterious disappearances of Speed Kinkel and other public enemies.

CHAPTER III. THE HIDDEN GAME

POLICE COMMISSIONER RALPH WESTON was very fond of two things. One was a comprehensive police report; the other, a double-thick lamb chop.

He was listening to one and gnawing the other, as he sat in the grillroom of the exclusive Cobalt Club the

day after Speed Kinkel had made his latest spectacular escape.

The man who produced the comprehensive report was Inspector Joe Cardona, a swarthy, poker-faced official, who rated highly with Commissioner Weston. Cardona had made a complete summary of the case in question.

"I've quizzed the guy that drove that decoy cab," declared Cardona. "His name is Storber, and he sticks to his story. But I still think he's a phony."

Weston nodded agreement, and emphasized it by wagging the demolished lamb chop in Cardona's direction.

"Storber admits he was paid to follow Speed's car," declared the commissioner. "We ought to arrest him as an accessory."

"But we can't prove it," asserted Cardona. "His story is too good. Somebody left this note" - Joe spread a typewritten sheet of paper - "at a hashhouse where Storber eats. There was ten bucks with it."

Weston read the note. It simply called on Storber to be at a given corner and follow a certain car when it came along, to pick up a passenger from it.

"Storber should have reported this!" stormed Weston. "Furthermore, when Speed's car went by in flight, he should have known that something was wrong."

Cardona didn't agree with either point.

"You can't blame a hackie for wanting to make money," he told the commissioner, "and what's more, Speed wasn't going fast when he went by Storber's cab. According to Storber, he was messed up in the thing before he knew it."

"And you believe him?"

"No." Cardona was quite emphatic. "But I can't shake his story. My hunch is that he deliberately kept on his way after Speed turned off somewhere. But hunches don't count, commissioner."

Subtly, Cardona was rubbing in an important point. The ace inspector was noted for his hunches, and usually, the police commissioner disagreed with them. This was one time when Weston was on Cardona's side of the fence, so it was Joe's turn to be conservative.

"Let's figure Storber as an accomplice," suggested Cardona, as though making a concession. "At most, he's just a stooge. What we've learned is this: Speed and other smart crooks have used taxis to decoy us every time they make a getaway. But last night was the first time we found it out. What we ought to do is forget Storber and look to the future."

The argument sounded logical to Weston. Cardona carried it further.

"Storber was driving a Nitelite cab," said Joe. "There's a lot of those hacks on the street; they look fishy to me. So I've gone after the man higher up."

"Who is he?" asked Weston, eagerly.

"Garret Fenmore," returned Cardona, "the guy that owns the cab company. I sent word for him to come over here, so that we could talk to him."

Someone was entering the grillroom. Hearing footsteps, Cardona swung about, expecting to see

Fenmore. Instead, he observed a hawk-faced arrival named Lamont Cranston, who was a close friend of the police commissioner.

Neither Weston nor Cardona realized that behind the imperturbable face of Lamont Cranston lay the brain of The Shadow. They simply took Cranston for what he appeared to be - a wealthy club member, with an occasional flare for adventure.

WHILE waiting for Fenmore, Weston reviewed Cardona's evidence, hoping that Cranston would give an opinion. His calm-mannered friend agreed that Storber's part looked shady, but would lead the law nowhere.

"If you shake Storber's testimony," spoke Cranston, in an even-toned manner, "you will probably learn that he received a phone call in addition to the note. We may assume that he was instructed, verbally, to carry pursuers from the trail.

"Maybe the fellow has a bad past and was picked on that account. But you may be sure of one thing, commissioner. No crook of Speed Kinkel's intelligence would reveal his full plans to a cabby like Storber. If you bother with Storber further, you will still be following a decoy."

As Cranston completed that statement, footsteps announced the arrival of Garret Fenmore. The owner of the Nitelite Cab Co. was a tall, long-faced man, whose baldish head had an egg-shaped contour. Fenmore shook hands in solemn fashion, but behind the straight lines of his face he betrayed annoyance.

Once seated, he stared with sharp eyes from Weston to Cardona, occasionally including Cranston in his roving gaze. As the commissioner took up the Storber case, Fenmore's lips moved as though wanting to interrupt. But it wasn't until Weston was through that Fenmore delivered his hot outburst.

"I take it," he boomed, "that you accuse me of running a fleet of taxicabs for the express purpose of aiding and abetting the flight of criminals like Speed Kinkel."

"Not at all," snapped Weston, promptly. "We merely charge you with laxity in choosing your employees. We believe that you may have others on your pay roll as doubtful as Storber."

"And that I deliberately hired them?"

"I wouldn't say that, Mr. Fenmore. But since you've put the question" - Weston's gaze was as sharp as Fenmore's - "suppose you answer it for us."

Fenmore's lips began to twitch. He mopped his broad forehead with a handkerchief.

"It's outrageous!" he sputtered. "Absolutely outrageous! Why... why" - he paused, dug into his pocket for a batch of papers - "take a look at these, commissioner. Full reports on every cabby who drives a Nitelite. We always demand recommendations.

"If any of our men are crooks, it's not our fault. We look into their affairs as far as we are able. I have already made a new rule, which was broadcast among the men today, stating that none are to take fares in advance, as Storber did, nor to accept any kind of questionable offers."

Weston grunted. He felt that Fenmore was locking the stable after the horse was stolen. Thinking of stables made him remember garages. He decided to give Fenmore an object lesson.

"Let us take the opposite of Storber's case," decided Weston, reaching for one of Cardona's report sheets. "Here we have the testimony of a man named Winter, who works for the Blue Star Garage Co. He was on duty last night in one of the company's garages, when a police patrol car arrived in the rear

street.

"Its occupants stated that they had heard sirens and were trying to locate them. Winter went through to the front street, as requested, and saw Speed's sedan approaching, followed by Storber's cab. Both had increased their speed by that time, and Winter, recognizing something was wrong, promptly beckoned the patrol car through."

This testimony was of particular interest to The Shadow, for he knew that it concerned the fake patrol car of the night before. The police had not learned that such a car was in the chase at all. They regarded Storber as entirely to blame for the false pursuit.

As for The Shadow's mix-up with the same car later, the law supposed that a legitimate police car had drawn a crook-manned taxicab out into the open, so that it could be trapped by other squads.

"WINTER shouted for the patrol car to follow the sedan," declared Weston, "as other witnesses have testified. Evidently, he wasn't heard, for the patrol car took after the taxicab instead. But the point is this: Winter did his utmost to aid the law.

"Therefore, in commending Winter, I must also congratulate the owner of the Blue Star Garage Co., whose case is the opposite of yours, Fenmore.

"The president of Blue Star has evidently been quite particular in choosing employees. By the way, inspector" - Weston was swinging toward Cardona - "who owns the Blue Star Garage Co.?"

"I don't know," returned Cardona.

"I do," put in Fenmore.

"Very good," spoke Weston, feeling that his lesson had been driven home. "Who does own that company, Fenmore?"

"I do," repeated Fenmore, with a broad smile. "I have just stated the fact, commissioner."

Weston was flabbergasted. It was Fenmore's turn to talk, and he did it effectively. From his other pocket, he produced a sheet that listed the employees in the Blue Star garages; he showed Weston that they were hired on the same basis as the taxi drivers who worked for the Nitelite company.

"We had bad luck picking Storber," declared Fenmore, "and good luck with Winter. That's all there is to it, commissioner. So if I take the blame in one case, I should be given credit for the other. But, personally, I think that the two should nullify each other."

Apologetically, Weston agreed that they should. He added that Fenmore's opinion was more than fair, but Fenmore did not feel himself entirely clear of fault. He felt that he could help to prevent such happenings in the future. Last night had given him the idea. Beside a general shake-up of personnel, there was more.

Fenmore's Nitelite Cabs were easily identified by their special toplights. Manned with reliable drivers, they could aid as a reserve fleet in the pursuit of criminals.

Such would not interfere with their regular business; the farther they roamed, the better they could serve when called upon by police cars to join in a chase.

As for the Blue Moon Garages, Fenmore owned a few dozen of them, all over Manhattan. With men like Winter working in those garages, they could serve as observation posts.

Carrying his plan further, Fenmore stated that his cabs would be available for plain-clothes men who wanted to use them, and that precinct detectives could use his garages as special places of contact.

By the time that Cranston was ready to leave, a big map of Manhattan was lying on the table, with blue-headed pins indicating the Blue Moon Garages, while Weston was pointing out cruising routes that the Nitelite Cabs could follow, with Fenmore giving full approval.

It was Cardona who expressed a side opinion to Cranston, as the two left the grillroom together.

"I've got a hunch that Speed Kirkel was trying to make a goat out of Fenmore," Joe told The Shadow, "by picking one of those Nitelite Cabs to help the getaway. But the way things are shaping up, it's going to be plenty tough for Speed and any other guys who try more funny stuff."

Cardona's theory went much deeper than even he supposed. Leaving the inspector at a phone booth, Cranston continued through the foyer of the Cobalt Club and out to the street, where he entered his waiting limousine.

As the big car rolled away, The Shadow's disguised lips phrased a laugh. He was thinking of what Cardona had said, and how far it could be carried. Fenmore would have been a real goat, had the law learned that a fake police car had made that short-cut through one of his garages.

Almost unwittingly, the law had prevented a repetition of last night's game, by accepting Fenmore's offer of future co-operation.

Nevertheless, the getaway game would continue, but in a different fashion. Of that, The Shadow was quite sure, particularly when he remembered certain details of the daring robbery that Speed had staged in Turbin's strong room.

Other measures would be needed to support the law's coming campaign against this wave of crime.

It would be The Shadow's task to provide those necessary methods.

CHAPTER IV. THE SILENT THRUST

THE remainder of that week was marked by a lull in crime. Not that the latest exploit of Speed Kirkel had failed to impress other crooks. On the contrary, it had impressed them a little too much.

Self-styled big-shots were more than anxious to stage crimes, for they felt that Speed's getaway proved that escape could be managed under the most difficult of circumstances. But there was a shortage of small-fry mobbies willing to join the big-shots in such a risk.

Lesser hoodlums hadn't forgotten that Speed had left two dead followers on the field of battle. Rumor was rife that The Shadow was responsible for those casualties. Thugs didn't like the setup at all, and were waiting for guarantees that bigshots were slow to provide.

Meanwhile, Inspector Joe Cardona has been working on his own. Stool pigeons had brought him news of previous crimes before they happened, but always too late to get to the places in time.

Cardona had an idea that the stoolies could bring better results. If they did, Joe would score a victory before a getaway could start. He knew that The Shadow had walked in on one job - the robbery at Turbin's - and Joe hoped that he could match The Shadow's system, whatever it might be.

It was a bigger order than Cardona supposed.

The Shadow, too, had workers who scoured the badlands, but they were quite different from the easily spotted stool pigeons that Cardona employed. Some of The Shadow's secret agents rated high in the underworld, and were able to pick up information with according ease.

In addition, The Shadow was checking on questionable cabbies dismissed from Fenmore's service. In that task, Moe Shrevnitz was useful.

Certain crooks, too, were well informed on many things, particularly one group that met nightly in a basement dive familiarly known as "Jerry's Joint," in honor of the proprietor, who saw to it that his special customers were not disturbed.

Chief of that assemblage was a brawny, big-jawed mob leader named Cal Grosham, whose tiny, beadlike eyes formed a contrast to his otherwise massive face. His nickname, Cal, was unusual, because it was an abbreviation for California, due to the fact that Cal had once been a mobbie on the Pacific coast.

Cal had a standing invitation to become an inmate of San Quentin Prison; but that was only one reason why he had decided to come East. The other was that Cal had been attracted by the promise of easy crime, after learning how successfully Speed Kirkel and others had operated in New York.

Arriving after Speed's sharp tiff with The Shadow, Cal had found difficulty in lining up the men he wanted, but that problem was well ironed out. Tonight, Cal was laying out the details of a criminal scheme which he expected to put in practice without delay.

"There's five of you guys with me," announced Cal, surveying the group with his tiny, quick-shifting eyes. "I've got double that number for an outside crew. I'm going to spill the dope and let you in on the kind of job we're going to handle."

"You don't have to, Cal," put in a swarthy, flat-faced crook named Dowdy. "Everybody knows it already. You're going after a warehouse, according to the grapevine."

Cal scowled. He hadn't guessed that the news had oozed out. Then, with a thrust of his heavy jaw, he demanded:

"What warehouse?"

Dowdy shrugged; so did the others. Satisfied that he had gained an important point, Cal spoke triumphantly.

"Listen, lugs," he announced. "Other guys have pulled big jobs and made their getaway. Maybe Speed Kirkel nearly flivved the last time, but that was because he didn't have a big enough crew."

Dowdy showed keen interest. "You're going to take Speed's route?"

"Sure, we are," returned Cal. "That's why I came here from the coast. Other guys have used it, and I've looked into the proposition. It's the real thing."

"WHAT about the swag?" queried Dowdy, still spokesman for the group. "Is that going along, too?"

"Why not?" demanded Cal. "Speed and the rest of them got away with the stuff, didn't they?"

"Yeah. But all Speed had was a load of sparklers. You'll need a truck for the load we're going to carry."

"I've got the truck. Listen to this. When Speed started the getaway racket, he used a lot of taxi jockeys

to help him. Guys who were working for the Nitelite Cab Co. Last week a jockey named Storber got himself in Dutch with the coppers."

Cal's statement brought understanding nods from Dowdy and the rest.

"A simp named Fenmore owns the Nitelite outfit," continued Cal, "and he bounced Storber and a lot of other drivers that were working the racket on the q. t., but he wasn't smart enough to get rid of all of them. That's why we've got the dope on what Fenmore is doing.

"He's working with the bulls, using the whole Nitelite fleet to help them. The idea is that Speed, or anybody in the know, will get in a jam if they pick one of those cabs to help a getaway. But Fenmore has forgotten all about the jockeys that he bounced, and so have the coppers.

"Those boys are still in the racket. They're bringing the truck, and they've got wheelers of their own, besides. We'll make our getaway, truck and all, with a whole bunch of decoys to take the bulls off the trail."

Dowdy and his pals began to drop their lukewarm attitude. Seeing that things were going his way, Cal Grosham drove home a clincher.

"Here's something hot," he added. "I'll tell you why the coppers are sure to fall for the decoy stuff. The other night, a phony patrol car was on the job to help Speed's getaway. It led the chase after Storber, only he fluked his own getaway.

"The phony will be on tap again tonight. But this time, it will give the decoys a chance to scatter. The cops will wind up in one part of town, while we're in another. Who cares if Cardona has been talking with a lot of stoolies who are wise to something? It won't matter to us."

Striding across the basement meeting room, Cal looked out and received an "all clear" signal from the barkeep. Turning about, the big-faced crook saw Dowdy and the others rising to their feet. With a grin, Cal gave the order:

"Let's go!"

The path that the crooks were taking led toward a gloomy district where several large warehouses loomed toward the dullish sky. This particular sector was one of several that police were keeping under surveillance, for stoolies had tipped off Joe Cardona that Cal Grosham had ambitions as a warehouse worker.

But Cardona, in accordance with instructions from the commissioner, was leaving the actual observation to a few Nitelite cabs. Handled by trustworthy drivers, each of those vehicles carried a quota of detectives. They had instructions to watch the warehouses until notified otherwise.

It happened that the cabs in this particular sector were getting orders that Cardona didn't know about.

A patrol car had poked into the vicinity. Easing through the streets, it passed cruising cabs and flashed them a given signal, which meant to move away. Thinking that their turn would come later, the detectives ordered Fenmore's drivers to clear the neighborhood.

One of the cabs, however, pulled into a Blue Moon Garage, several blocks distant. From there, a detective called headquarters, to report to Inspector Cardona.

Meanwhile, the mysterious patrol car moved back into the vacated area and stopped near a blind alley that led to a warehouse owned by the Occidental Silk Corp. During its circuit, the patrol car had drawn

other vehicles along its route.

Two dark-colored sedans and a pair of ramshackle independent taxicabs rolled into the alley, guided there by blinks from the patrol car. They must have parked along the alley's narrow sidewalk, for soon a truck rumbled into the same passageway and did not stop until it had reached a square court that served as a loading yard at the inner end of the alley.

Another cab arrived; it looked better than the rest. It didn't swing into the alley. Instead, it went beyond and darkened its lights near a stretch of blackish curb. From it glided a living figure, completely blanketed in the gloom.

NO eyes could have discerned that cloaked shape. To The Shadow, night was a perfect shroud.

Weaving a course across the street, The Shadow reached the opposite sidewalk and pressed close to the building wall. Across projecting steps, down into the hollows of basement entries, he was following an unseen course.

It was not The Shadow's purpose to strike at robbery itself, but at the getaway that followed it. By such a move, he would nullify crime itself, and accomplish even more.

The Shadow was after the trail that the crooks intended to use, hoping not only to bag Cal Grosham but to get a lead to Speed Kinkel, the notorious public enemy who had previously disappeared along that very route!

CHAPTER V. BROKEN CRIME

THE men in the parked patrol car wore uniforms, but they weren't police. Their low growls betrayed them as a pair of thugs, and they were worried about something. They were watching the taxicab that had parked across the way, wondering what it was doing there.

"It don't look like the right sort of hack," argued one of the fake cops. "Anyway, there was only supposed to be two of 'em come along."

"Maybe it belongs to the rest of the caravan," put in the second hoodlum. "They're waiting for us, ain't they, over by the bridge?"

"Yeah. But we was tipped off that all the jellopies that came here was to go into the alley. It don't look right, that one sticking around outside."

"Let it stick there. The longer it stays, the better. Maybe the hackie that's in it needs a beauty sleep. I'll go over and see that he gets it."

Easing from the fake patrol car, the speaker drew a blackjack from his hip pocket.

But the fake cop never crossed the street.

Hardly had he stepped to the sidewalk before a figure rose to meet him. It was like a living blackjack, that shape from the gloom; pliable as a coil spring, as powerful as steel. A quick-moving arm doubled around the crook's elbow and shot long fingers for his throat, where another hand immediately joined it.

Unable to swing his lethal weapon, the astonished thug also found that he couldn't articulate a sound. As steely fingers tormented his throat, they lifted him so that a hard-driving knee could swing him in back of the spurious patrol car.

There, the crook began to slump. The hands released him, he telescoped to the street. The fringe of a street lamp showed a black-cloaked figure bending over the quickly-settled victim. Turning a thuggish face into the glow, The Shadow repressed a low, brief laugh.

The hoodlum in the patrol car was wondering what had become of his pal. Squinting toward the taxicab, he kept expecting to see a bluecoated figure moving up beside it. Dissatisfied by the delay, he shifted from the wheel and reached for the opposite door.

At that moment into the car came the same pair of gloved hands that had settled the first crook. With the same swiftness, they settled the second thug.

Placing the first crook back in the fake patrol car, The Shadow began a rapid, but thorough, search. He found that they were fully equipped for their parts as fake officers. They had badges, handcuffs and keys, along with revolvers.

The Shadow relieved them of everything except the handcuffs. He used those on their owners, linking each crook's cuffed wrists to the steering wheel. Along with the guns, The Shadow took their blackjacks. Finding adhesive tape in a dashboard compartment, he plastered their mouths.

Thus having bound and gagged his prey, The Shadow stepped from the car and started across the street. He flashed signal blinks with the tiny flashlight that he carried, telling Moe Shrevnitz that the first job was done.

The Shadow's next task lay down the alleyway. There, he intended to spring up amid the warehouse robbers, start them into desperate flight, and stage a remarkable disappearance.

A clever plan, The Shadow's; one that even Cal Grosham could hardly suspect. For, when he vanished, he intended to go by a surprising route: with the crooks themselves!

Halfway across the street, The Shadow wheeled. His keen ears had caught the humming of a car motor just beyond the next corner. Sensing what it might be, he made a dive back to the patrol car just as an automobile swung in from the corner.

It was a police car, and a real one. It wasn't alone; others were close behind it. They saw the fake car at the curb and pulled over toward it, as The Shadow performed a vaulting roll across the hood.

It wasn't in The Shadow's schedule, this business of real police finding the false so early in the game. The call from the Blue Moon Garage had produced results ahead of time. The Shadow's alternative was to get into the alley before the genuine officers investigated it. But, again, an event occurred to upset his calculations.

Sounds came from the cul-de-sac across the way. The crooks had finished their rapid robbery, and were getting ready to come out!

INSTANTLY, officers scurried from the patrol cars without stopping to investigate the fake one. The Shadow heard Joe Cardona snapping orders; the inspector still thought that the parked police car was bona fide.

He had intended to question its occupants; to ask them why they had sent the taxicabs from this area. But he hadn't guessed that the car itself was phony. In fact, Joe was depending upon help from the men in it.

Headlights cleaved the darkness - crook-manned cars were coming out. Shouts told that Cal's murder squad had spotted the police. Revolvers spouted, a machine gun began to chatter, as Cardona and his companions took for cover.

Two sedans, two taxicabs, behind them a truck loaded with gunners who perched on stolen bales of silk: such were the odds that Cardona and his squad were up against!

This would have been a getaway with massacre in its wake, if crooks hadn't made the same mistake as the law. Only Cal Grosham was justified in his error, when he supposed that the fake patrol car contained friends.

From across the hood of the phony police car came the blast of heavy guns, accompanied by a fierce burst of rising mockery that one being alone could produce.

The Shadow!

Mobsters turned their fire toward the gun spurts. The car's hood might be a barrier against revolver bullets, but the machine gun was capable of withering it.

The Shadow took that chance, counting upon aid that came. Behind steps, below the level of basement doorways, Cardona and the headquarters men were opening a valiant fire.

In their swing, the crook-manned cars had exposed themselves to a flank attack from Cardona's men. The enfilading fire came up to expectations. Machine-gunners caved, losing their aim; then, as the cars wheeled farther, The Shadow stabbed shots at the crooks who sprang forward to man the loose guns.

Then the menace had passed. Cal and his outfit were in full flight, the truck traveling with them. Cardona and his headquarters squad were bounding back to their own cars, to take up the trail. Things were going just as Cardona wanted them.

But not in accord with The Shadow's plans!

This time there was no fake patrol car to lead the police from the proper trail. The Shadow had personally eliminated it, so that the silk-laden truck could be overtaken in a legitimate chase. But he had expected Cal and the others to make an actual getaway on which he intended to accompany them.

With such a close pursuit, The Shadow's scheme seemed doomed. Nevertheless, he did not intend to abandon it. By the time pursued and pursuers were crossing the next avenue The Shadow was in Moe's cab again, following along.

The crooks took a twisty course that the trucks couldn't follow. Men were dropping from the lumbering vehicle. When it tried to round a corner, it smashed a building wall, bringing down a deluge of bricks and windows from the floor above.

Police cars sped past it, with the exception of one that stopped to complete the capture of the truck.

More twisty streets ahead. Noting the constant direction in which the chase veered, The Shadow paused while reloading his guns and gave an order to Moe.

The speedy driver took a shortcut that worked as The Shadow hoped. They came right in among the fleeing cars, fully a block ahead of the pursuers.

CAL GROSHAM was too busy to notice the extra cab. His two sedans cut into a side street, the ramshackle cabs behind them disgorged four thugs and kept straight ahead.

Moe's cab went with them, prepared to shake the trail later; but it dropped a passenger also. The Shadow did a rapid dive straight for a darkened store front, as Moe started to spurt ahead.

Four cars were waiting on the side street. Like the first contingent, the rest of the caravan consisted of two cabs and two sedans. Since the latter were to pick up Cal's men, they were at the rear of the line. Wheeling from the wall where his dive had ended, The Shadow saw the chance that he had wanted all along.

He took the opportunity, despite the risk that the changed circumstances produced. With a long, swift sweep, he reached the last car just as it started. His hands plucked the handle of the trunk compartment; with his lifting move, The Shadow made a spring across the bumper into the space beyond.

It was a sideward somersault, that leap, and The Shadow concluded it by grabbing the trunk hinge with his other hand. A single yank brought the trunk door downward; the folds of The Shadow's cloak wedged beneath the catch.

Then, dizzied by his crash against the wall and the mad whirl that had followed, The Shadow felt himself surging onward, cramped in darkness, as the final car gathered speed to catch up with the fleeing caravan.

The crooks were on their way. Spoils of robbery were lost, but Cal Grosham and his crew still hoped to complete their getaway.

For once, The Shadow shared the same hope that inspired the men of crime!

CHAPTER VI. THE CHANCE THAT CHANGED

During the first part of that mad ride, The Shadow could hear popping sounds above the roar of the sedan's exhaust. Occasionally, there was a zing against the metal trunk lid. The pops were gunshots; the sharp clangs meant bullets.

Of all persons engaged in the rapid flight, The Shadow occupied the least desirable position. He was cooped in a place that he could not leave; and if any police bullets penetrated steel, they would find The Shadow before all others.

Nevertheless, The Shadow was counting upon eventual safety, for a very logical reason.

He had assumed that the last car in the caravan would be the speediest; otherwise it would not have been relegated to that undesirable position.

The Shadow's calculation was correct. After a few deflected bullets had failed to penetrate the trunk lid, no more popping sounds could be heard.

Twisting to a reversed position, The Shadow raised the lid a few inches. Looking backward, he could see scudding lights; each jounce that racked his shoulders gave him a momentary view of bobbing pavement. The car was close to the front of the caravan.

One patrol car had evidently followed the cabs which Moe had joined; but the other had taken up the right trail, and more cars had joined it. Back beyond the two cabs in the caravan, The Shadow could see tiny lights well above the street.

They were Nitelite Cabs that had joined the chase in keeping with the law's plans. Fenmore's honest drivers were making sweet amends for the dirty work that Storber and others had done in the past. Purged of the crooks who had crept into the organization, Fenmore's fleet threatened to ruin the getaway game completely.

The Shadow was flung bodily across the compartment as the sedan took a corner on two wheels.

Gleaming like vengeful fireflies, Fenmore's pursuit cars whipped around the corner and kept to the trail, bringing police cars along the correct route. It looked as though the getaway game was finished. Tightening, The Shadow prepared for whatever might come.

The thing that came was as fortunate as it was unexpected. There were four cars in the fleeing line; the one that carried The Shadow was in second place. Up ahead in the front car, Cal Grosham pointed a course through a very narrow alley.

Three cars took it safely, but the last one crashed. Looking back, The Shadow saw a whirl of figures catapulting from a crazy pile of bouncing wreckage. The whole top of the smashing car had opened, to emit a batch of hapless thugs who wouldn't need bullets to finish them.

Then the mass subsided, making a blockade across the mouth of the alley. Three cars were keeping on, profiting by the disaster to the fourth. Patrol cars that had cut in front of Fenmore's Nitelites were unable to continue the chase past the twisted wreckage in the alley.

The Shadow let the trunk lid settle lower, still keeping his cloak wedged beneath the catch.

Though they had slackened speed, the three remaining cars were still following a tricky route, under Cal's guidance. At last, they actually coasted.

In his cramped compartment, The Shadow felt the rear wheels give a slight thump. Then the car came to a halt. Oddly, however, The Shadow still noticed a throb, like that of a motor.

As he lifted the trunk lid he saw a car close behind him, its lights extinguished. Then came motion; off beyond the other car, The Shadow observed reflected lights that seemed to glide away.

The three cars of the caravan were on a ferryboat that was leaving Manhattan on a trip to the New Jersey shore!

VOICES were close at hand. With a drawn gun in his fist, The Shadow eased his head and shoulders from beneath the partly lifted trunk lid. He saw two men standing close by the rear fender of the middle car.

One was Cal Grosham, recognizable by his big face and tiny eyes. The other was a thin-faced fellow with a receding jaw, who looked like a member of the boat crew.

Cal put a question in an undertone: "You're name's Gurthy?"

The thin-faced man gave a nod, said: "I'm Gurthy. Got the dough?"

"How much do you want?" parried Cal, as if to test the fellow. "And what do I get for it?"

"Five grand," answered Gurthy. He pulled an envelope from his coveralls. "And this is yours."

Cal pulled a big wad of bills from his pocket and gave it to the thin-faced man. Cal's other hand was gripping a gun in his pocket.

Watching Gurthy, Cal ripped the envelope open with his teeth, then drew forth folded papers by the same system. One-handed, he opened the sheets, spread them toward a deck light. The dim glow showed Cal's satisfied grin.

"This makes it jake," he said. "We lost one buggy in the getaway, but why should I beef? I don't need the lugs that were in it."

"Speed left a couple of boobs behind him," reminded Gurthy, as if to seal the bargain. "So we're living up to the guarantee."

"Except for the swag."

"It was too heavy. Speed wouldn't have chanced a truck load. You said you'd take the risk."

Cal offered no argument. Standing by the light, he continued to scan the papers, while Gurthy went aft. Evidently Cal considered that he had gotten his money's worth, for he was still grinning when Gurthy returned.

The thin-faced man looked worried.

"I don't like them lights back on the ferry slip," he declared. "It looks like the coppers must have got there. But we're pretty near acrost and there's nobody on this side to stop you. Only, if I was you, Cal, I'd -"

The two were moving forward while Gurthy talked. The Shadow missed the rest of the conversation, partly because the clang of bells produced an added interruption. Then came the churn of reversing engines. The ferry was pulling into its New Jersey slip.

When the three cars rolled from the dock The Shadow was again behind a lowered trunk lid, with only a crack through which he could peer. He noticed the glimmer of lights behind the sedan; he saw them swerve ahead and knew the reason for the maneuver.

Since this car was the speediest of the three, Cal was assigning it to bring up the rear. That fact became quite apparent, after it had completed the long climb up through the Palisades along the Jersey shore.

For the car in which The Shadow rode was rolling quite slowly, to give Cal and the rest of them some leeway. Being speedy, it could easily hurry up from the rear and join the rest of the depleted caravan, should police come on the trail.

Suddenly, the police were on it!

A spotlight, cutting in from a side road, swept the broad face of the trunk lid. As he shut his eyes against the dazzle, The Shadow heard the mad shriek of a siren. He knew that the light had focused on the sedan's license plate.

Someone must have checked that number while the sedan was making its first start. Word had been flashed to the New Jersey authorities. A State police car had found the prey it wanted and was howling for more pursuers to join in the chase!

BULLETS rattled like hail against the trunk lid as The Shadow dropped it. His hiding place was more dangerous than ever, or would have been if the sedan had not taken a quick veer just as the barrage began.

Bullets pinged the rear of the sedan in plenty, but they struck the trunk lid at an angle, thanks to the car's change of course. Instead of penetrating The Shadow's shield, the slugs were deflected. Amid a rattle of ricocheting bullets, the sedan made for the clear.

It was opening up to a speed that made the Manhattan chase seem a snail's game by contrast. The Shadow was bouncing back and forth in his cramped compartment. He finally managed to wedge himself in a position that would avoid further jolting when the car made sharp turns.

The man at the wheel was spurting on every straightaway, and taking corners without slackening. Gunshots were no longer evident; the wails of sirens, though more numerous, were dwindling in the rearward distance.

Then the car was rocketing onward, following a direct highway. The Shadow had heard no shots from the sedan itself. He could picture either a crippled crew, or a batch of crouched thugs who preferred flight to battle. The sedan was living up to the speed that The Shadow had estimated; it was probably faster than any patrol car on the road.

Fast enough, too, to overtake the two cars ahead. From cramped darkness, The Shadow gave a grim laugh as he wedged his automatics beneath the edge of the trunk lid.

Soon, the sedan should be leading the procession; then he could look back at the rest of the caravan, and be ready to open fire if necessary.

As he waited in his tiny coop, The Shadow felt that he was prepared for any eventuality; but, gradually, his opinion faded. Looking backward, down over the rear bumper, he could see the wide ribbon of the paved highway streaking back beneath the moonlight.

It was flowing like a mammoth cataract, at a speed which easily exceeded eighty miles an hour. But, so far, this swift-moving car hadn't managed to catch up with the others.

A new thought gripped The Shadow. Pushing the trunk lid up a notch, he swung one arm out from the side and gripped the bullet-battered fender on the right.

As the car took a curve, The Shadow pulled himself to a precarious roost and gained a view from the rear edge of the car. He was looking forward across a moon-bathed landscape, where the glistening road coiled through hill and valley, visible for a few miles ahead.

There wasn't a sign of another car anywhere along that stretch.

Again, a laugh whispered from The Shadow's lips; its tone was a grim one. The cloaked fighter remembered the conversation that had started between Cal Grosham and the fellow who called himself Gurthy. Cal had received advice, and used it.

Cal had assigned this sedan to bring up the rear, just as The Shadow supposed; but there was more to it than that. The sedan had not been ordered to rejoin the caravan. Instead, it had been assigned to a different route.

It was the decoy game again. Having mixed with State police cars, the swift sedan had taken them along a wrong trail, and was now outdistancing them along the straightaway. As a passenger, The Shadow was likewise on the route he did not want.

Chance had worked in The Shadow's favor at the start of this hot adventure. Now, chance had turned against him. This wasn't a new thing in The Shadow's long experience.

When chance turned the wrong way, the only policy was to salvage what opportunity still remained.

Again, a grim laugh sounded from the rear of the rocketing sedan.

The Shadow's tone boded trouble for his fellow passengers, the crooks up ahead!

CHAPTER VII. STABS IN THE DARK

THE SHADOW'S game was to work forward along the outside of a sleek and slippery sedan that was hitting eighty miles an hour. At that speed, the slightest jolt could be magnified into a destructive hurl that no human power could withstand.

Already half from the trunk compartment, The Shadow was receiving tormenting slashes from the bouncing lid. He needed to get clear of those impacts. Thrusting one hand around the corner of the car, he reached for the tiny window beside the rear seat.

Chances were that the window would be open. It was, for the crooks had used it earlier as a loophole for their guns. The window was hinged. The Shadow's probing fingers inched in at the rear and took a strong hold.

A risky action in itself!

Had mobsters seen that clutching hand, they could have smashed it with gun butts, in which case The Shadow's trip would have ended in a skull-shattering dive to the road that literally flew beneath the car wheels.

But The Shadow was confident that his grip would pass unnoticed. Crossing his other hand beneath him, he clamped the edge of the rear fender, drew himself along the bumper until his legs cleared the trunk lid. The hinged shield went shut with a clang that was fortunately drowned out by the car's racing roar.

Hands clutching window and fender, feet pressed tight against the bumper, The Shadow was a huddled, crisscrossed figure that swayed hopelessly. Apparently, he had put himself in an impossible spot from which there was no retreat, for he had let the trunk go shut behind him.

But The Shadow wasn't thinking of retreat.

He waited until the car veered to the right. Then, loosening both hands, he made what seemed a suicidal dive forward and along the side of the car!

For a moment, the cloaked shape was a thing suspended in air, stretched forward, arms ahead, as if in futile effort to meet the smash of the roadway. But, in that lunge, The Shadow's figure seemed stayed by some mighty magnetic power that held him to the car's slippery side, aiming him toward the running board and not the road.

The explanation was centrifugal force.

In curving to the right, the car's whole weight was straining to the left. Like the car itself, The Shadow was bearing toward the high side of the curve. But he wasn't a mechanical part, fastened tightly in its place. He gained the full benefit of the leftward strain.

Flat on the long step that ran along the right side of the car, The Shadow remained there as if glued, even though the step was tilted at a downward angle!

The Shadow's left hand jabbed upward, caught the edge of another open window - the one in the sedan's rear door. Then, as the car began to straighten, he added impetus with his rising knees.

His left hand thrust forward inside the car itself, got a hold on the edge of the front window; the forearm was braced along the space between.

Almost with the same motion, The Shadow's free right hand came swinging from his cloak, bringing an automatic. Shoving the gun through the front window, The Shadow swung it to cover everyone in the sedan except the driver.

As a result, the gun threatened no one!

There was only one man in the car, and he was at the wheel. The fellow was Cal's lieutenant, Dowdy; he was busy watching the road ahead.

DOWDY must have seen something that pleased him, for he gave a satisfied chuckle.

Looking ahead, The Shadow saw the glare of approaching lights over a distant hilltop. Those lights shouldn't have given Dowdy any occasion to chuckle. They probably signified a highway car, coming in from the Jersey hinterlands to search this road.

But Dowdy had seen something else, visible only from his position behind the wheel. It was a fork in the road, just past a short right curve.

Dowdy was veering right when The Shadow aimed his .45 toward the fellow's head; then, with a jerk of the wheel, the crook yanked the car hard toward the left fork, pressing the brakes as he made the swing.

Instantly, The Shadow's form was lashed as if a gale had plucked it. He not only lost the aim with which he intended to challenge Dowdy; he was tossed from the step and twisted full about.

The only thing that saved him from a headlong trip to a stony embankment was the grip that his arm held through the windows.

Because of the swing, The Shadow was lurched outward; similarly, the application of the brakes hurtled him forward. One flying foot jammed in between the front fender and the car hood. Instinctively, The Shadow shoved it deeper.

Wedged in that odd position, like a trapeze artist frozen in midflight, The Shadow still held his left-arm grip. His right shoulder was actually through the window. Still clutching his gun, he made a wide sweep to regain his aim toward Dowdy.

The sway of the car prevented it. Still shoving the brake pedal, Dowdy was cutting down the speed regardless of the shrieking skids that resulted. Straight ahead was something that The Shadow could not see: a curve that showed a barricade across the front of an old bridge.

There was a red light on the barrier; to the left, a ramshackle fence marked the brink of the steep ravine that the bridge crossed. Dowdy had expected to see those things ahead; they fitted with what Cal Grosham had told him.

The thing that Dowdy didn't expect was the challenge that hissed suddenly in his ear. For an instant, the crook forgot his present task and sped a startled look toward The Shadow.

Dowdy's left hand was already off the steering wheel, thrusting toward the door handle on his left. For a moment, he was helpless, petrified, his own scheme of action obliterated. But he had already gone too far to change his purpose.

Cut down to a speed of scarcely more than twenty, the car went right where Dowdy had pointed it: to the left of the bridge that The Shadow could not see. It took a jounce as it left the highway; with that jolt, Dowdy no longer saw a gun muzzle looming straight between his eyes.

Bounced upward, The Shadow lost his aim. As Dowdy ducked, a gloved finger pressed the trigger. But instead of finding Dowdy, the bullet from the .45 punched a deep dent in the turret top of the sedan.

In ducking, Dowdy slashed his door handle downward. The door lashed open and the crook went with

it, striking rough ground just as the front of the sedan smashed through the fence that guarded the ravine. Flat on his back, Dowdy saw the doomed car launch out into the moonlight, twisting as it took to space.

Flinging with it, writhing wildly in the darkness, the flat-faced crook saw a shape of blackness that looked more like a mammoth pretzel than a human figure.

The Shadow had gone with the sedan into the depths of the ravine!

A CRASH came instantly, a much louder sound than the splintering of the fence. The sedan had smashed into a batch of trees that lined the ravine's slope. It was tearing its way down through those saplings, ruining larger trees as it went.

The whole valley echoed with the devastating roar, that grew louder with every second, until the final crash was smothered by a terrific explosion that came from the wrecked car's gasoline tank. Coming to his feet, Dowdy gave a raucous chuckle and started for the blocked bridge.

The structure was closed to motor traffic, but there was an open footway across it. Dowdy took that route. As he neared the far side of the bridge, he caught the glint of metal from a side road just beyond.

It was the thing that Cal had promised him, another car that he could use after wrecking the sedan. With or without The Shadow as a passenger, it had been Dowdy's duty to drop the decoy car in the ravine. He had simply taken a detour to get rid of the marked car. Soon, he would be rejoining Cal along the regular trail.

Dowdy hadn't forgotten the lights that had flashed toward him from the main highway. He knew that patrolling police could not have failed to hear the explosion from the ravine. Soon, they would be coming along this side road; but that didn't matter to Dowdy.

He would have plenty of time to dodge the law. He wanted to take a last look at The Shadow - if he could see what was left of the cloaked battler.

The shattered sedan was visible from the far side of the bridge. Bathed by moonlight, it formed a collection of well-spread junk, some of which had been tossed far by the explosion.

Some distance from the middle of the mess, Dowdy saw a twisted splotch of black. Aiming his revolver, he fired three rapid shots toward the thing that he took for The Shadow.

The bullets produced echoing clangs. Squinting, Dowdy realized that he had been shooting at the hood of the car, which had ripped from its moorings, near the bottom of the ravine. Dowdy gave a disappointed snarl; curiously, that was echoed, too.

A strange laugh vibrated from the depths, a sinister peal of mockery that Dowdy couldn't quite locate. His flat face registering puzzlement, Dowdy let his ugly eyes rove up the path that the crashing sedan had hewn in its journey from the brink.

Dowdy saw the top batch of saplings. They were the first trees that the sedan had struck; it had cleaved a sharp path through them.

Wide of the narrow channel that the smashing car had cleaved, The Shadow must have struck the fringing trees and clung there. Maybe he was crippled; maybe not. Anyway, Dowdy's snarl was one of pleasure. He'd get The Shadow once and for all; easily, too.

Thanks to the moonlight, Dowdy could see a blackish patch wavering amid the swaying saplings. Swinging out beyond the wavering bridge, Dowdy fired at the target. Three shots spurted from his gun.

They were stabs from darkness, for Dowdy was sheltered from the moonlight, but they told the crook's position. Again, shots were echoed.

This time, it was another gun that gave the echo. A stab came from a darkened spot behind a rock, close by the saplings. It was a better shot than Dowdy's three, that message from The Shadow. The bullet reached the shoulder above the crook's gun arm. Dowdy's shrieky snarl told that the hit had scored.

Across the ravine, The Shadow plucked his cloak and hat from the saplings where he had hung them. He had provided the decoy, this time, to coax Dowdy back from a sure route to escape.

PUTTING on the cloak and hat, The Shadow started a quick climb to the ravine's brink just above, intending to cross the bridge and capture Dowdy before the wounded crook could reach the car on the other side.

Just then, a police car wheeled in from the main road. The patrolers saw Dowdy on the far side of the bridge. He was reloading his gun when they went after him.

By the time The Shadow reached the road, guns were talking from the bridge. The volley ended before The Shadow could join in.

The officers had settled Dowdy permanently, by a double volley while he was trying to pick them off left-handed. They hadn't had time to observe that their foe was crippled.

Bringing the body back to their coupe, the officers propped it between them and started back to town. As they drove, they agreed that a dead passenger was better than none, but they mutually admitted that they would have preferred to bring in a live one.

Actually, they were doing just that.

The coupe had a rumble seat. Its top was slightly open, inched upward, like the trunk lid of the ill-fated sedan. During his return trip, The Shadow was listening to the conversation of the road patrolmen, who were giving him a lift without knowing it.

Like the police, The Shadow regretted that Dowdy had not been taken alive. For, with Cal Grosham and the others gone, Dowdy was the only man who could have furnished a further lead along the getaway trail. Nevertheless, The Shadow was not dissatisfied with this night's results.

The cloaked investigator had seen the inner workings of a very remarkable racket; enough to link the past with the present and provide for the future.

When crime moved again along the getaway trail, The Shadow would probe far deeper into the methods of the game!

CHAPTER VIII. CRIME'S INFORMANT

COMMISSIONER WESTON felt that the law had scored a substantial victory in the Manhattan sector. He made that claim a few days later, when he conferred with Inspector Cardona and Garret Fenmore at the Cobalt Club.

Weston based his opinion on definite facts. The police had spiked a robbery by capturing a truck loaded with some sixty thousand dollars' worth of silk. They had rounded up nearly half of a sixteen-man crew of crooks. They had bagged a few decoys, identifying them as suspicious characters who had once worked for the Nitelite Cab Co.

"Your weeding-out process was a good one, Fenmore," commended Weston. "I am sorry that I once criticized you for having men like Storber in your employ. Bad men can always manage to creep into any organization. But you eliminated the bad."

"And kept the good," reminded Fenmore. "My present employees have certainly co-operated up to expectations."

"They have indeed," agreed the commissioner. "The garage man, Winter, helped our investigation by identifying those two crooks that we found in the fake patrol car. He recognized them as the pair who cut through the garage the night when Speed Kirkel fled. So we know that they were impersonating officers on that occasion."

Reaching for a batch of report sheets, Weston did not notice that Lamont Cranston had entered, to take his place quietly at the conference table. Finding the sheet he wanted, Weston turned to Fenmore to add further approval.

"Special credit is due one of your cab drivers," the commissioner continued. "His name is Lewis, and he was the man who noted the license number of the last car in Grosham's caravan. His information enabled us to call in the New Jersey authorities."

Pausing, the commissioner became aware of Cranston's presence. He was shaking hands with his friend when Cardona put in the glum comment:

"We got the license number, commissioner, but nobody got Cal Grosham."

"Dowdy was overtaken," returned Weston, "and he was wanted for a long time. In fact" - the commissioner turned suddenly to Fenmore - "there was a reward for the capture of the fellow on an old kidnap charge. Six thousand dollars, and Lewis is entitled to a half share."

"I don't believe that Lewis will accept it," declared Fenmore. "All of my men have agreed to work together in this cause. What goes for one must go for all."

"You can divide the reward among them," returned Weston, "and I may add that there are other offers pending for the capture of Speed Kirkel and any members of his mob. That fact should encourage your men to future effort, Fenmore."

In the large batch of police reports, there was one item absent. Its importance was known only to The Shadow.

No one had checked on the crew of the ferryboat that had taken Cal and his crew to the Jersey shore. Thus the police knew nothing of a man named Gurthy, an important link in the whole chain of crime. The Shadow had personally witnessed Cal's payment of five thousand dollars to Gurthy, and knew just what it meant.

Cal, and probably others before him, had given cash in order to learn the secret route which Speed Kirkel had so often used to throw the law off his trail.

But the police, so far, had failed to recognize the existence of a getaway ring. They seemed to think that Cal had simply copied Speed's methods, by choosing a few of the public enemy's former helpers.

It was just as well that the law should labor under that misapprehension for a while. The Shadow preferred to tighten his own links first.

It happened that Gurthy was no longer on the ferryboat that had figured in the getaway. Thus The

Shadow knew that the getaway route had been subjected to some change.

Nor was Gurthy known in the underworld. He had disappeared as neatly as if the ground, or the river, had swallowed him.

But The Shadow, though he lacked the link he wanted, had gathered many threads instead. From his investigation of former Nitelite cabbies, he had picked up leads that the law had not obtained.

The Shadow intended to make the most of those details in the very near future.

AS soon as the conference had finished, Cardona went out. The Shadow knew Joe's destination.

The ace inspector was going to his office, to be on hand at dusk, the time when stool pigeons sneaked in to make their reports. From things that he had heard, The Shadow understood that the stoolies were due for a lively time.

They hadn't been delivering the goods. Unless they came through in a big way very soon, some of them would be due for long trips up the river.

For Cardona was putting pressure on the stoolies who had jail sentences hanging over them, threatening them with arrest for certain crimes that they had committed in the past, unless they made themselves more useful.

Ordinarily, Cardona decried such tactics, but this was a time when they had to be employed. Joe wanted to get in ahead of crime for once, and stool pigeons were the only persons who could provide the advance information that he needed.

After Fenmore had gone, Cranston chatted a while with Weston. He seemed a bit worried, as he talked to the commissioner, about some foreign bonds.

"I want to leave them with Rutledge Mann," said The Shadow, in Cranston's style. "He's a reliable banker, but his place isn't well protected. These bonds are negotiable -"

"We'll take care of them, Cranston," interposed Weston, with a smile. "I shall have Cardona post a man to watch Mann's office. When are you delivering them?"

"In an hour or so," replied The Shadow. "That is, if Mann is willing to take them. Again, he may be gone from his office when I call, though he is often there in the evening."

"Suppose you telephone me -"

"I'll have Mann do it. I think it would be better. He would be worried if he saw someone outside his office unless he knew that the chap was a detective."

Leaving the Cobalt Club, The Shadow rode a few blocks in his limousine, then transferred to Moe's cab. It was after he was in the cab that he dropped his part of Cranston. The change took place when he drew a drawer from beneath the rear seat of the cab and extracted cloak and hat.

It was already dusk. Within the cab, the figure of Cranston merely seemed to fade into gloom as the cloak slid over The Shadow's shoulders. Then came low-toned instructions to Moe.

It was Moe's job to call Mann, who was also an agent of The Shadow, and tell him to phone Weston at a certain time.

Moe's present route was the one that Cardona had taken a short while before. It brought The Shadow to

police headquarters, where he alighted and glided through the dusk. Unnoticed when he entered a doorway, similarly shrouded as he moved through poorly lighted corridors, The Shadow descended a stairway and came to a locker.

There he removed his cloak and hat, to put on a pair of overalls. Using a mirror and make-up kit that were deep in a high shelf, he rapidly demolished the features of Cranston.

Instead of that aristocratic visage, The Shadow molded a pasty, droopish face. Satisfied with the transformation, he picked up a mop and bucket.

Soon The Shadow was scrubbing the corridor floor outside Cardona's office. Passers recognized him and waved a greeting, to which he responded with a mere grunt.

They mistook him for Fritz, the rather stupid janitor who was often around the place. Fritz had gone home half an hour ago, but only The Shadow knew it.

Hurried footsteps sounded from a stairway. A squinty short-built man came into sight. His rattish face darkened when he saw Fritz. The fellow drew back to the stairs and waited there. But Fritz, who apparently didn't see the arrival, kept right on mopping the floor.

The Shadow knew the squint-eyed man by sight, as well as reputation. His name was Jojo Jorcum, and he was one of Cardona's stoolies.

Jojo was late this evening. He had been detained by a friend named Hawkeye, who happened to be one of The Shadow's secret agents.

Within a few minutes, a tingle of a telephone bell sounded from Cardona's office. The Shadow made a last sweep with the mop, deftly pushing the door a trifle inward as he did so. Then, picking up the bucket, he moved away in Fritz's stooped, ambling style.

Jojo took that opportunity to hurry toward Cardona's office.

NEARING the door, the stoolie stopped suddenly. He could hear the inspector talking over the telephone.

"Certainly, commissioner," Cardona was saying. "If you want a good man, I'll send Sergeant Markham... Yes, I've got the name and address. Rutledge Mann, Suite 618, Falcon Building..."

"Yes, I understand... The bonds are worth a hundred thousand dollars, and they belong to Mr. Cranston... Yes, I'll impress Markham with the importance of his duty -"

There was a clatter from along the hall. It was Fritz, coming back with mop and bucket. Jojo hesitated; then, since Cardona was still talking, the stoolie decided not to enter the office. Instead, he hurried back to the stairs. He was there when Fritz appeared.

The pretended janitor muddled about for quite a while, Jojo watching. At last, Cardona came from the office. Seeing Fritz, he remarked:

"Working late, eh?"

Fritz gave a grunt.

"Tell me, Fritz" - Cardona was looking along the corridor - "did anybody come up here, like they wanted to see me?"

"Yah," was Fritz's solemn reply. "Nobody."

With a chuckle, Cardona started for the stairs. Jojo was no longer there when the inspector reached there. It was at the lower door that he ran into Jojo, who popped in suddenly in breathless fashion.

"Sorry I was late, inspector," panted Jojo. "But I couldn't get away sooner, from where I was."

"Got anything?" demanded Cardona.

"Not yet," returned Jojo. "But I'm working on some hot tips. I'll be getting something soon -"

"You'd better be!"

Cardona stepped out into the night and slinky Jojo followed. From the top of the stairs, keen eyes watched the double departure. They were eyes that peered from the pasty face of Fritz, the headquarters janitor.

From the droopy lips of that disguised countenance came the whispered laugh of The Shadow.

CHAPTER IX. THE JOB TO COME

IN picking Jojo Jorcum as a figure in a coming game, The Shadow was working upon special facts known to privileged persons in the underworld.

He had learned that Jojo was more than a stool pigeon. The fellow was one of crime's informants, who kept big-shots posted on what happened at headquarters.

But Jojo acted in other capacities, too. Proof of that was given when the squint-eyed stoolie shambled into the Hotel Spartan, later that same evening.

The Hotel Spartan housed the elite of crimedom. It was a place that had once been considered first class, in the days when hotel guests did not mind the rumble of elevated trains outside the front windows.

Having gone down the ladder because of fussy patrons, the Spartan was now patronized by people who weren't so particular. A few tough-looking men were always lounging about the lobby, and they had a reason for being there. They were mobbies who served the big-shots who resided at this hotel.

Very few stoolies could get into the Hotel Spartan, unless they were willing to depart in several pieces. One of the few who took the risk was Jojo, although he always went through the place politely.

Jojo wasn't blacklisted as a stoolie. He was supposed to be a leg man for the big-shots, a sort of go-between who served them in minor matters.

Because of his access to the old hotel, Jojo stood in quite well with Inspector Cardona. But that was something that the squinty stoolie didn't brag about openly.

On this night, Jojo made one of his quick trips into the place and took the stairway to the second floor. He stopped at a door, rapped hastily, then hurried in as soon as he received a rasped order to enter.

The occupant of the room was a tall man, in shirt sleeves, whose face was big-browed and heavy-jawed. He had recently arrived from Chicago, disproving rumors that he had fallen victim in a gun battle with a batch of Feds.

His name was Clicker Lordon, and his nickname came from his ability to make the tumblers of safe combinations talk to him.

Clicker's big forehead and heavy jaw were the results of accidents. They had an artificial look, and the reason was well known. Clicker had stopped some bullets with his face during his palmy days.

They had dented him very definitely, those bullets, but Clicker had been repaired by a sawbones who knew his business. The physician who had done the job was now in prison, and Clicker was supposed to be dead.

But the wisecracks of the underworld claimed that a guy who could stop bullets twice could do it a third time. At present, Jojo was viewing the living proof that Clicker had survived his fight with the Feds.

Clicker didn't waste time getting down to business. In his harsh tone, he asked:

"You're Jojo Jorcum?"

"Yeah," replied Jojo, eagerly. "I just seen you come in, Clicker -"

"Snooping, huh?" snapped Clicker. "That ain't healthy, around where I am!"

"But some right guys said you wanted to talk to me."

"O.K., Jojo. Squat."

Jojo took a chair. Clicker faced a mirror, smoothed his garish shirt, and viewed his face as if proud of it. But Jojo, squinting sideways, saw that the big-shot was watching him.

"They tell me, Jojo," began Clicker, in a low, grating tone, "that you've been working for Speed Kinkel."

"No, no!" Jojo was hasty in denial. "I'm not working for nobody. I just know something that's worth dough, that's all."

"Something about the getaway route?"

Jojo nodded to Clicker's question. Turning from the mirror, the bullet-flattener rasped:

"What's the price?"

"Five grand," returned Jojo. "Cash and carry. I tell you where to go. You pay when you start the trip."

"It sounds good," sneered Clicker. "At least it would, if it didn't come from a stoolie."

Clicker's hand whipped from his hip as he spoke. It brought a gun that pointed between Jojo's squinty eyes. The stoolie shrank back, then caught himself. Jojo's lips formed a grin.

"Sure," he admitted. "I'm a stoolie! That's the sweet part of it! I work the racket two ways, but only one counts. I give Cardona dope that doesn't do him any good, and I bring back stuff that right guys can use."

WITH a grunt, Clicker let the gun go back into his pocket.

"I've heard that too," he gruffed, "and it sounds like it's the real goods. I'd like to do business with you, Jojo. Only, I'm a stranger in town. Wait till I pick a job; then I'll take up the getaway proposition."

Jojo gave his lips a lick. "You got a crew, Clicker?"

"Yeah," was the reply. "Gorillas always flock around when I show up. But I'll let 'em cover up. What I like is a one-man job; and the tougher it comes, the better."

The statement pleased Jojo.

"I'll steer you to a swell one," declared the double-crossing stoolie. "You can call it part of the deal, Clicker. There's a hundred grand in it."

"It sounds whacky," returned Clicker, back at the mirror. "Who's going to toss a hundred grand in anybody's lap?"

"I am," insisted Jojo, "because you're the only guy that can pull it, Clicker. To begin with, there's a copper on the job -"

"So what?"

"And I'll have to square myself," continued Jojo. "That means a tipoff. If you can work fast, Clicker -"

Wheeling, Clicker interrupted. He stretched his fingers, wiggled them to show their pliability.

"I never grabbed any slugs with these," he told Jojo. "They're as good as ever. Give me ten minutes and I'll crack anything short of a bank vault. Some of them fall easy, too. When I start working with a combination, it jumps just like I want it."

Jojo gave a smile of real satisfaction. Craftily, he was considering details that would save his own face; not from bullets, in Clicker's reputed fashion, but in a matter where Joe Cardona was concerned.

"Cardona got a call from the commish," declared Jojo, "and I listened in on it. Here's the lay: Cardona is sending a guy named Markham to keep an eye on an office run by some bird that's in the broker dodge.

"But if the joint gets cracked, Cardona may figure I put somebody wise to it. What's more, he's expecting me to hand him a hot tip anyway. Cardona don't know I listened in; still, I was the first guy he saw after the commish called - except maybe the janitor."

Clicker shrugged.

"Pin it on the janitor," he suggested.

"Not a chance," said Jojo, gloomily. "The guy's a dope. He couldn't get wise to anything - not even to himself."

Stretching himself in a chair, Clicker stared at the ceiling. Though half shut, his eyes glistened. Jojo knew that the ace safe-cracker was figuring out one of his smart plans. At last, Clicker gruffed a laugh.

"It's easy, Jojo," he declared. "I'll tail this dick Markham. You get wise and spill it to Cardona. That will bring him on the job, but it won't do any good. I'll be clear when he shows up."

"But if he comes quick -"

"Ten minutes!" Clicker spread both hands, so that Jojo could count the fingers. "That's the most I need. Anyway" - his eyes went narrow - "this getaway gag is a sure thing, ain't it?"

Hastily, Jojo nodded. He gave Mann's address; mentioned that the swag would be bonds belonging to a millionaire named Cranston. Then Jojo came to the important matter of the getaway.

"We're still using the ferry route," informed Jojo, "but with a new gag that will fox the bulls. You don't head for a Hudson slip, Clicker. Instead, you take a Staten Island boat."

"And get boxed, later?"

"No. There's bridges off of Staten Island. When you're on the boat, a guy named Gurthy will show up. Hand him the five grand; he'll tell you what's next."

"Suppose the bulls tail us?"

"They won't," assured Jojo. "The decoys will pull them off. You'll make your getaway, Clicker. Everybody else has."

For a short while longer, Clicker and Jojo continued their discussion, going over minor details. Their combined ideas gave the plan its needed touch of smoothness. They left the Hotel Spartan separately. Jojo sidled from the lobby, but Clicker went more boldly.

When Clicker passed the seated thugs, some of them rose and followed. They were the "right guys" who had voluntarily offered him their services; men dyed deep in crime, ready for anything, including murder.

CLICKER and his crew were not far from the Falcon Building when Detective Sergeant Markham approached there to take up his assignment. Markham was a burly officer, easily identified by Jojo's description.

A couple of Clicker's men happened across Markham's path, stepped aside to hold a fake argument. One was pretending to be a panhandler, asking the other for a dime. That was to cover Jojo later, for Markham would testify that he had noticed suspicious parties near Mann's building.

Watching from across the street, Jojo sidled up to a doorway, spoke to a man who stood there.

"It worked great, Clicker," said the fake stoolie. "When do you want me to call Cardona?"

"As soon as that boob gets posted," rasped Clicker. "Let him get into the building, then spill the works. I'll do the rest."

Jojo started for a telephone in a drugstore a block away. Looking back, he saw that Clicker had left the doorway; the thugs who were working with the cover-up crew were also gone to picked spots in the neighborhood.

Everything was clear, as Jojo wanted it. Cardona would need at least ten minutes to reach the scene in person.

Jojo's squinty eyes were unusually sharp. When he figured that everything was clear, it generally was. But Jojo could have continued his backward glance without observing a wary motion near the doorway of the Falcon Building.

Out from the darkness glided a black-clad figure that shunned the light in an uncanny fashion, keeping to gloomy fringes as it took Clicker's route into the building.

Again, The Shadow was on the scene ahead of the law. The master hand who battled crime was prepared to play his part in the game that he - more than any other - had arranged!

CHAPTER X. THE BAITED TRAP

ARRIVED at Mann's office, Detective Sergeant Markham knocked politely, but rather heavily, on the door. A chubby-faced man appeared and introduced himself as Rutledge Mann.

"I've been waiting for you, sergeant," said the broker. "Everything is quite all right, as you can see. I'm ready to lock up, but I can spare a few minutes if you wish to look around."

Markham looked around. Mann's suite consisted of two offices; the safe was in the outer one, for the inner office was scarcely more than a little cubbyhole and the only available space in it was occupied by a large filing cabinet, which Mann evidently needed in the private office.

Windows were tightly locked; furthermore, they opened on the street, which lay beneath a sheer wall. So far as Markham could see, there was only one route into the suite and it came directly from the hall. As for the safe, it looked quite strong.

When Mann had locked the suite, Markham took up a position in the hallway, directly opposite the entrance. Satisfied that he had found the best post, the detective sergeant decided to look around a bit.

Nearing the turn to Mann's office, Markham studied a short passage that he hadn't previously noticed. He was sorry that he had not investigated it before, because it had deep doorways where someone could easily have hidden.

Anyway, present inspection proved the little passage to be empty; but Markham became uneasy as he returned toward 618. Maybe his imagination was bothering him, but he seemed to hear sounds in the deserted, poorly lighted hallway. He was wondering if someone might have sneaked past while he was making his patrol.

That thought, plus the vague, creaky noises, caused Markham to turn about and look back toward the side passage. His turnabout was a mistake.

Instantly, a gun muzzle prodded Markham's back and a harsh voice grated:

"Stick 'em up, flatfoot!"

Markham complied, but did it with a side swing that jolted his captor. Lunging heavily, the detective sergeant was reaching for a gun, but the move didn't work.

His adversary was quicker. Not only did he swing about ahead of Markham, he shoved his free hand to the latter's pocket and whisked the gun away before the sergeant could get hold of it.

Disarmed, Markham found himself looking into a revolver muzzle, and an ugly, bulging face above it. Clicker Lordon was coolly pocketing the weapon that he had snatched.

"You've heard of me, flatfoot," sneered the crook. "I'm Clicker Lordon, the guy that was supposed to be croaked out in Chi. Only, the Feds didn't get me, like they thought."

Markham recognized Clicker from photographs that he had seen at headquarters. But the detective sergeant didn't answer.

"Gone dumb, huh?" queried Clicker. "Well, you were dumb, to begin with! But all this gumshoe stuff of yours has sort of slowed me on the job. Here, take this and help me speed things up."

He shoved a flashlight into Markham's raised hand, and gestured toward the door of Mann's suite. Having no other choice, the detective sergeant focused the light on the lock.

Clicker got busy with a set of keys, using his other hand to prod Markham with the revolver. The detective sergeant was treated to a display of Clicker's preliminary skill. The fourth key on the ring opened the door with very little trouble.

PUSHING Markham ahead of him, Clicker left the door slightly ajar and told the prisoner to swing the light around the room, keeping it low.

When the beam reached the safe, the crook rasped for Markham to hold it steady. Then, keeping his gun jabbed in his captive's ribs, Clicker crouched to work on the combination.

Every time Markham squirmed, the gun pressed harder, causing him to stiffen. Then it would repeat its tantalizing ruse, giving the sergeant another case of wriggles. All the while, Markham was forced to keep the light on the safe dial.

"You ain't the first boob that's done this," chuckled Clicker. "When I work on a dial I can feel the tumblers jump - and I can tell what's happening at the end of a gat, too.

"I'm handling the combo with one mitt and you with the other, and if either gets tough" - his tone hardened to a rasp - "I'll get tougher! Remember it!"

Markham decided to play a waiting game, for very good reasons. First, he hoped that the safe would withstand Clicker's vaunted skill. Again, if the safe didn't, Markham would find a better opportunity to deal with Clicker.

Though he kept the flashlight directed on the safe, Markham was lifting it a bit higher every time he gave one of his squirms. He foresaw that Clicker would have to stoop lower to reach into the safe. That would be the right time for attack.

For Markham recognized that he had a weapon, even though Clicker had deprived him of his gun. The weapon was the flashlight which the crook had so generously provided. It would make an excellent bludgeon when Markham found the right chance to use it.

In less than five minutes, the safe door yielded. Deftly whipping a handkerchief from a hip pocket, Clicker used the cloth to wipe the dial.

"Just force of habit," he grunted. "After showing my mug like I did, what diff would a few fingerprints make?"

The words encouraged Markham. One point had worried him: the chance that Clicker would blast loose with the gun before the detective sergeant could stage his attack.

From his statement, Clicker evidently did not intend to include murder along with robbery. Markham's waiting policy looked good.

But it didn't turn out the way Markham figured. Instead of foolishly thrusting himself into the safe, Clicker shoved the police sergeant forward. Deftly, he plucked the flashlight from Markham's hand.

Turning the beam into the safe, Clicker gave orders that included some details which would alibi Jojo Jorcum.

"I've heard a lot about Inspector Joe Cardona," declared Clicker. "They tell me he's a guy that plays hunches. So do I. That's why I figured Cardona would be putting birds like you around places where guys like me might show up.

"There's got to be some real mazuma in this box, or you wouldn't be on the job watching the joint. So go ahead, flatfoot. Find what I want, and hand it over."

Markham began to fumble in the safe, while Clicker played the flashlight across his shoulder. There were

many stacks of envelopes and boxes; among them, Markham saw one that bore the name of Lamont Cranston.

He deliberately ignored it. Clicker kept pressing hard with his gun, telling the prisoner to hurry.

At last, Markham was forced to open the box bearing Cranston's name. He hoped that Clicker might decide that bonds were not worth while as swag. But if Clicker chose to take them -

Markham's plans for a mad, but heroic, fight were interrupted by a snarl from Clicker. The crook told his prisoner to stop where he was, and supplied a hard gun prod to emphasize the command. Then, in an undertone, Clicker queried:

"Listen! Hear anything?"

Straining, Markham thought he did hear something, but he didn't say so. It was like a whisper; vague, yet weirdly sibilant, a tone that might have been within the very room.

Markham knew of that strange tone.

It belonged to The Shadow!

Encouragement, meant for Markham!

FROM somewhere close at hand The Shadow must have sent that whispery message, hoping that the safe would magnify it, in sound-box fashion, for Markham's exclusive benefit.

The tone was not repeated, but Clicker still seemed dissatisfied. Shifting back from the safe, he kept Markham covered, both with revolver and flashlight, as he growled:

"Stick right where you are, lug!"

Clicker reached the outer door, deftly opened it with one foot. Again using his foot, he hooked the handle of a small bag that was lying at the hinged side of the doorway.

Markham heard the muffled clank of tools, as Clicker kicked the bag into the office. He guessed that the crook had brought a burglar's kit along, in case he had too much trouble with Mann's safe.

Then Markham heard another sound that carried in from the distant hall. It was a muffled creep, as of men ascending the stairway around the corner.

Hearing the same sound, Clicker snarled. Though still covering Markham, the crook made a half shift out into the hall.

Instantly, the snarl turned into a yell, that ended in a gargle. Clicker was reeling in the hallway; from beyond the door, Markham heard the fierce peal of a challenging laugh. Amid that strident mockery came a gunshot.

Markham was leaping for the hall. Into his path came Clicker, clutching a smoking revolver. He was staggering as he met Markham, but he was still capable of handling the unarmed detective sergeant. As Markham grappled, Clicker twisted, turning his opponent's lunge into a dive.

Hurled out through the doorway, Markham wound up across the hall, landing hard against the wall. He heard Clicker's hoarse shout, then the blast of a gun, finally the taunting laugh of The Shadow. All the sounds came from Mann's darkened office.

Others heard those same tokens of battle. They were dashing along the hall, a picked squad headed by Joe Cardona. The ace inspector gave an understanding nod when Markham pointed into the darkened suite.

Cardona knew that Clicker Lordon was inside, for Jojo had named the Chicago crook when giving his tip-off. As for The Shadow, Cardona had heard his unmistakable laugh; knew that the cloaked fighter was again ahead of the law, in the trapping of a notorious criminal.

But Cardona did not guess that the trap had been specially baited, for a different purpose than the capture of Clicker Lordon. Before this affair was ended, Joe Cardona would experience more than one surprise.

CHAPTER XI. CRIME IN REVERSE

THINGS had silenced suddenly in the office. There were no sounds of Clicker's snarl nor of The Shadow's laugh. That was why Cardona edged up toward the door and pushed a flashlight gingerly past the corner.

As the gleam reached the opposite wall, Cardona received a rasping challenge. He saw Clicker's face, peering from the partly opened door of Mann's inner office. A gun muzzle shoved forward with it.

"Douse that glim," ordered Clicker, "unless you want me to start shooting. I just got The Shadow" - his chuckle was hoarse, as Cardona withdrew the flashlight - "and if the rest of you want a dose of lead, I'll give it!"

Motioning his men away from danger, Cardona beckoned Markham up beside the opened door.

"He's in the private office," whispered Joe. "How about it - can he find a way out?"

"Not a chance," returned Markham, "unless he wants to jump six stories to the street."

Cardona motioned for everyone to relax. Then, to those closest by, he spoke words so guarded that he knew they could not carry to Clicker.

"The guy will have to make a break for it," assured Cardona, "and from what I've heard of Clicker Lordon, I figure he'll do just that - if we work it right."

Cardona explained his scheme. He was to dicker with the crook, promising Clicker a chance to surrender. The others were to retire, if Clicker insisted; but some were to stay close, and be ready. The rest were to stave off any of Clicker's pals, if such men should show up.

"Clicker will come out, all right," gritted Cardona, "but he'll come out shooting. He'll use the surrender stuff as a bluff, to get me. But the chances will be fifty-fifty as to who clips whom first. Clicker don't mind stopping a bullet, so I'll take the same risk.

"But one's my limit. I'm depending on the rest of you to riddle Clicker as soon as he cuts loose. If I soften him first, so much the better. But nobody's to aim for his face. He's got a tin jaw and an iron skull that can make slugs bounce. Get him in the belly."

Raising his voice, Cardona called into the office, offering his plan to Clicker.

"Better give yourself up," voiced Joe. "It'll be easier, Clicker. We'll allow you a chance to surrender."

"Easier, huh?" came Clicker's retort. "Easier for you guys, but not for me. If you get me, you'll have to do

it the hard way! But I'm telling you" - his voice was gloating - "that this place I'm in is a regular fort. Think that over, before you come to get me."

Clicker finished his statement with a sharp slam of the inner door. Cardona promptly made other plans.

"We'll have to blast that inside door with bullets," he began. "But keep working from the sides when we do it. If Clicker -"

A tone interrupted; it came from the darkness. But it wasn't Clicker's voice. The tone was firm, yet sibilant - the voice of The Shadow!

By its very firmness, it proved that Clicker's previous claim was wrong. The crook had failed to get The Shadow!

Cardona could readily picture what had happened. With Markham blundering into the fray, The Shadow must have been handicapped in dealing with Clicker. That was how the mobster had managed to get into the inner office. Tactfully, The Shadow had let Clicker think himself the winner.

"Stay clear," warned The Shadow's whisper. "Clicker has a reason to stall. He hasn't finished with the safe."

Cardona looked at Markham, who gave a prompt nod. The detective sergeant knew that Cranston's box of bonds was still in the safe. How The Shadow knew it was something that didn't bother Markham, who seldom troubled his mind with anything complex.

"Let him come out," added The Shadow. "My shots will be the signal -"

THE whispered tone stopped abruptly. Evidently The Shadow had heard some sound from the inner door. Cardona motioned his men back along the hall; told them to buzz, as if in distant conference. But Joe crept closer, on his own.

He saw a thin streak of dullish light come from across the office. It was from the inner room; Clicker was sneaking into the outer office. Blackness seemed to block the widening streak; it could only mean The Shadow, creeping inward.

Cardona drew back from the edge of the outer door, rather than ruin the situation. But Joe was ready, a flashlight in one hand, a revolver in the other.

Then the thing came.

First, the quivering laugh of The Shadow - a short, sinister voice-thrust in the darkness. Next, Clicker's snarl, followed by a sudden clatter that was punctuated by muffled gunshots.

Leaping inward, Cardona sliced the darkness with his flashlight. He saw The Shadow halfway through the inner door, struggling heavily.

There was a crash of furniture. The Shadow lunged farther inward; then recoiled. Cardona saw a gloved hand deliver an upward stab with an automatic. Twisting as he fired, The Shadow came diving from the inner room, rolling half across the floor.

Propping to one elbow, the cloaked fighter sagged, but managed to point Cardona through. The inspector charged, followed by his entire squad.

Markham, coming last, turned a flashlight toward The Shadow, saw his rescuer rise. A bit unsteadily, The

Shadow motioned Markham through with the rest.

As Cardona reached the inner office, he stumbled over pieces of a broken chair. One happened to be a prop that supported a table. As furniture clattered, detectives yelled. Cardona dropped back as a massive, blocky shape came lunging his way.

Prepared to beat Clicker to the first shot, Cardona opened fire as the thing swooped toward him; but his shots brought clangs that couldn't have come from any human target.

Nor did the lunging shape crumple under Joe's fire. Instead, it hit the floor with a flat, hard crash, splintering the wrecked table beneath it.

The thing was Mann's big filing cabinet. Clicker had wrenched it from its corner and propped it against the furniture, to handicap any invaders. But when Cardona dropped behind the metal cabinet, to use it as a bulwark, his sweeping flashlight showed no sign of Clicker.

All that Cardona saw was a small open satchel, with tools scattered around it. Knowing that they must have belonged to Clicker, Cardona began to understand. Coming to his feet, he cleared away the filing cabinet and reached the inner corner of the room.

Joe saw what Markham had failed to notice earlier, while the filing cabinet was in its proper place. There was a door in that corner of the room, leading to another office. The door was open, a tiny pick hanging from its lock. It marked the route that Clicker must have taken.

Surging through with his men, Cardona found a locked door with a glass panel. Clicker must have locked it from the other side and taken the key along. Cardona smashed the glass panel, and with that start soon demolished enough of the door to get through.

He came out into the little side passage that Markham had noted with suspicion a while earlier. Starting along with that route, Cardona was suddenly confronted by Markham and a detective. They had come back through Mann's office and cut around the other way.

They hadn't seen a sign of Clicker, but Cardona was not at all surprised. Glumly, the ace inspector realized that the crook could easily have reached the stairway while the entire squad had been smashing into an office which supposedly had no outlet.

Cardona decided to use the stairs himself. He beckoned the squad along. As they started downward, Joe snapped to Markham:

"What about the Shadow?"

"He was heading out when I came back," returned the detective sergeant. "He was kind of wobbly, but he made the stairs all right."

"He must have spotted Clicker," decided Cardona. "Too bad he's done in; but maybe we can pick up again where he leaves off."

OUTSIDE the building, they saw The Shadow staggering into a cab. He was making gestures, which the driver answered. The cab shot away. From a window, The Shadow leaned out and gave a long sweep of his arm, as a signal to Cardona.

The police followed. In the lead car, Cardona could see The Shadow half leaning from his window. Striking a rough patch of paving, the cab swerved and took a bouncing skid half across the sidewalk.

Groggily, The Shadow lifted his head, pointed forward, then made a right swing with his hand. The effort must have taxed him heavily, for he slid back into the cab.

Cardona understood the signal. Just as The Shadow had pointed the police through to Clicker's stronghold, so was he sending them along the crook's trail. His signal indicated one block ahead, then a turn to the right. From his actions, The Shadow must have been wounded, but not seriously, or he couldn't have gotten this far.

Knowing The Shadow's ways, Joe Cardona did not stop to inquire. The Shadow wanted the chase to continue, so Cardona kept on with it, knowing that the blare of his car siren would bring a larger number of pursuers to aid in the capture of Clicker London.

There were ways of The Shadow, however, that Cardona had never even guessed at.

As soon as the chase had howled past the corner, the cloaked fighter laughed. His tone, though low, was strong - proof that he had suffered no injury in combat. He spoke an order to Moe, the cabby, who promptly swung his cab about and started in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, The Shadow was removing his hat and cloak, along with the thin black gloves. Stooping, he packed the garments tightly in a small metal dispatch box, that had a hinged handle. He didn't lift his head until the cab was crossing an avenue; with the lift, The Shadow laughed again, very softly.

Stranger than the mirth itself was the identity of the person who uttered it. For the lips that laughed belonged to the hardened, metallic countenance of the crook whose trail the police thought they had followed - Clicker London!

CHAPTER XII. THE GETAWAY ROUTE

IN an alleyway a block beyond the Falcon Building, tough-faced lurkers showed elation when Clicker London joined them, bringing the metal dispatch box which they supposed contained the spoils of crime.

They had been waiting in a parked car until Clicker completed his one-man job. Hearing sounds of a chase, they had wanted to cruise around and look for their daring leader.

But Clicker had definitely told them to wait where they were, and the man at the wheel had insisted upon following instructions. Being the toughest of the lot - with the exception of Clicker himself - the wheel man had gotten his way.

The fellow's name was Cliff Marsland. Long known as a capable mob lieutenant, he was rated as a killer in the underworld.

Actually, Cliff was an agent of The Shadow, the only such person in the group of five mobsters who had joined up with Clicker. The rest fitted exactly with what Clicker had told Jojo. They were thugs on the loose who had looked up Clicker when they heard he was in town.

For the first time, Clicker named the immediate destination. Cliff piloted the car to the Staten Island Ferry, which docked in lower Manhattan. All the while, his chief was at his side, gazing back occasionally to check on decoy cars that followed.

The decoys soon scattered, because they weren't needed. Their disappearance brought a growl from Clicker.

"Great stuff, paying five G's for this," he asserted. "I could've made this getaway on my own. I was the guy that shook the bulls off the trail. Maybe what's coming will be worth the dough, though."

They reached the ferry. It was Clicker who stepped out and strolled the deck. He was approached by a stoopish man who identified himself as Gurthy. The fellow had acquired a job on this boat. Clicker produced a bundle of bills and counted off five thousand dollars.

"All big numbers," he told Gurthy. "That's the only kind of dough I carry. Let's have the dope."

Gurthy passed over an envelope similar to the one that Cal Grosham had received. Opening it, Clicker Lordon spread the thin sheets of paper in the light, noted that they were closely typewritten. Taking it back to the car, he showed the others the papers under the dash light.

"Get a load of this," he chuckled. "It's one of those route lists like they put in automobile guide books. Only, it's got 'em all stopped. It checks right down to tenths of miles. You keep the wheel, Cliff. I'll call off the route."

Beginning from the Staten Island end of the ferry, the route was tricky. It led by obscure streets that avoided heavy traffic, and finally swung to a road that led toward a great bridge. Crossing over, the car reached New Jersey.

"That was the only tough part," announced Clicker, "but the sheet had an alternate, in case we needed it. D'you know, guys" - he swung toward the rear seat - "I've got a hunch that this system helped Cal Grosham the other night. He stayed on the regular road, and sent Dowdy by the other.

"Good stuff, having Dowdy pull the decoy act. If he hadn't tried to get tough with those hick coppers, he'd have made a getaway, too. His route must have closed in with Cal's, because that's the way this one operates."

THE car was threading an intricate course, in and out among the main Jersey highways, using underpasses and bridges to cross them. But Cliff had no trouble along the twisty way. Clicker simply read off the directions and checked them by the car's speedometer whenever the proper mileage registered.

After some miles in a northerly direction, the route veered to the west, along a secondary highway. Cliff shot a quick look to the passenger beside him. He thought he saw the flicker of a genuine smile upon the disguised lips that Cliff knew were The Shadow's.

Cliff had guessed things right.

They had reached the original getaway trail - the portion of the route that Speed Kinkel had so often used; the same one that Cal Grosham and others had also followed, upon payment of five thousand dollars.

The first part of the journey had been changed because of recent trouble, but that was the neat feature of the whole arrangement. Fleeing crooks could be steered from Manhattan by whatever way seemed advisable. But, always, they reached the secret maze that traversed the New Jersey hinterlands.

The route chart proved it. No longer did the sheet simply list roads; it carried other information. Pulling along a dirt road, the car reached a fork which Clicker pointed out.

"If we needed a sawbones," he stated, "we'd go right half a mile. Good stuff, having a croaker listed first in line. I bet Cal dropped some guys off there."

Having no wounded men in his crew, Clicker ordered Cliff to take the road to the left. After three and six tenths miles, there was a sharp turn to the right. Keen eyes checked the speedometer; then came Clicker's growl:

"Easy, Cliff. Go left on the road that runs behind the barn. Stop when you get down into the little hollow. Give the lights three blinks. If there's no result, repeat."

They reached the hollow. Cliff gave a signal; waited, then repeated it. A flashlight answered from the trees. Soon a stocky man reached the car, bringing a long hose.

"Fill her up," ordered Click, "and make it snappy!"

The man obeyed. Removing the hose, he stopped by the window, gave a thumbing gesture across his shoulder.

"Only about fifty yards over to the through highway," he remarked. "Better use the dimmers when the trees thin out. Nobody's supposed to use this old road."

"So the sheet says," returned The Shadow, in Clicker's harsh tone. "But thanks, anyway, for reminding us."

The old road veered into the main highway. There, Cliff turned the lights entirely off. White concrete enabled him to coast the car across a downward grade, when traffic was clear. As they struck a dirt road on the other side Cliff flashed the lights again.

After a dozen miles of backwoods journey, they crossed another paved highway. The passengers saw a large lunch stand set back from the main road, against a background of trees. The place was closed, but The Shadow told Cliff to take the road that swung in back of it.

"Climb out," he ordered, when the car stopped. "We're going to grab some hamburgs and java."

The place was like an old-fashioned speakeasy, with shades drawn tight and lights dimmed. A hard-faced proprietor served his special customers, while three crooks growled their approval of the route that Clicker had purchased for this getaway.

From then on, there were no stops. The chart listed repair shops managed by "right guys," who were always ready; it named other features, the most picturesque being a cemetery, with open graves near the road, in case any traveling mobsmen had died en route.

But the only details that Clicker called off were those pertaining to the road itself. Over long stretches, the route was easy, particularly when it traveled between the ranges of the Watching Mountains; again, when it afforded a straight run to the Pennsylvania border along a hard dirt road.

There were times, though, when the list advised caution, especially as to speed. Crossing the Delaware River was a very important point. State police were apt to be on both sides, at the bridges, but the getaway chart listed a loophole in the law's armor.

It routed the car by way of an old covered bridge that, technically, was closed to traffic. The bridge was open, however, for the use of local traffic between the tiny towns on the opposite shores.

Instructions called for dim lights, a sneaky speed of less than ten miles an hour. It also advised that caravans should cross at intervals, each car waiting until the one ahead was off the bridge.

WESTWARD through hilly Pennsylvania country, then southward into Maryland - at all stages, the chart plucked usable roads out of a maze of highways. It was in Pennsylvania, however, that the chart showed a definite change.

From there, down into the Blue Ridge country, it no longer listed regular stopping places. It simply named

spots where cans of gasoline could be found, buried for emergency use; it named towns where the travelers could stop for food or repairs without attracting too much attention.

But none of those places was guaranteed as safe. It was a case of using good judgment.

The car finally reached a small cottage nestled in the Maryland hills, away from a road. The place looked abandoned, until the arrivals entered it. They found the house stocked with food and supplied with cots.

Tired crooks were stretching on the cots, when Clicker rasped instructions.

"Before you guys grab some shuteye," he told them, "we'll have a look at the swag. Wait a minute - don't all jump at once! One guy's got to watch the door of this -"

Cliff interrupted by stationing himself at the door, a drawn gun in his hand. The others perched on their cots, watching Clicker open the metal dispatch box.

"This junk comes first," sneered Clicker, taking a flattened hat and a tight-rolled cloak from the box. "I picked it up while I was doing some shooting tonight. Maybe you guys can figure who it belonged to."

Mobsters were agog. Their voices overlapped, as they hoarsed the name:

"The Shadow!"

"Yeah, The Shadow!" Clicker's tone was contemptuous. "A lot of saps thought he never could be rubbed out. That was about as funny as the Feds thinking they could croak me!"

Amid approving mutters, Clicker draped the cloak over his own shoulders. Seeing his leering face above the black collar, the crooks showed high glee. They weren't surprised that Clicker had knocked off The Shadow. Noted for his immunity to bullets, Clicker was the one man who could do it.

Picking up the hat, Clicker tugged it down over his head; its brim deflected the light and hid his face. The crooks were pleased by this impersonation of The Shadow; they laughed when they heard Clicker's voice come from obscuring darkness.

"I got some surprises for you," rasped the speaker. "First, there's no swag, because the job went sour." With a push, he knocked the dispatch box from the table where it lay. Crooks stared amazed, when they saw that it was empty. "Next, I didn't croak The Shadow -"

Thugs looked up, amazed to hear Clicker belie his former statement. They saw deft hands come from the folds of the cloak, bringing out a brace of automatics. Then they were listening to a voice that actually went with that garb of black. It was a sinister, throbbing mockery - The Shadow's own!

"There wasn't a chance for Clicker Lordon to get The Shadow," announced the black-clad speaker, "because Clicker is still in Chicago. He is there to stay, for a very good reason. Clicker is dead, killed by the Feds, exactly as they reported!"

Snarling crooks sprang to their feet, reaching for revolvers. Outnumbering The Shadow five to one, they had the wild idea that they might stage a desperate battle. But the odds were no longer five to one.

They were only four to two. Cliff had stepped over beside his chief. Only The Shadow and Cliff had guns that were already drawn. Snarls changed to whines, as crooks shoved their hands upward, empty.

The getaway route had reached its end, with an added climax for men of crime. The confines of the remote hide-away quivered with the triumphant laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIII. CRIME MOVES ANEW

LAMONT CRANSTON was quite irked, apparently for good reason. Things had gone very badly in Mann's office a few nights before. The police had nearly bagged a redoubtable crook named Clicker Lordon, but they hadn't saved Cranston's bonds.

Returning to Mann's after their pursuit of Clicker, they had found Cranston's box in the safe, but it was empty. Somehow, Clicker must have managed to grab the contents. It was commonly believed that the smart crook had doubled back, to complete his robbery.

Talking with Commissioner Weston, at the Cobalt Club, Cranston did not mention that the box had been empty all along, a fact that only he and Mann knew. Instead, he went the limit in criticizing his friend Weston, even to the point of departing from his usual calm and indulging in ugly sarcasm.

Cranston's mood was quite plain to Garret Fenmore and Joe Cardona, who were silent witnesses of the outburst.

"You stationed a man to watch that office!" vociferated Cranston. "Very well, why didn't he stay there? Other robberies may have been excusable; not this one. Moreover, I lost more than my bonds. Because of your positive assurance that I would be protected. I placed cash in that box, as well. It's gone, too."

"How much was it, Cranston?" asked Weston.

"Twenty or thirty thousand dollars," returned The Shadow, with an indifferent gesture. "It isn't the money that counts, Commissioner. What hurts me, is the way you let me down."

"Do you have the numbers of the bills?" queried Weston, earnestly. "Can you tell me what denominations they were?"

Cranston's answer began with a contemptuous snort.

"Why should I copy numbers from bills?" he demanded. "it was new money, fresh from the bank - that's all I know about it. The denominations were large - five-hundreds and thousands, mostly."

"The bank might have a list of them."

"It hasn't. I've already asked."

Cranston was about to leave. Weston tried to mollify him by promising that the law would do its utmost to aid him. But Cranston wasn't to be mollified.

"I've turned the case over to the F.B.I.," he said, in parting. "By the way, they claim that Clicker Lordon was killed out in Chicago, a month or more ago."

"They're wrong!" exclaimed Weston. "Positively wrong, Cranston!"

"Why don't you tell them so?" was Cranston's final jab. "Only, first, commissioner, I'd advise you to read some back numbers of the newspapers."

Outside the Cobalt Club, The Shadow relaxed as he entered his limousine. As Cranston, he had actually contacted the Feds, according to his statement. But it happened that the Feds, themselves, were no longer any too sure about Clicker Lordon. They were ready to believe that the Chicago crook might still be alive.

In fact, that was a general opinion held everywhere, including the underworld. What was more, Clicker's exploit had stirred up new interest in the badlands. The Getaway Ring business had waned somewhat after Cal Grosham ran into difficulties, but the ease with which Clicker Lordon had slipped the law was bound to drum new trade.

The grapevine rumored that both Speed Kirkel and Cal Grosham were back in town, ready to stage new crimes and make another run for safety. For the underworld recognized the existence of a getaway ring, even though the law did not. It seemed well established that Speed Kirkel was the head of the racket, and that he cut others in on it, for cash.

ANOTHER rumor, however, was quite in error. Scumland believed that the getaway trail led to a common hide-out, where various crooks hung out together in a sort of happy hunting ground. The Shadow knew that the supposition was wrong.

He had taken the trail in the hope that it lived up to such specifications. He had found out, instead, that there were different hide-aways, and he was sure that old ones were often abandoned as a matter of sound policy.

No one had disturbed the Maryland hide-out, where The Shadow had left Cliff Marsland in charge of captured crooks. The Shadow had sent other agents there to relieve Cliff, and frequent reports had been relayed back.

The assumption that hide-aways changed, like the route, was very important. In fact, The Shadow was banking his future plans upon it.

An hour after Cranston had left the Cobalt Club, Inspector Cardona returned to headquarters. It was about the time when stoolies made their trips to Joe's office; hence he was annoyed to find Fritz mopping up the place.

"Scram, Fritz," Cardona told the janitor. "Scram, and stay away. Do your mopping downstairs. I'm going to be busy."

Stoolies came and went, after finishing scathing interviews with Cardona. The inspector raked them with threats and had reached his limit when Jojo Jorcum arrived. Seeing Jojo, Cardona showed his first trace of satisfaction.

"It's going to be the ax for everybody," began Cardona, "unless I get some lead either to Speed Kirkel or Cal Grosham. They're supposed to be in town, you know - or haven't you heard?"

"Gimme a break, inspector," Jojo pleaded. "You can't believe every whacky idea that comes along the vine."

"It's a fifty-fifty proposition," insisted Cardona. "One or the other of those two ought to be around. I'm counting on you to find out which, or both."

"Why me?" demanded Jojo, sullenly. "I steered you to Clicker Lordon, didn't I? I'm the one guy that's brought results."

"That's just it," assured Cardona, emphatically. "You got results once, you can get them again. If you don't, there's going to be a flock of pigeons flying up the river and you'll be right at the head of it."

Jojo was muttering to himself when he went down the stairs. He had expected something like this, because Cardona had indicated it all along. Spilling the dope on Clicker had been a grand idea, but it had worried Jojo at the time.

He knew the fate of stoolies who worked for precinct dicks. The more they learned, the more they were expected to find out, until they were either pumped dry by the law or polished off by crooks. In Jojo's estimation, Cardona was nothing more than a small-fry detective inflated to unbearable proportions.

But Jojo wasn't an ordinary stoolie. He could get results without running risks. The thought made him chuckle, and he didn't bother to look around for Fritz, the stupid janitor. He wouldn't have seen Fritz had he looked.

The janitor was missing. He had gone to the locker while Jojo was chatting with Cardona. Instead of Fritz, a shrouded figure was watching from the gloom of the corridor. As soon as Jojo left, The Shadow took up his trail.

AFTER a devious journey through the East Side, Jojo entered a poolroom, gave a wise nod to the manager. Going up a flight of stairs, he gave a wary glance out through a window that opened onto a fire escape. Knocking at a door, Jojo was admitted.

Right after that, blackness looked in from the hallway window. Materializing into a cloaked shape, The Shadow approached the door, worked silently on its flimsy lock and finally eased it inward.

Two men at a table were talking to Jojo. The Shadow recognized both. One was Speed Kirkel, the other Cal Grosham. In the background stood a cluster of privileged mobbies who were in on the conference.

"So that's the way Cardona sees it," Jojo was concluding. "I gotta give him something, or he gets a new batch of stoolies. You know what that would do to the racket. We got everybody labeled, right now. Guys without tags would make trouble."

Speed Kirkel pulled a hanging cigarette from his lower lip.

"Give him the dope, then," decided Speed. "Tip him off that Cal and me are working together; that we're going to crack the Unity Savings Bank tonight. How about it, Cal?"

"It suits me," put in Cal. "The getaway stuff works better when the cops are close than when they ain't. Clicker Lordon proved that for us."

"Too bad Clicker isn't in on this," grunted Speed. "I guess he likes his hide-away too well to want a change. There's enough dough in this job for all of us, though."

"Not with the new ante," objected Cal. "Don't forget, the getaway costs ten G's tonight, instead of five."

Speed growled that the price was cheap enough. Cal assured him that he agreed, considering the size of the job in question. He added that he hadn't started the racket. Since the honor belonged to Speed, Cal was willing to play along.

Speed swelled when he heard that; he was evidently proud to be rated as the head of the getaway ring.

"Give us until nine o'clock," Speed told Jojo. "We got the job figured down to the dot; the bulls will be too late again. What Cal says is right - the closer they get, the better we like it."

"Anyway, we're getting a bigger bunch of decoys, and some special service" - he nodded at Cal, by way of a reminder - "on account of the bigger price."

The door was silently shut and locked again when one of the mobbies approached it to let Jojo out. The hallway was as silent as before; Jojo didn't bother to look out from the window. He was calculating the

intervening time as he went down the stairs to the poolroom.

A clock showed ten minutes after seven; it was late enough to please Jojo. Cardona certainly couldn't expect results before nine. In fact, Jojo doubted that Cardona expected any results at all. The stoolie was grinning over the thought when he sidled out through the exit to the darkened rear street.

As he went beneath the fire escape, Jojo happened to look up. Everything was pitch-black above him. But darkness had never behaved as it did at that minute. It came down in a solid mass, flattening the stoolie before he could make an outcry.

Tight fingers relaxed from Jojo's throat when they found that the stoolie was quite limp. Shouldering his burden, The Shadow carried Jojo away and placed him in a taxicab, where other hands took charge.

As the cab pulled away, the echoes of a whispered laugh trailed from another direction. The Shadow had taken his own course on foot.

Jojo's two-way game was over. Inspector Cardona would not hear from his star stoolie this evening. Any word that reached the law would come from another source.

The Shadow had taken over the duty of giving inside facts on coming crime.

CHAPTER XIV. CROOKS IN THE MIDDLE

THE UNITY SAVINGS BANK was an old-fashioned institution that occupied a corner lot in a very dingy neighborhood. It had begun business in that locality years before, and its directors had always refused to move to a better section, even after the district had degenerated into a slum.

Being a savings institution, the Unity's proper policy was economy. By occupying the old building, the directors were able to offer depositors a higher interest rate than if they had moved. They were careful, too, in other expenditures.

Protective devices were an example. The bank had installed them, but always begrudgingly. The directors thought that such measures were adequate; and they would have been twenty years before. It simply happened that crooks were getting smarter, though the Unity directors did not know it.

In fact, the Unity's real protection had been ignorance. Not the ignorance of the fossilized directors, though they were blissfully lacking in wisdom, but the ignorance on the part of criminals. Until Speed Kirkel had looked into the situation, crooks had considered the Unity Savings to be a veritable fortress.

Having found out that the Unity was a Gibraltar financially, but not otherwise, Speed had put it on his schedule of future crimes. He had knocked off some jewelry jobs first, reserving the bank attempt for a grand occasion.

Speed thought himself quite clever. He had "looked over the lay" by opening a savings account at the Unity under an assumed name. He didn't know that The Shadow had similar accounts in many savings banks, including the Unity, and had also listed the weak points of this particular institution.

The mere mention of Unity Savings had given The Shadow the key to Speed's whole game. There was just one way to crack the place, and The Shadow knew it quite as well as Speed.

Soon after eight o'clock a cloaked figure dropped from a low roof to a tiny courtyard in back of the brickwalled Unity building. Deft hands set to work on a barred window, and opened it rapidly. Entering, The Shadow closed the bars behind him.

He was in the president's office. Originally part of an adjoining house, the room had been added to the bank's premises and a connection cut between. That had been nearly a year ago, but the directors had not yet appropriated funds to extend the bank's alarm system.

Such things had to be decided upon at annual meetings, and there had been an oversight at the last one. Both The Shadow and Speed Kinkel had been granted separate interviews with the ancient president of the savings bank, and had studied the windows of the new office.

Flashing a tiny light about the room, The Shadow stopped at the president's desk and examined its contents. Replacing some papers in a top drawer, he turned to a little safe in the corner. The safe was an heirloom, used only to preserve certain records in case of fire.

Opening it easily, The Shadow shifted bundles that he found in the safe and added a packet of his own. Returning to the desk, he wrote something on a piece of paper and placed it in the drawer.

The flashlight moved out into the main room of the bank, doused suddenly as footsteps came plodding from another direction. Gliding into a side office, The Shadow waited there until a watchman came along. Then, with a silent swoop, he shot forward in the darkness.

A few minutes later, a very puzzled watchman was staring at the ceiling of a storeroom, wondering how a hurricane could have come into the bank, twisted him like a pretzel, and left him so tightly bound and gagged that he could scarcely budge a muscle.

The Shadow was back in the president's office, watching for lights to appear on the opposite roof. They came - guarded blinks that announced the arrival of the combined gang commanded by Speed Kinkel and Cal Grosham.

WHILE the crooks were fiddling with the bars, The Shadow calmly used the telephone and called Joe Cardona. In a tone confined to the mouthpiece, The Shadow stated terms to which Cardona listened eagerly.

It was a tip-off from The Shadow, with no mistaking the weird whisper. Deliberately, The Shadow described a robbery already in progress, but paused before naming the location. With that all-important information lacking, The Shadow stated provisos, to which Cardona agreed.

In return, The Shadow stated: "The Unity Savings Bank."

Window bars were yielding; nevertheless, The Shadow made another call. It was to his contact man, Burbank, telling him that the time had come to deliver a certain packet to a Fed, named Vic Marquette, who had come to New York to investigate the recent getaways of crooks like Speed Kinkel.

The Shadow placed the telephone on its stand just as the window gave. He was gliding out to the main portion of the bank when a flashlight licked across the president's office. The glow showed fading blackness that dwindled like a collection of mere shadows. The darkness melted.

A solid figure had gone with it. The Shadow was taking a new station, to await the law.

Foremost among the invaders were Speed Kinkel and Cal Grosham. Speed shook his head when Cal congratulated him over his easy entry.

"The vault's going to be tough," declared Speed. "That's why I wish we had a guy like Clicker with us. As it stands, we'll have to drill it first, then soup it."

They were using their flashlights while they waited for the rest of the crew. Thugs were coming through

under the direction of Speed's lieutenant, Hook, who had returned to New York with the public enemy. Speed's light probed the drawer of the president's desk.

"By the way, Cal," Speed remarked, as he examined various papers, "did you bring along the ten G's that you'll need for the getaway."

Cal suppressed a guffaw.

"Why should I take a ham sandwich to a banquet?" he demanded. "There'll be all the dough that either of us needs when we crack into the vault."

"Sometimes guys don't take along what they go after," reminded Speed. "I'm thinking of silk, for instance."

"Dough's different," began Cal; then, catching the full significance, he added angrily: "Nix on the wise cracks, Speed. You couldn't have got away with that warehouse job either. The cops showed up too soon."

"They'll be here soon enough tonight," put in Speed, "on account of us squaring Jojo. I just didn't want you to forget. We've got to move fast -"

Speed paused, spreading a paper under Cal's flashlight. Both crooks saw numbers listed on the slip.

"A combination," began Cal. "Maybe to the vault -"

"Not a chance," interposed Speed. "The president of this outfit is soft in the bean, but not balmy enough for that."

"But those figures mean something."

"Maybe his nibs was playing the numbers game in his spare time. A bank president has to amuse himself somehow."

Cal was sweeping his flashlight as Speed spoke. Spotting the little safe, Cal grabbed the paper and went over to try the combination.

Meanwhile, Speed was sending Hook ahead with the arriving crew, telling the lieutenant to croak the watchman when they met up with him.

HAVING opened the safe by the combination on the paper, Cal bounded back to the desk, bringing an envelope that he had ripped open. He thumbed through a stack of currency.

"All G notes!" enthused Cal. "Twenty-five of 'em! A neat divvy for a starter, huh?"

He was stacking the bills in two piles. When Cal came to the odd one, Speed produced a half dollar.

"Match you for the odd note, Cal."

Cal called heads. The coin came tails. Speed pocketed the extra thousand-dollar bill, but Cal didn't mind the loss.

"Here's my dough for the getaway," he chuckled, thumbing his own share, "with a couple of grand over. Let's go along and pick up some real dough."

The pair reached an archway to the vault, where Hook informed them that the crew hadn't located the

watchman. Speed looked around, saw a couple of men ready with drills and explosives.

"We'll bring the guy quick enough," declared Speed, referring to the watchman. "Get busy on the vault, guys" - he was flashing his light through the arch - "but lay off that funny handle alongside the door."

"What's the handle for?" queried Cal.

"An alarm," laughed Speed. "I guess they figured that guys like us would wonder what it was about, and pull it. They've got a lot of smart gadgets in this dump. Things that were smart when they put them in, back in the time of the Indians!"

The drillers were moving forward. Speed's light centered on the glistening front of the vault. Fringes of blackness crept inward, encroaching upon the edge of the vault door. It was like dark smoke, moving with method, the substance that closed upon the alarm switch.

Then a chance shift of the flashlight's beam revealed it - a gloved hand that tugged, then whipped away to a larger, blacked mass that formed a shrouded shape in a corner near the vault.

Cal saw the thing and yelled. His shout was drowned by the sudden clangor of the alarm. But Speed caught the beginning of the whoop that Cal's leather lungs ejected. He was speed all over as he yanked a gun, to aim for the foe who had started the alarm.

Speed wasn't fast enough, even though he was half a draw ahead of his companion, Cal. The shape in the corner hadn't whipped away for safety. The Shadow had simply drawn back to gain needed impetus for a forward drive.

Like a shroud-draped lance, he launched himself into the midst of Speed's astonished drillers, rolled them back in a wave. Above the brazen-throated alarm, they heard fierce mockery of The Shadow's laugh ringing in their very ears. They knew their antagonist to be The Shadow. Panic seized them.

The thugs had guns, but no time to draw them. Dropping their drills, they surged out through the archway. Speed and Cal dived for cover; they had no chance to clip The Shadow as he came along behind that human wall.

Hook and others rushed up to see men lurching, scattering, under sprawling blows. As the path cleared The Shadow was visible in the archway; he wheeled back to shelter before Hook and the rest could fire.

Those who tried to cross in front of the arch were promptly dropped by The Shadow's bullets. Crooks who fired from angles gained no results. From a slant, The Shadow's refuge had all the advantages of a fort.

Mutually recognizing the futility of such a conflict, Speed and Cal took to flight, howling for the rest to follow. Mobbies obeyed, shooting back at The Shadow as they retired. Their delay was costly to most of them.

The clamor of the alarm had drowned smashing sounds from the front of the bank. A big door gave. With flashlights blazing, Cardona and a headquarters squad surged in upon the trapped thugs, cutting off the route to the far corner, where the president's office was situated.

BY that time, crooks preferred to battle with the police, rather than The Shadow. They made a furious surge that threatened to sweep Cardona's squad out into the street.

But the most ardent gunmen were diving as they fired. Out from his archway, The Shadow was foiling them with a rapid, two-gun fire.

Crooks were in the middle; their chance for escape was gone. Seeing the dilemma of their followers, Speed and Cal dived into the corner office, which they alone were close enough to reach.

While the police were putting the quietus on Hook and the few remaining mobbies, The Shadow skirted the wall of the big room and took the route by which Speed and Cal had gone.

Crossing the other roof, The Shadow heard the roar of departing automobiles. Crime's aces were fleeing with an outside crew, under the very noses of police cars. Nitelite Cabs were cutting in from everywhere, to aid the chase.

Reaching Moe's cab, which was stationed a few blocks away, The Shadow gave a destination of his own. So far, he had thwarted a robbery and chopped a criminal mob in half, with the aid of the police. But that was just the start of it.

Crime was due for a one-way ride tonight, with a finish that would be recorded as one of The Shadow's greatest triumphs!

CHAPTER XV. JERSEY TRAIL

MADLY, three cars were making a twisty flight through the side streets of Manhattan. Speed Kinkel was leading the way, being the man most familiar with the getaway game. Cal Grosham was bringing up the rear, ready to fight it out with the police if they overtook him.

The chase was close; but decoy cars were cutting in between, as if playing cross-tag. There were trucks, too, among the decoys, ready to lumber in the way, apparently by chance.

The trucks were the new feature that Speed had mentioned; but they didn't work. The pursuit was too hot.

Oddly, however, the decoys succeeded where the trucks failed. Police cars and Nitelite Cabs chased after every false trail.

Only because of their great numbers did the pursuers manage to stay with the fleeing caravan; and when the race had thinned, with decoys a thing of the past, there were still a few police cars sticking too close for Cal's comfort.

Then, thanks to Speed's neat reversal of the route, the pursuit was ended. Speed made a double turn, the two other cars duplicated it. Looking back from the rear of the caravan, Cal saw the police cars take the first corner, but not the second.

Twenty minutes later, the lucky fugitives had reached the Staten Island Ferry. Reunited, Speed and Cal were arguing over the honors.

The leading public enemy claimed that his tactics had pulled the trick, whereas his friendly rival declared that anybody could have picked the course, but that few - perhaps only Cal himself - could have brought up the rear in such efficient style.

Both were wrong in taking credit. It belonged to the last person they imagined: The Shadow. Letting the public enemies get clear was the main proviso that The Shadow had forced on Joe Cardona.

As matters stood, the police were rounding up the decoys, something that they should have done before. The real trail was a special proposition; one for which The Shadow had made other plans.

Gurthy had seen the three cars come on the ferry. The fake deckhand was standing near the stern talking

to a squatty passenger, whom he addressed as Barney. From the way Gurthy spoke, Barney was a regular passenger on these rides.

"We've got a couple of minutes yet," said Gurthy. "I'll collect before we start, and you won't have to make the trip over and back."

"Suits me," returned Barney. "I don't get no kick out of riding this packet. The sooner I get the dough off, the better."

Gurthy moved forward. He stayed close to the dark, because he preferred it; but, this time, the policy did not serve him well.

Massed darkness stirred, became a shape that was human in form, but metallic in power. Gurthy went limp when viselike hands clutched his throat.

As The Shadow lifted his new prey by the neck, a cab door opened. Swinging Gurthy into the waiting hands of Cliff and Hawkeye, The Shadow whipped off cloak and hat, tossing the garments along, too. While Cliff was watching Gurthy, Hawkeye sidled from the cab, to be ready for further duty.

Cloakless, The Shadow strolled forward, came into the dim light where Speed and Cal were settling their friendly argument. His approach was no longer silent; the crooks heard him and looked up. The face that they saw was Gurthy's.

Though rather hastily applied, and done from memory, The Shadow's disguise was satisfactory for this interview, which naturally avoided too much light.

When Gurthy asked for the cash, both crooks dug into their pockets and handed over ten of the thousand-dollar bills apiece. In return, each received an envelope.

Cal watched for any knowing looks between Speed and Gurthy. When he saw none, he waited until the collector had gone; then gave a wise grunt. Speed flashed a sharp glance.

"Any squawks?" he demanded.

"None at all," returned Cal, coolly. "It wasn't your fault that the job fluked. Only, why try to kid me, Speed? I know where that dough is going to wind up. It's coming back to you again! But why should I beef? You started this getaway ring. I don't blame you for making the most of it."

Cal was fondling the two one-thousand-dollar bills that he had netted from the night's work. Speed produced the three that he had retained, and suggested:

"I'll chance three against two, on an even match."

Taking the deal, Cal called tails and lost. Repressing a grin, Speed folded the five thousand dollars and tucked it into his pocket. Without another word, the pair got back into a car.

MEANWHILE, The Shadow had reached Barney. The squatty man didn't see through the disguise of the pretended Gurthy. He didn't have any reason to suspect the change of identity, for the batch of cash that the impersonator shoved into Barney's fist was sufficient proof that this was Gurthy, in person.

Clanging bells announced the ferry's departure. Barney hurried ashore. He was followed, but not by The Shadow. It was Hawkeye who took up the trail, in capable fashion, while The Shadow stopped at his cab and received an old suitcase from Cliff.

While the ferry plowed the harbor, Speed and Cal compared the contents of their envelopes. Each was to take a separate route, but the two converged later, to follow the same course that The Shadow had used across New Jersey while traveling as Clicker London.

There were special listings of side routes, in case either was followed; but those wouldn't be necessary because of the good start that they had made. It was Cal who commented:

"Great stuff, these dope sheets! They take us clear into Pennsylvania before they branch off."

"They always do," returned Speed, "on account of the old bridge we use. The only trouble is that stretch of bad road leading down to it. But that's been fixed."

"Fixed?" queried Cal. "It looked like a creek without any water in it, the time I made my trip it would take a couple of months to fix that stretch."

Speed compared his chart with Cal's, then pointed out what he meant.

"We're being routed around the bad part," he explained. "These dope sheets aren't just guesswork. Guys look over the roads for us -"

With a warning nudge, Cal drew a gun as someone approached the car window. Recognizing the face outside the window, Speed clamped a hand on the revolver, pushed it back toward Cal's pocket.

"It's Gurthy," said Speed, smoothly. "Easy on the jitters, Cal." Then, to the man outside: "What's up, Gurthy?"

"I'm lamming off this packet," was Gurthy's reply. "The skipper figures I'm working under a wrong moniker, and he's getting snoopy. This line's city-owned; it ain't worth taking a risk. They know the bulls too well."

"Coming along with us?"

"Yeah. It's part of the deal, ain't it - a free trip for any right guy along the way, if he finds he's in a hot spot? That's how it was told to me."

Speed agreed.

"Ride along with Cal," he told Gurthy. "He's handling the last wheeler. There's more room in it" - he was peering from the window at Gurthy's suitcase - "and you'll find space enough to park that keister."

Wedged between two thugs, Gurthy crouched low when the last car rolled from the ferry, because he didn't want his face to be seen. But that was only half the story. Another Gurthy - the real one - was also out of sight, in a different vehicle.

The genuine Gurthy was on the floor of Moe's cab, shrinking from the ice-cold muzzle of an automatic that Cliff was keeping tight against the prisoner's head.

ALL was clear along the New Jersey route, after the caravan rejoined. But things happened in a lot of places, just too late for the crooks to witness those events.

After the cars had gassed up on the road in back of the filling station, two State policemen popped from the bushes and fell upon the man who had supplied the fuel. Hardly had the cars left the hamburger house when another squad raided the place, and captured the crooked proprietor.

Similar surprises were in order all along the line. Repair shops, houses that were listed as temporary

refuges for the getaway mob - all were invaded, and the occupants placed under arrest.

Speeding across New Jersey, the caravan neared the Delaware River. The procession took the revised route shown on the new list.

The dirt road was a good one, leading down through a steep-sloped valley that a creek had cut to the Delaware. The ravine turned sharply as it neared the river; at that point, the chart indicated why this road was little used.

The road crossed the creek, but there was no bridge. It had been washed out by freshets the year before. At this season, however, the creek was low; it could be forded with proper caution.

Speed's car picked the track, splashed its way, hub-deep, to the far side of the creek. The others followed successfully.

It was when they swung the turn, that the cars pulled up against a real obstacle. The road was barricaded with cross timbers, held down by heavy stones.

Speed leaped from the wheel, beckoned in the light of the headlamps. Others sprang out to help him demolish the barrier, which had evidently been placed there because the road was officially closed.

Cal came from the rear car, telling his men to come along. He included Gurthy in the order, but the silent passenger did not follow. Instead, he opened the bag at his feet, drew out black garments, and put them on while he was stepping from the car.

Working at the obstruction, none of the crooks noticed that Gurthy had not joined them. In fact, they did not connect his absence at all with the strange thing that followed. In the darkness of the lonely valley, the thing itself was too weird to allow thoughts of other subjects.

It came from the darkness - a voice that might have been projected from some strange realm of space. It was a laugh, beginning low and sinister, rising in a fierce crescendo that shattered itself into a thousand shuddering echoes, throbbing from every rock and crevice along the high-walled ravine.

The crooks went frantic when they heard that shivering taunt that seemed to come from their midst, to find reverberations everywhere. It was the challenge that all crimeland knew; but to these mobsters, it was magnified a thousand times.

The battle laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVI. GULLY OF DEATH

AMID the fading quivers of that mirth, criminals went berserk. Under other circumstances, their leaders might have held them in hand; but not in a setting such as this. In fact, neither Speed Kirkel nor Cal Grosham thought in terms of orderly attack. They, too, were maddened.

The Shadow was somewhere in the darkness, and the place was a cramped gully. He was behind them; that much was certain. There were machine guns in the car; if the crooks got to them, they could rake the whole terrain. In their wild dash for the cars, they opened a desperate revolver fire.

They hadn't looked this valley over - as The Shadow had before framing the substitute road charts that he had delivered instead of Gurthy's bona fide sheets.

The ground was rough, with as many holes as a rabbit warren. The Shadow had already reached the best nest of the lot before voicing his defiance. No amount of ammunition could reach him, unless the crooks

first found his stronghold in the rocks.

Outnumbering The Shadow a dozen to one, the crooks might have had a chance through organized effort; but they were not dealing only with The Shadow. His laugh was a signal that unseen listeners answered just as the crooks began their useless revolver shots.

Big searchlights sliced the darkness from spots along the heights. Sweeping beams, thousands of candlepower in intensity, bathed the gully in a glow like day. Shouts from rocky barriers called upon the mob to surrender. The crooks knew what the voices meant.

The Feds!

Manhattan police had rounded up all decoys; New Jersey State troopers had made captures all along the route; it remained for the F.B.I. to handle the mob itself. The Feds made themselves plain, but the crooks didn't listen. They still thought in terms of machine guns.

So did the Feds.

They had machine guns, too, and they used them, as soon as the crooks set up their "typewriters." The chatter from the valley was answered, not by echoes, but by the same deadly rattle, on a larger scale. But the crooks, in their madness, overlooked the matter of defense.

The Feds were entrenched, their guns projecting between rocks. The mob was in the open. The Feds had one difficulty - that of getting the guns into continued play. But the crooks were up against a greater problem - that of finding targets.

While mobbies withered, their own gunfire merely chipped the surfaces of rocks. Reason did not tell them the futility of the fray; it was the sight of sprawling companions that made a few come to their senses. Deserting their guns, the crooks jumped for the cars.

One car tried to crack the barricade, and couldn't make it. The occupants sprang out, dived for what shelter they could find. The rear car swung around, started for the creek, while the Feds were riddling the middle vehicle of the caravan.

But the creek turned out to be as great an obstacle as the barricade; a point that The Shadow had foreseen. In their stress, the crooks forgot the need of crossing slowly. Plowing nose first through the water, the car lifted a wave that poured through the radiator and stalled the motor.

Gunfire lulled from the heights. It seemed to chatter itself away, because of the many echoes. From a position beyond the sphere of lights came a solemn laugh that proclaimed an amnesty to the few surviving crooks, should they accept it.

But there was one man whose vicious brain could not think in terms of surrender.

Cal Grosham.

The Shadow's mirthless tone inspired Cal to vengeance, no matter what the cost. With a yell, he started for the darkness, and a straggly batch of followers converged behind him. They were blazing with their revolvers, shooting blindly, as the searchlights trailed after them.

Then, as a shaft of light struck the foreground, The Shadow rose, short of the spot where they expected him. His own shots met the onrush, stopping it cold. Bullets were the only answer the murderous tribe that gave no quarter, and asked none.

Hard upon The Shadow's timely shots came a new rattle from the opposite slope. Machine guns raked the staggering killers, flaying them with streams of bullets, so that they lashed about, seemingly alive, after they had taken death sprawls.

THE SHADOW'S laugh faded, like a finished knell. Silence filled the gully, while the lights played, showing the dead forms of Cal and the entire mob toppled in a variety of grotesque positions.

Beyond those probing lights, The Shadow was moving off through fringing darkness along the bank of the chuckling creek.

Feds were coming down from the cliffs, using flashlights to find paths. Vic Marquette was with them, for he had led them promptly to the rendezvous that The Shadow had named when he made the phone call. There were gaps among the descending lights, which meant spaces where the heights could be scaled unnoticed.

But The Shadow was not interested in such routes; not quite yet.

Moving along the creek, he was listening to sloshy sounds that the current did not produce. Someone was splashing along the water's edge, counting upon the banks to keep him from the paths of searchlights.

The fugitive could be only one man: Speed Kinkel. Brainier than Cal Grosham and the mobbies, the public enemy had found his wits during the fray. He was making for the top of the ravine.

This situation wasn't on The Shadow's schedule. He had considered two extremes: either quick surrender by the entire mob, or complete annihilation of the criminals. But The Shadow was not disappointed; quite the opposite.

In his calculations, he had considered a possible meeting with Speed Kinkel, alone. The prospect had offered too many loopholes, hence The Shadow had rejected it. Now, as an unexpected gift, The Shadow was gaining his opportunity. Steadily, swiftly, he closed along Speed's trail.

A flashlight glittered close to the ground. Speed was risking light, on the assumption that Feds would think him one of their number. The Shadow blinked his own light, knowing, in turn, that Speed would mistake him for a Fed. He could hear Speed scurry; using the light again, he located the path that the crook was taking.

From then on, The Shadow moved in darkness, using Speed's blinks as a guide. They were beyond the descending Feds; then, as the path stiffened, they passed the line of the searchlights, which were focused solely on the gully. Close to the top of the ravine the heights became dizzy, even in the darkness.

For the lighted scene below, where Feds were moving among the bodies of the crooks, gave proof of the summit's altitude. Figures were toylike, down below.

Darkness gulped the beam of Speed's flashlight. The crook had found a narrow crevice, a deep split in the sheer rock, with a cavernous space below. Sidestepping, he avoided it; found a climbing place nearby.

He reached the summit, totally unaware that a figure, like a mammoth beetle, was following him up the same steep stretch.

At the top, Speed shifted back to his former line of climb. He came to the crevice; it was six feet wide, its walls irregular. Gauging the distance, Speed leaped across to the other side. He was probing for a path among the bushes when a whisper halted him.

It might have been an echo, lingering here; a reminder of the mighty laugh that had first ended the silence of the gully. But Speed wasn't in a mood to deal with fancies. He listened, heard the laugh again. It was back on the other side of the crevice. Speed thought that he had guessed the exact direction.

His thoughts flashed back to his crazy mood. Wheeling, Speed fired. His shot was a crackle that rang from cliff to cliff. It was answered by another taunt. Then came the sibilant tone, rising from the whispered mirth:

"Your chance is over, Speed!"

The public enemy answered with another gun jab. His first shot was unwise; his second, disastrous. The Feds had heard the first burst, were looking upward. When the next stab came, they spotted it. Shouts brought big searchlights sweeping toward the high brink.

A passing beam seemed to linger on the scene above. It showed two figures facing each other across a cleft in the great rock. One was The Shadow, his cloak sweeping as he wheeled; the other, Speed Kirkel, his distorted features recognizable to men just below the brink.

Each fighter had a gun. Flames tongued from the weapons with the dart of clashing knives. Then the scene was blotted. The searchlight had not stilled; everything had happened while the beam was still on the move. Then, other lights were cleaving toward the brink; too late.

WITH the exchange of shots, both fighters had dived from the glare. In such brief, hurried conflict, it was doubtful that either could have scored a hit. The nearest Feds clambered for the scene of the fray, reached it rapidly. They looked for Speed first.

As flashlights splashed the bushes on the far side of the crevice, the Feds heard a snarl, followed by a mad scramble. They ripped out a rapid succession of shots, then sprang across the crevice. Plowing through the bushes, they stumbled over rocks.

Ahead, they heard the crackle of saplings; spreading, they tried to encircle Speed before he could get away. Their dash was useless. After fifty yards of rough going, they paused, unable to trace the fugitive farther.

Vic Marquette was coming up. The other Feds left it to their leader to plan an intensive search. But Vic wasn't thinking in terms of Speed Kirkel, for the present. Anxiously, he queried:

"What about The Shadow?"

The question was answered from behind them. A trailing laugh came from a thicket on the side of the crevice that the Feds had left. Weird, throbbing in its tempo, the tone carried a message, even though it was wordless.

It told, of course, that The Shadow was intact; but it carried a note of reproof.

The Feds felt that The Shadow had left Speed's capture to them, that they had failed the cloaked fighter. But that was not all; with its finish, the laugh carried a lift. It gave approval for the work that had been done, it signified that the final error could be rectified.

As silence followed The Shadow's parting mirth, Vic Marquette summed up the situation to his men.

"We missed out on Speed," said Vic, "but we got Cal and the mob. Speed has made his getaway, but it's the last he'll ever stage. Nobody ever shook The Shadow off the trail - not after he closed it as tight as he did tonight. If we don't get Speed Kirkel, The Shadow will!"

Whispering breezes along the cliff seemed to bring the sibilance of a distant laugh that certified the staunch opinion of Vic Marquette. A final answer from The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVII. THE GAME RESUMED

THOUGH the law admitted that Speed Kirkel was still alive and at large, it also claimed a mighty triumph. The public agreed that the law deserved it.

Speed was a hunted fugitive, deprived of all his power. With Speed's flight, the law had cracked the greatest of all rackets - that of the getaway ring.

Many forms of unusual crime had been exposed before, but none so spectacular as this. It explained the success of the many daring crimes that had startled the whole country and mystified the Feds, along with the police.

It was simple, yet amazing, to know that crooks had been provided with hidden channels of escape, in return for cash payments. Speed Kirkel had initiated the game, and others had been glad enough to follow his lead.

From Manhattan, the getaway ring had guided its customers along a route that rivaled the historical "underground railway" of the nineteenth century. Whisked from the very hands of the law, criminals had been spirited to mysterious hideaways, there to remain until ready to try the route again.

Many hands had helped. Practically all had been gathered in. Some were decoys, who had originally worked for the Nitelite Cab Co. until the president, Garret Fenmore, had weeded them out. But they kept right on working, independently.

Others were the supply men along the route. While New York police had been rounding up the decoys, the New Jersey authorities had handled the more distant workers. But the pay-off, of course, had been provided by the Feds. They had made the gully of death a historic spot that would be remembered as the scene of crime's last stand.

Due credit was given to Fenmore's loyal taxi drivers, as well as the personnel of the Blue Moon Garages. They had worked perfectly with the law, and had done much toward capturing and finally identifying the decoy squad.

Rewards were in order for all who had helped in the trapping of Cal Grosham and known members of the Kirkel mob. Fenmore's men were listed for their share.

As for Joe Cardona, he took double credit. He had smashed the robbery of the Unity Savings Bank for a starter, and had thinned Speed's mob to a point where it was a setup for the Feds. Everyone, it seemed, had taken a hand in things.

But there was no mention of the master hand that had pulled every string from start to finish. Those who knew The Shadow's part made no mention of it. They would have done so, gladly, but The Shadow had provided that they should not.

That was why Cardona said nothing of the timely tip-off that had brought him to the Unity Savings Bank. It explained why Vic Marquette smilingly refused to answer when asked how and where he had acquired a duplicate list of route sheets that the getaway ring used.

When those sheets had been delivered, the top one had borne the imprint of The Shadow's silhouette - an emblem that had mysteriously faded under Marquette's gaze.

In his chats with Fenmore, Commissioner Weston showed great elation; during his conferences with Cardona, he was buoyant. Something of a hero himself, Weston managed to ignore one thing that bothered him.

He was no longer on speaking terms with his friend Lamont Cranston. It was Cranston who had severed all relations, and in his frank moments, Weston couldn't blame him.

Weston understood that Cranston conferred occasionally with Vic Marquette; but, so far, there was no report of the Feds reclaiming the stolen bonds and cash that Cranston had placed with Rutledge Mann. The commissioner preferred not to think of that loss.

There was something else that Weston did not think about, because he hadn't heard about it. No one had mentioned a little matter of twenty-five thousand dollars taken from the president's safe at the Unity Savings Bank. The fate of that rather sizable fund was something that only The Shadow could have conjectured.

THE SHADOW was still investigating the final destination of the major portion of that money. Hawkeye had trailed Barney, and had seen him put the twenty thousand dollars in an envelope. At a mail box, Barney had torn open the end of the envelope and let the contents slide into a letter box.

Hawkeye had found a blank and crumpled envelope later, where Barney chucked it away. The envelope had eventually reached The Shadow; studying it, he laughed. Whether through fear or inclination, Barney was an honest crook, like so many who served the getaway ring.

The Shadow knew that Barney must have had two envelopes; one addressed and stamped, but within the other one. Placing the cash within, Barney had sealed both. Tearing the outer envelope, he had let the inner one slide down the mail chute without getting a chance to glimpse the writing on it.

Barney was like Gurthy, who had been thoroughly quizzed before The Shadow delivered him to the law. All Gurthy knew was that he followed orders, which came by telephone or typewritten letters. He knew nothing about the real workings of the getaway ring. Even with Speed Kinkel branded as the master mind, Gurthy could admit nothing.

His mind had been eased on all points; so had those of the captured decoys. All told the same story. They received messages, which they obeyed, because they received cash, too. Whether Speed had sent those messages personally they couldn't say.

Inspector Joe Cardona was discussing those points, a few days after the clean-up. Cardona was talking at considerable length, because he had a willing listener: Detective Sergeant Markham.

Two listeners, in fact, but Cardona didn't count Fritz the janitor. He doubted that Fritz understood anything he heard; if he did, he probably couldn't remember it.

"From the way I figure it," declared Cardona, "the getaway ring never panned out as big as Speed Kinkel wanted it. If we include Speed's own payments in the total take, it still runs short of a hundred thousand bucks."

Markham usually refrained from asking questions when Cardona talked. But this time he couldn't help it.

"How can you count what Speed paid?" he queried. "It was coming back to him, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but it counts," insisted Cardona. "It's the way big corporations work, and the getaway racket comes in their class."

"If they own a building, they charge themselves rent for it. If one department is breaking even, they say it's losing money, because they have to charge off so much for advertising and what-not that's being run up by some other branch of the company."

Markham muttered that it didn't make sense to him.

"Nor me either," admitted Cardona, "but one of those public accountant guys was explaining it all to the commissioner, so there must be something to it. Anyway, the getaway ring must have figured on staying in business for a long while, in order to show a profit."

"You mean Speed will start it up again?"

"I don't see how he can. There's a rumor around that the racket is still on the go. But how can it be, when there's nobody left that worked with it? Believe me, I'd like to find some guy that we've overlooked -"

CARDONA interrupted himself. A shambling figure had entered. It was Jojo Jorcum. Cardona surveyed the whiny stool pigeon with complete contempt.

"On your way," growled Cardona. "You're not working for me any longer. I won't be needing you."

Jojo started to say something, then stopped short. He shifted, startled, as Fritz went clumping past him carrying mop and bucket.

"If you need a job," chuckled Cardona, "look up Speed Kinkel. Maybe he can use you in that racket of his, Jojo. Some guys are dumb enough to think he's trying to reorganize."

"Maybe I can check on that, inspector -"

"All right," interposed Cardona indulgently. "I'll remember you, Jojo. Drop in any time you get anything worth while."

Leaving headquarters, Jojo followed one of his darty trails without bothering to look behind him. He arrived at a shabby-looking house, went up to the second floor. Admitted to a rear room, Jojo faced a dark-eyed hatchet-faced man whose tight-fitting coat showed the bulge of guns.

Jojo's host was Nick Angreff, a former racketeer who had just come back to town. Finding things slow in his own line, Nick had planned direct crime as a coming venture. A prospective client of the getaway ring, Nick had been marking time ever since the blowup.

"Well," demanded Nick sharply, "is the racket staging a come-back?"

"I've told you it was, already," insisted Jojo. "I just went over to find out if Cardona is wise."

"Is he?"

"No. He thinks it's hooley. He's a dumb cluck, all right! Sore at me because I didn't bring him some dope the other night."

As he paused, Jojo rubbed the back of his head reflectively. Then he added:

"Just talking to Cardona makes me act dumb, too. I almost told him about the tip I had for him the other night. How I would've spilled it, if six or seven guys hadn't put the slug on me, thinking I was a real stoolie."

Such was Jojo's recollection of his brief combat with The Shadow. It was Nick who spoke next.

"Listen, Jojo," he growled. "I'm ready. I'll stage my job and take the getaway trail, at the new price. Speed is a smart guy; it's easy enough for him to be running the racket while he's still laying low.

"Only this stuff of letting the bulls close in, is something that's got to be out. When I get a right mob together, I'll pick a job and get a head start of my own. All I've got to know is where I'm supposed to go, so I can pick up the new trail.

"When you find out, put me wise. Forget this two-way business of yours. I don't have to know what Cardona thinks; you've told me enough. And remember" - Nick concluded with final emphasis - "I'm playing things my own way. Speed or nobody else is going to know what job I pick until they read about it."

Jojo decided that the arrangement would be satisfactory, but that Nick could not count on decoys. Nick said he didn't want them, that they were out of date. With that, Jojo left.

From the darkness of the hallway, The Shadow followed. He had overheard the conversation through the thin door. It fitted perfectly with his plans.

Nick Angreff was the answer to The Shadow's plan of crushing the getaway ring. For The Shadow knew that the insidious organization still existed. Resuming operation, the ring intended to regain crimedom's confidence, and baffle the law with new methods.

The Shadow planned to doom the coming menace by strategy more surprising than any that crime could produce!

CHAPTER XVIII. THE PUSH-OVER

NICK ANGREFF felt that he was very popular indeed. By sheer power of his personality, he had acquired about the most versatile mob that any big-shot criminal could want.

The "right guys" knew that Nick was in town; so they came to see him, as they had with Clicker Lordon. But Nick was more popular than Clicker. In fact, Nick was overburdened with candidates for membership in his crew.

One was Cliff Marsland, a tough sock-'em-and-rock-'em baby. Some guys called Cliff a "one-man mob," and he looked it. What was more, Nick had it on good report that Cliff was out to get The Shadow, though Cliff was taciturn on that point.

When it was noised about that any guy wanted to get The Shadow, it generally happened that The Shadow got the guy. But Cliff was still in business, despite the rumor, which made Nick decide that Cliff was very smart. But if it came to a showdown, Cliff would have to shoot it out with The Shadow.

That was what Nick wanted Cliff for. The Shadow had mooched into too many jobs lately. Nick decided that Cliff would be useful in the pinch.

The other man was Hawkeye, who came along with Cliff gratis. Hawkeye was a scrawny, wizened little fellow who could sneak around like a cat on a midnight prow. Learning that Hawkeye was a pal of Cliff's, Nick formed a prompt conclusion.

It was Hawkeye, probably, who spotted trouble when it came Cliff's way. Trouble, in the person of The Shadow. No wonder Cliff had been able to play his hand without interference from the fighter in black.

The thing fitted so well that Nick would have laughed at anyone who might have broached the theory that Cliff was working for The Shadow. It was alleged that The Shadow had workers in the underworld, but

it would be crazy to list Cliff as one of them.

Nick might have doubted Hawkeye, but the fact that the spotter came along with Cliff was proof that he was all right, too.

With his mob assembled in a suitable meeting place, Nick put on a Napoleon act as he discussed the coming campaign.

He had a list of a few dozen places that offered targets for crime: banks, jewelry stores, theaters - all places where cash or portable values could be had.

"Warehouses are out," emphasized Nick, as his men studied the list. "Cal Grosham fluked a job like that. What we want is a quick take, and one that's easy to carry."

Experts disagreed as to their preferences. Tired of the argument, Cliff went to a corner and began to look through a newspaper. Noticing that Cliff had withdrawn from the discussion, Nick wanted to know why.

"I don't like anything on the list," gruffed Cliff. "You've picked a bunch of duds, Nick."

"Yeah? What makes you think so?"

"I'm going on what you just said," returned Cliff. "You want a quick take, and an easy one. That leaves the whole list out."

NICK rubbed his hatchet jaw. There was truth in what Cliff said. Thinking it over, Nick brightened.

"What about a pay-roll job?" he queried. "With Hawkeye to spot the lay, we could make the grab on the move, and keep right on going."

"No dough in it," retorted Cliff, "unless we go after an armored truck. They carry the big pay rolls nowadays. But nobody takes them on the move. You've got to wreck them, and blow them all apart. Sometimes it's like cracking a coconut with a toothpick."

Nick surveyed Cliff with a scowl. Then, thumbing toward the newspaper, he suggested sarcastically:

"Keep reading that bladder, Cliff. Look close when you get to the want ads. Maybe you'll find the right job listed with them. Say, Cliff, what kind of a job do you like, anyway?"

"A push-over," returned Cliff, folding the newspaper. "You're working for real dough, Nick, but your health counts, too. You've got to go after a guy that has cash on hand and doesn't expect any trouble -"

Cliff paused, looking at a front-page photograph. He read the column that went with it, chuckled as he handed the newspaper to Nick.

"Ever hear of this bird?"

Nick glared at the photograph, which showed a long face, solemn and aristocratic, topped by a baldish, egg-shaped forehead.

"Garret Fenmore!" he sneered. "The skunk that put the crimp into the getaway racket by ringing in his fleet of cabs to help the coppers. Yeah, I've heard about him - too much!"

"Wrong again, Nick," returned Cliff, taking the newspaper. "You haven't heard enough. Get a load of this."

Reading aloud, Cliff hit the high spots of the newspaper story. Listening, Nick snarled for his mob to stop their argument over the list. It was dawning on Nick that Cliff had struck something important.

Fenmore, the account said, had collected rewards totaling close to thirty thousand dollars from the capture of wanted criminals. The money, he said, belonged to the men who had played the real part in helping the law. They were drivers of Nitelite Cabs, like Lewis; managers of Blue Moon Garages, like Winter.

At midnight, Fenmore was to give them a grand banquet in the dining room of the exclusive hotel where he lived. There would be more than a hundred such guests, and each man was to receive an equal share of the reward. Nor was that all.

Nitelite Cabs had become famous, Blue Moon Garages were recognized as the best in town. Because both were doing better business, Fenmore had decided to double the reward money and distribute a cash bonus of his own.

"Sixty grand in all!" ejaculated Nick Angreff. "That would be a sweet take! Only you've forgot one thing, Cliff" - Nick's scowl returned - "and that's how tough the job is. What chance have a dozen guys like us against a hundred or more? Particularly the bunch of bozos that queered the getaway racket?"

Cliff tossed the newspaper aside.

"I'm not thinking of a hundred," he replied. "I'm thinking of one: Garret Fenmore."

"You mean we can grab the dough before he passes it out?"

"That's right. But we won't wait for the banquet. We'll blow in on Fenmore about half an hour before midnight, and grab the cash from his apartment."

Nick smacked a tough fist against a leathery palm, shoved his hatchet jaw around the group.

"Cliff's got it!" he snapped. "He's picked the right job for us! Only one thing, though." He turned to Cliff. "We ought to barge in sooner."

CLIFF shook his head. He explained why a half hour allowed the proper leeway. His reasons were excellent.

First, Fenmore probably had the money locked up somewhere, and wouldn't be bringing it out until just before the midnight hour. Again, that would be the time when Nitelite Cabs would be off the streets, and the Blue Moon Garages temporarily closed.

"The hackies will be home dressing up for chow," summed Cliff, "and so will the grease monkeys. This is one night when the bulls won't have a reserve fleet and a lot of lookouts working with them."

More pleased than ever, Nick Angreff proceeded to lay out the campaign. Some of his men were acquainted with the neighborhood around the Hotel Albron, where Garret Fenmore had his permanent apartment. Quite rapidly, Nick arranged positions for the outside crew; then he picked the men for the invading squad.

Cliff, of course, was one. And Nick chose two more, figuring that Fenmore might have a few troublesome flunkies on the premises, and perhaps some guests. The newspaper said that Commissioner Weston would be at the banquet, and there was a chance that he might stop at Fenmore's apartment first.

But that suited Nick, very nicely.

"I hope the coot shows up," he gloated. "If he does, he'll be in on a swell free show, while Fenmore is getting plenty for his money. Because" - Nick's tone hardened to a rasp - "I'm going to toss a few slugs right into Fenmore's guts!

"It happens that me and Cal Grosham handled a lot of jobs together when we was both out on the coast. If this stuffed shirt Fenmore hadn't chipped in, Cal wouldn't have got croaked. Bulls and Feds, they got a right to go after guys, but Fenmore should've kept his mitts off it."

Cliff shot a knowing look to Hawkeye; this was a new angle of the situation, one that had to be properly reported. Hawkeye understood. He waited for Cliff's next suggestion.

"Suppose we send Hawkeye ahead," said Cliff. "He can look over the lay for us and get word back."

"A good idea," returned Nick. "Get started, Hawkeye. Now, about the getaway route. I've heard from Jojo. He says it's all set, and he's told me where to pick up the dope sheet. There won't be any regular stop-offs, but that don't matter.

"We're going along a lot of side routes that were planted a long while ago, just in case. We'll find buried gas cans, hidden grub, shacks nobody knows about, with a lot of first-aid kits under the floor.

"That's why I signed up Shaney" - Nick thumbed toward a silent, dapper member of the crew - "because he started out to be a sawbones oncet, and knows plenty about the medico dodge. Take care of yourself, Shaney, we may be needing you."

That was the last that Hawkeye heard. The spotter was on his way, leaving the rest to Cliff. For Hawkeye had much work to do; much more than Nick Angreff supposed. It was Hawkeye's task to look over the scene of coming crime and report back to Nick.

But whatever Hawkeye revealed would be subject to important reservations, as ordered by The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIX. CRIME WITHOUT PROFIT

It wasn't quite half past eleven when Lamont Cranston strolled into the quiet, spacious lobby of the exclusive Hotel Albron. Except for a clerk behind the desk, the place was deserted.

There were muffled sounds, however, beyond closed doors on the mezzanine floor. The dining room was being arranged for the midnight banquet.

A single elevator was running; it took Cranston to the third floor. Walking along the hallway, The Shadow noticed stairs at one end, an inside fire tower at the other. Both gave easy access to the third floor. As for the door of Fenmore's apartment, it was opened promptly by a mild-mannered servant, as soon as the visitor knocked.

The whole situation fitted the description that Cliff had given it: a push-over.

Hearing Cranston's name announced, Fenmore came to greet him. He had sent the police commissioner's friend an invitation to the banquet, but had scarcely hoped that Cranston would accept. Fenmore, therefore, was quite overjoyed.

"Good evening, Cranston," he exclaimed. "I was just talking to a friend of yours."

"Not Commissioner Weston?"

"No, no," inserted Fenmore, hastily. "I mean Clyde Burke, the reporter on the Classic. He's the chap who gave our banquet such a fine write-up, you know."

Fenmore saw Cranston give an approving smile. He didn't guess the reason behind it. Clyde Burke was an agent of The Shadow. The Classic story had been written as a bait for crooks. Rather than go after crooks in their own preserves, with uncertain results, The Shadow had preferred to bring them to a place where he could properly handle them.

No place could be better than Fenmore's, for the final stroke whereby The Shadow intended to finish the getaway ring forever.

They had entered a miniature ballroom that Fenmore termed his study, when Commissioner Weston was announced. Fenmore gave an apologetic glance at Cranston, who seemed quite indifferent. Weston was ushered into the study, bringing Inspector Cardona with him.

Seeing Cranston, the commissioner stiffened; then, ignoring his former friend, he opened conversation with Fenmore.

"I had hoped to bring news of Speed Kinkel," asserted Weston, "but, so far, the F.B.I. has failed to trace him. It would have been a high point of my speech tonight if I could state that the head of the getaway ring was dead or captured.

"However, I can confine myself to a few important remarks" - the commissioner was drawing a twelve-page speech from his pocket - "that will emphasize the actual situation. The getaway ring is broken. Therefore, the crime wave is automatically ended. Moreover -"

Weston paused, his face purple. He was catching side remarks that Cranston was addressing to Cardona. The Shadow was asking if the police had traced any of the stolen property that successful crooks had taken along the getaway trail.

"Marquette has traced some hideaways," informed Joe, "and picked up a lot of loot that Speed Kinkel took -"

"All that will be covered in my speech, inspector," interjected Weston. "Mr. Cranston can wait for details until the proper time."

Coolly, Cranston addressed another question to Cardona: "And Clicker Lordon?"

Cardona shrugged. Waiting until Weston had turned away, Joe managed to undertone an answer.

"The Feds won't admit that he's still alive," said Cardona, "but they are probably looking for him. When they find him, you may get back what he took, Mr. Cranston. I hope so, anyway."

Fenmore, meanwhile, was trying to relieve the tension of the meeting between Cranston and Weston. Stating that the banquet hour was near, Fenmore opened a panel in the rear wall of the study, disclosing a safe front. Thumbing the dials, he opened the safe while the others stood by, silent.

MEANWHILE, a hunched figure was moving along the route to Fenmore's study. It was Hawkeye; the spotter had pushed in ahead of Nick and the mob. Hawkeye was covering the few servants with a revolver; steering them into a side room.

"You boys don't want to get hurt," he was telling them. "I'm doing this for your own good."

Hawkeye's admonition was literally true. He was getting the servants to a spot of safety before Nick and the dangerous crew came through. Then, as Hawkeye grinned from the doorway where he had corralled the servants, Nick Angreff arrived.

The murderous big-shot stepped into the study, one man with him. He left Cliff at the door with a reserve, so that both could cover. Producing a pair of revolvers, Nick announced in raucous tone:

"Four of you, huh? That means eight mitts to hoist! Make it swift, so I can count them."

The hands raised. Nick held his victims in two pairs: Fenmore and Weston at his left, Cranston and Cardona to the right. He spoke to the man with him.

"Move up, Jigger," ordered Nick. "Grab everything in the safe that looks like dough. Bring the works back here."

From his doorway, Cliff was undertoning instructions to the man close by him.

"It's under control, Skeet," informed Cliff. "You can get back to the outside door, and keep lookout along the hall."

Cliff was acting in accordance with instructions from The Shadow, relayed back to him when Hawkeye rejoined the mob. By disposing of Skeet, Cliff was able to take over a vital duty.

His gun, glimmering from the doorway, seemed to be trained on everyone in the room. Actually, it was covering just one man: Nick Angreff.

Should Nick show tendency to complete his threat of murdering Fenmore, Cliff was to drop the bigshot first; then swing, with Hawkeye, to be ready for the mob should they be attracted by the commotion.

The Shadow, meanwhile, would be taking over rapidly, for he would only have to handle one astonished foe: Jigger.

Lugging cash boxes that he found in the safe, Jigger was making himself a very easy mark for the attack to come. He laid the boxes on a chair beside Nick, and opened them. Nick didn't turn his gaze; he simply told Jigger to describe what he had found.

One box contained pay envelopes, with names typed on them. Opening the topmost envelopes, Jigger found cash inside. He was reading the names when Nick cut him short.

"The reward dough," chuckled Nick, "and the bonus that Fenmore thought he was going to pass out tonight. But Fenmore won't be passing out dough. He'll just be passing out! What's in the other box, Jigger?"

The crook lifted bundles of bank notes - funds belonging to Fenmore, personally. From the corner of his eye, Nick saw the green printed sheaves, noted some bills of high denomination.

"Move on out," gritted Nick to Jigger. "Tell the others to close in, as soon as you pass by. There's a guy here that's going to take a dose of pills." He steadied one gun on Fenmore. "But he won't have time to swallow them.

"That guy is you, Fenmore!" Nick's glare was toward the stiffened man, whose long face showed an affrighted gape. "You're getting it because you tried to crack the getaway racket. Only you didn't do it. I'm going along the same trail tonight."

ALL eyes were on Fenmore. None noticed Cliff, his face half muffled, gun in hand, moving up behind the crook. The Shadow's agent was waiting for a sibilant signal. It came, low-toned, from the fixed lips of Cranston.

The slight sound was drowned out. Joe Cardona was lunging forward in a headlong dive for Nick. Unwatched by The Shadow, Cardona was injecting the unexpected with remarkable zeal. Joe had picked just the instant when Nick was off guard.

Nick's guns blasted, belated, as he went backward from Cardona's onrush. High shots hit the ceiling. Cliff didn't have a chance to fire. Seeing Cranston springing to Cardona's aid, Cliff wheeled to the outer room.

The game was to get downstairs with the swag, dump Jigger in the lobby, and let the hotel clerk and others reclaim the stolen goods. After that, Cliff and Hawkeye could yell for the mob to get started, then duck into Moe's cab that was close at hand and begin a pursuit that would bring patrol cars on the trail.

Such was the system that The Shadow had arranged; a satisfactory one had it begun as planned. But Cliff had not inserted the needed element: the shot that should have dropped Nick Angreff.

Cliff took it that a losing grapple was equal to a crippling bullet, but the rule didn't follow where Nick Angreff was concerned.

It didn't work that way.

Flat on the floor of the study, Nick heaved himself backward and drove both feet against Cardona's chest, lifting the stocky police inspector like a missile hoisted from a catapult. As luck had it, Nick hurtled the human projectile directly toward the arriving figure of Cranston.

Crashing Cardona squarely, the swift-moving Shadow took a rolling pitch to the floor. Nick, coming to hands and knees, grabbed for his lost gun and took new aim at Fenmore, who had ducked behind the police commissioner.

Again, luck was with Nick, for Weston was starting forward to the fray, leaving the path to Fenmore clear.

Nick lifted a triumphant bellow. Hearing it, Fenmore went back against the wall, his arms stretched wide. Frantically, he was shouting a plea, but Nick didn't hear it. The crook's hand tightened on the trigger.

A human arrow shot from the floor. It was Cranston, one arm pointed out ahead of him, in a streaking dive that seemed the result of an inspired spring. It was so superhuman, that thrust, that Fenmore gaped despite his plight.

Cranston never could have grabbed Nick in time to stop the death shot; the distance was too great. He was after the gun instead, using every ounce of energy to carry his stretched hand to the glittering goal. A tremendous attempt, for he was hoping to cover half the width of the big study in that one lurch.

Only The Shadow could have made it. His hand seemed to lengthen as it plucked the air. Fingers clamped the gun barrel just as Nick fired. Jostled, the gun blasted wide.

Then the weapon was gone from Nick's clutch, retained by a hand that was dropping to the floor, along with Cranston's stretching body.

Nick didn't wait. Turning before Cranston could come about with the captured revolver, the crook dashed for the door. He stooped to snatch up his other gun, bellowing anew; this time, his shout was for

aids to join him.

They were at the doorway, Skeet and Jigger. They had come back at Nick's shout. Behind them were Cliff and Hawkeye, who jolted forward suddenly, flattening the others. Then Cliff and Hawkeye were retreating; in their place were Fenmore's servants.

BREAKING through, Nick thought that the servants had staged the real attack. He was beckoning Skeet and Jigger along with him, yelling for Cliff and Hawkeye to go ahead.

But the servants suppressed Skeet and Jigger while the pair were trying to scoop up the cash boxes that Jigger had dropped when starting to Nick's aid.

Passing the fighters on the floor, Joe Cardona went in pursuit of Nick. Behind him came Cranston, while Commissioner Weston brought up the rear. They reached the lobby, only to hear the departing roar of motors. From the hotel steps, The Shadow caught a signal from a cab across the way.

Moe's gestures told that Cliff and Hawkeye had gone along with the mob; their only course, since Nick had been with them. But Moe finished with a wide sweep of his hands, indicating that none of the fugitives had carried anything with them.

Realizing what must have happened, The Shadow broke his silence feud with Weston. Turning to the commissioner, he said in Cranston's quiet tone:

"We should go back upstairs, to make sure that all is well with Fenmore."

The commissioner agreed. He left Cardona the thankless task of organizing a futile pursuit. Expressing appreciation to Cranston for his timely aid, Weston led the way back to the apartment. They found Fenmore in his study, with the servants in attendance.

On the desk lay the cash box that contained the envelopes with the reward money. Fenmore was closing the lid of the second box, which contained his private funds. Turning to replace it in the safe, he smiled across his shoulder.

"It is all here, commissioner," he said. "It appears that our unwelcome visitors staged a crime without profit."

Closing the safe, Fenmore sobered. He held out his hand to shake Cranston's, warmly. Fenmore was effusive in his thanks to the rescuer who had saved his life. Then indignation flashed to Fenmore's eyes.

"Money means nothing in this case!" he asserted. "I shall spare neither cash, nor effort, in searching for that murderer who tried to take my life!"

While Fenmore swelled with righteous desire for revenge, Weston assured him that the law would go the limit in seeking the capture of Nick Angreff. Weston, too, was loud in the tirade that he delivered against the escaped crook.

But The Shadow's thoughts were along another angle. He was thinking of the attempted robbery, not the frustrated murder. It had been crime without profit, but with a climax different than the one that The Shadow had foreseen.

The Shadow had planned to recover the stolen funds himself, down in the lobby; to turn the regained pelf over to Joe Cardona and let the ace inspector take credit for the case. It would have been much better that way.

As things stood, Fenmore had actually reclaimed his wealth himself; yet, in a way, it made the future better. Much might come from this episode, particularly since Fenmore had declared that he would make a personal crusade against Nick Angreff.

Crime without profit could promise a really worthwhile yield; not to men of crime, but to The Shadow!

CHAPTER XX. THE TRAIL CLOSES

BY morning, New York was learning that a reward of one hundred thousand dollars had been offered for the capture of certain known criminals. There were no "ifs" to the proposition; cash would be paid on the nose when any of the wanted men were delivered.

It was also stated that the reward was being offered jointly by Lamont Cranston and Garret Fenmore. Three mobsters were listed in the reward offers: Clicker Lordon, Nick Angreff and Speed Kirkel.

Cranston wanted Clicker because of the robbery at Mann's. Fenmore wanted Nick because the crook had tried to murder him. Rather than make the matter a strictly personal one, Cranston and Fenmore had mutually agreed to include Speed Kirkel, who was now the nation's leading public enemy and the recognized head of the getaway ring.

The reward was timely, for public opinion had been stirred by the fact that the ring was once more in operation. Nick Angreff had made a perfect getaway by using its system.

Working on tip-offs, the police had rounded up a few small-fry - a stoolie named Jojo and a go-between called Barney - but the arrests had produced no worthwhile information.

Like everyone who served the getaway ring, the new prisoners claimed that they followed orders received by telephone or mail. They wouldn't admit that it was Speed who had talked to them, because the rough voice didn't resemble his, nor anyone else's that they knew of. As for the typewritten messages, they had destroyed them.

These angles were discussed by Cranston and Fenmore when they held frequent private conferences. Cranston was merely hopeful, but Fenmore felt confident of results. It was on the second afternoon that Fenmore showed his greatest exuberance, when Cranston called at his apartment.

"What news?" queried Fenmore, trying to hold back a broad smile. "Anything from the Feds?"

"Not yet," replied Cranston, his calm tone a bit moody. "They have struck a snag, it seems, in their search for Clicker Lordon."

"I've been checking on a more recent trail, that of Nick Angreff."

"With results?"

Fenmore nodded.

"Nick was lucky," he affirmed, "because my cab drivers were off duty at the time he made the attack here. But my men have taken it as an issue of their own, as well as mine. Unable to trail Nick, they have investigated instead."

Spreading a map of Manhattan on the desk, Fenmore checked certain spots, traced a connecting line.

"Inquiries indicate this route," he said. "You will notice that it passes the neighborhood of two Blue Moon Garages, which helped considerably. It fades out near Central Park."

The Shadow nodded.

"This afternoon," added Fenmore triumphantly, "some of my best drivers scoured the park. They found the meeting place."

"Where Nick received his envelope?"

"Yes." Fenmore frowned. "At least, they suppose it to be such. It was at a turnout on a dirt road leading around the Gotham Monument. Tire tracks lead in this direction."

He drew a line through the park, ending it in an arrow that pointed to an East River bridge. The Shadow suggested that the crooks might have headed to Long Island, and Fenmore agreed. He produced a larger map, showing territory surrounding New York City.

"It is likely," he said, "that they used this ferry plying between Long Island and Connecticut. Some of my drivers have gone up to Connecticut. I am waiting to hear from them."

The telephone was ringing. Fenmore answered it, held a brief conversation, then shook his head. The thing was repeated at intervals that averaged five minutes, and most of the calls were long distance. Fenmore became eager after one call, and made quick jots on a sheet of paper.

"Two cars went through a town called Burberry, night before last," he told The Shadow. "One had a Pennsylvania license, the other was a Massachusetts car. But the fugitives could have changed plates."

He found Burberry on the Connecticut map, nodded, as he checked roads leading from the place.

"Have dinner with me, Cranston," suggested Fenmore. "We may have more news by then."

It was after dinner that the news came through. Fenmore's workers had located an old lodge tucked among the Connecticut hills. The place was supposed to have been deserted, but lights had been seen in it the night before. Furthermore, there was some report of strangers in the neighborhood.

"Mere local gossip," summed Fenmore, "but, added up, these trifles may produce the fact we want. I have an idea, Cranston, that we have located Nick Angreff."

The Shadow's expression remained unchanged, although he knew that Fenmore's conjecture was fact. One of the suspicious parties mentioned by Fenmore could have been Hawkeye, for the spotter had sent in word exactly where the mob had gone. The hide-out was the deserted lodge that Fenmore was locating on the map.

Fenmore leaned back.

"I wonder just what we should do about this, Cranston."

"Why not turn it over to the Feds?"

"I would, if I were sure of it," replied Fenmore. "But, first, it would be better to make certain. I have recalled my men, rather than have them bungle matters. Still" - his expression was meditative - "it would be possible -"

"For us to look into the case personally?"

Fenmore nodded.

"Of course, Nick is my grudge," he said, soberly, "while yours is Clicker. But I feel that our cause is a

common one, that we have every right to manage on our own."

The Shadow agreed. For once, the calm face of Cranston registered eagerness. The thing was not surprising, for Cranston's one love was adventure.

A worldwide traveler, he had stalked big game and battled savages in many lands. Anything that called him to the open, with danger as the climax, was sure to intrigue Lamont Cranston.

From then on, it was merely a question of arrangements. The crook hunters decided to leave in an hour, after Cranston had stopped at the Cobalt Club for a brief chat with Commissioner Weston.

Cranston had promised to drop in on the commissioner and, considering their recent grievance, it was good policy to keep the appointment.

Dropping in on Weston was one thing, getting away from him another. Cranston was half an hour late when he returned to his hotel, but they began to cut down the lost time as soon as they were on the way.

They were using Cranston's limousine, under the guidance of a capable chauffeur. It clipped off the miles rapidly.

Fenmore had brought along two of his trusted servants; he was able to chat freely in their presence. By the time the big car neared its destination, complete plans were made.

It was agreed to leave the limousine near the main road, half a mile from the lodge, then prospect the terrain on foot.

They left the chauffeur in the car, with instructions to check on everything he saw. He was a competent fellow, Stanley the chauffeur, who had been in Cranston's employ for years.

He was used to Cranston's midnight prowls, though they rather puzzled him. For Stanley, though very useful, had never served The Shadow as an agent.

STOLIDLY seated behind the wheel, Stanley watched flashlights move guardedly away. They had gone from sight when he heard a voice beside the window. It was Cranston's tone:

"Stanley!"

"Yes, sir," whispered the chauffeur. "Anything wrong, Mr. Cranston?"

"This is dangerous business," confided Cranston. "We're going after that chap Angreff, who tried to murder Fenmore."

"I thought that might be it, sir."

A deft hand had opened the back door; from beneath the rear seat of the limousine it was drawing out the secret drawer which even Stanley had never discovered. The hand produced black garments.

"I think you had better make a circuit of these roads," continued Cranston's voice. "Go through the little town near here, to make sure that all is quiet; then come straight in by the road to the lodge, Stanley."

"Straight in, sir?"

"As far as you can," was Cranston's reply. "The road doesn't go quite to the lodge. Coast the car, of course, and keep the lights dim. I wouldn't want Fenmore and the others to be alarmed."

"Of course not, sir."

The drawer was sliding back into place. The rear door went shut as Stanley pressed the limousine's smooth, well-muffled starter. Then another flashlight was moving in among the trees, keeping so close to the ground that no one could have spotted it.

Soon, The Shadow was creeping past three other widely separated lights, which were guarded, yet visible.

Cloaked in his garb of black, accustomed to swift progress in darkness, The Shadow was moving rapidly ahead of Fenmore and the latter's two companions. It was one of those situations made to The Shadow's order; the sort where he could reach a goal with silent certainty, and have a situation well in hand when others joined him.

In teaming with Lamont Cranston, Garret Fenmore had bargained well. He had gotten more than the services of a gentleman adventurer; he had acquired the powerful aid of The Shadow!

No laugh whispered in the darkness, as the cloaked being continued his swift progress. The time for mirth would be later, when The Shadow completed his great stroke against crime.

CHAPTER XXI. THE DOUBLE TRAP

BARELY discernible beneath a cloud-thickened sky, the old hunting lodge formed a squatty mass in the center of a fair-sized clearing. As a background, trees formed a high, irregular line; for the lodge, as Fenmore's searchers had described it, was situated among slopes.

Approaching from the side of the building, The Shadow noted the outline of a heavy-shuttered window. There were several such windows, all fitted with removable plugs, so that loopholes would be ready if needed. The Shadow had been informed of that detail by Hawkeye. In fact, the getaway ring had provided Nick Angreff with more than a mere hideaway. They had given him a stronghold.

It was part of the new service, necessary because of the nationwide search that had begun for missing public enemies. If surprised in their present refuge, Nick and his mob could put up a powerful battle before being taken.

The door of the lodge looked ordinary, but its innocence was deceptive. Above it was a light, set in a frosted half-dome. The light, of course, was off, for the building was supposed to be deserted; but The Shadow could tell that the frosted glass was bulletproof.

Anyone trying to force an entry here would be challenged, his presence easily disclosed when the light switch was pressed within the lodge.

The Shadow did not force an entry. It was not necessary. The door gave when he squeezed the handle. Hawkeye, the last person into the place, had left the barrier unbolted. But The Shadow had not passed the only obstacle.

Within were darkened steps which led down to a barrier that looked like a screen door. The tiny holes, however, were round, instead of roughly square. The door was sheet steel, thick enough to stop anything short of bullets from a field gun. It had a wicket that would do as a loophole.

Through the puncture-studded door, The Shadow could see the main room of the lodge. Wavering flickers of a dying fire added a ruddy touch to the dimmed electric lights. Nick didn't think it good policy to keep the place too brilliantly illuminated.

The steel door was barred; it had to be. Nick would have noticed the deficiency had Hawkeye left it unbolted. But The Shadow was counting upon further co-operation. Pressed close to the hinged side of the steel door, he gave a low, sibilant signal.

Both Cliff and Hawkeye heard it. The others took it for a sound from a burning log, with the exception of Nick Angreff, who happened to be seated close beside the fireplace.

Swinging suddenly about, Nick was quick enough to catch Cliff's attentive expression.

"You heard it, Cliff?"

A nod was Cliff's necessary response, under the circumstances. He gave one.

"Where did it come from?" demanded Nick. "Outside somewhere?"

"I guess so," returned Cliff, with a shrug. "Want me to take a look?"

Cliff was rising as he spoke. Crossing the room, he laid his hand on the barrier, inched it up so he could leave it loose if Nick replied in the negative. But Nick decided that someone ought to take a look outside.

"Press those two switches," he told Cliff. "One lights the steps; the other, the outside. Then take a gander."

PRESSING the switches, Cliff could see The Shadow vaguely through the hole-studded door; but he kept his own form at the proper angle, so that no one else would spy the shape in black.

It was hardly necessary, but Cliff thought that the ruse would be needed for a while. Nick had drawn a gun, so had a few of his jittery pals. Cliff supposed that The Shadow would delay until they calmed.

Instead, The Shadow gave another order, so low that only Cliff could hear it. Sudden understanding flashed to Cliff. It was a bold move, but a strong one, the step The Shadow wanted.

Cliff drew his own gun, naturally enough, since he was going on patrol. Also, in logical fashion, he started to draw the steel door inward.

Then, with a sharp yell, Cliff sprang aside, yanking the door wide open. Swinging inward, the steel sheet went almost to the wall, carrying Cliff behind it. But mobsters weren't watching Cliff; they were staring at The Shadow.

Thrusting inward as though he had materialized from the vanished darkness of the steps, The Shadow swept two automatics before the eyes of the rooted crooks. His sinister, mocking tone offered them two alternatives: surrender or death.

Nick Angreff heard the terms, but his decision was already made. With a snarl to his mob, the big-shot lunged forward, jabbing his gun straight at The Shadow. Half a dozen of his followers did the same.

In the muffling space of that tight-closed room, the burst of guns was terrific. But, despite its fury, the roar was brief. The result that it produced was astonishing. It seemed as if The Shadow's guns blasted everywhere at once, beating half a dozen foemen to the shot.

Nick pitched to the floor, a bullet through his heart; sprawling about him were his most ardent marksmen, crippled and withered. But The Shadow still formed a challenging figure at the doorway.

His laugh sounded triumph, as he turned the muzzles of his smoking automatics toward other crooks who

had their guns half drawn.

There was an explanation to that swift, incredible victory. With two guns, The Shadow had beaten Nick and a pair of mobbies in their fire; but others had taken care of the rest.

From the edge of the steel door, Cliff had started shooting as quickly as The Shadow, hoping to draw shots in his own direction. As a result, he had time to pick off two.

Hawkeye, from his corner, had supplied a crossfire, accounting for the last man. Hawkeye had scored a few other hits, but those shots had all found toppling enemies.

The remnants of Nick's crew were cowed. The Shadow ordered them to attend to the wounded, which they did while Cliff and Hawkeye were depriving them of guns. Shaney, the onetime medical student, was put in charge of the mercy squad.

Cliff was out from behind the metal door, moving toward the steps that led outdoors. The Shadow, looking toward the outside barrier, observed that it was slightly open. He gripped Cliff by the arm, pushed him back, with one word:

"Wait!"

Then, reaching for the steel door, The Shadow swung it shut with a terrific clash. There was another heavy clang as he drove the heavy bar down into place. Through the punched holes of the barrier, The Shadow delivered another laugh that seemed to carry welcome in its mockery.

THE outer door swung wide. The light above it cast it a glow upon the threshold; beyond that, all was blackness.

Garret Fenmore peered toward the steel door, his face registering amazement. He observed the tight-closed wicket and approached it. Fenmore was carrying a gun, but his hand seemed shaky.

He looked through the screenlike steel, saw the body of Nick Angreff lying on the floor. Fenmore's features went livid with elation, but only momentarily. His eyes were roving elsewhere. He spied The Shadow, standing close to the fireplace.

Flickering flames reddened the black cloak; their waver gave a slight view of the face that was hidden by the slouch-hat brim. Not enough for anyone to have identified The Shadow's features, but Fenmore did not need a full view.

Dryly, the long-faced man remarked: "Congratulations, Cranston."

The Shadow laughed a quiet response. One gun put away, he gestured for Cliff to unbar the door. As the agent advanced, Fenmore drew back angrily from his side of the barrier.

"I advise you to wait," he croaked. "There is a matter to be discussed first."

Cliff stepped back at The Shadow's order. Fenmore approached again, thrusting his face close to the hole-dotted barrier.

"I knew who you were," Fenmore told The Shadow, "when you rescued me the other night. Your swiftness proved that you were not merely Cranston. You marked yourself as The Shadow. That was why I brought you here tonight, knowing that you, of all persons, would find some way to enter this stronghold.

"I wanted you to meet Nick Angreff. The outcome did not matter. One of you was sure to die. Nick deserved it, because he tried to murder me. Death will be yours also" - Fenmore's tone was rising - "because you alone are able to injure my greatest enterprise, the Getaway Ring!"

FENMORE thrust his gun point to the wicket, in case anyone tried to open it as a loophole. Half turned, he was ready to spring up the steps to outside safety. But before he made that start, he had something else to tell. He declared it in high glee.

"So The Shadow trapped Nick Angreff!" chortled the master crook. "Only to be trapped himself! This fortress that I fixed for Nick will be his tomb, and yours as well, Shadow! Outside I have a score of men, all the reserves who belong to the Getaway Ring.

"One machine gun is waiting, beyond this very door. Others will soon riddle those shuttered windows. Put up a battle from the loopholes. If you hold out too long, we will bomb you! I haven't forgotten the chimney.

"Listen!" He paused, his free hand pointing its forefinger upward. "You can already hear my men scaling the roof."

Cliff and Hawkeye were straining, anxious to reach the wicket and yank it open before Fenmore could get outside. But it was useless; the self-revealed crook had gauged the distance too well. The Shadow stopped his agents with another gesture.

Then, reaching beneath his cloak, he produced a small package, wrapped in paper. His eyes had moved away from Fenmore; he was half turned toward the fireplace, as if following Fenmore's admonition to listen for the sounds along the roof.

His stoop toward the fireplace seemed an added effort to detect such sounds, but it ended with an unexpected maneuver. With a sideward toss, The Shadow flipped the wrapped packet into a corner of the fireplace, where small flames were lapping at a log.

With the same motion, he whipped his cloaked arm upward, carrying the sleeve across his eyes while the packet was still on its way. The little bundle reached the flames; momentarily they fondled it.

Then came a sharp-coughed puff. With it, a burst of scarlet light that filled the room with a dazzling redness. Closest to the fireplace, The Shadow had been forced to shield his eyes, for a fraction of the puffing powder blazed in his direction.

The major portion went up the chimney in one great crackle, like a monster released from bondage. There were shouts from outside - the voices of Fenmore's startled gun crews - telling that they had seen the chimney mouth its mighty beacon toward the sky.

Fenmore, himself, was startled. Springing from his moored position against the steel screen, he cleared the steps with a long bound, shouting for his followers to open their attack.

But Fenmore's commands were trivial, compared to the confident burst of mirth that followed him from the entry.

Again, The Shadow's laugh!

CHAPTER XXII. DEAD MEN'S TALES

FROM the parked limousine, Stanley saw the scarlet blast that The Shadow's hand had launched and thought a volcano had opened shop in the middle of Connecticut. The flame was weird as it left the

chimney, for it opened in mushroom fashion once it was released.

A mushroom that spread a hundred feet in height, whipped about like a wind-swept torch, then vanished in a puff, leaving flashes of its dazzle wherever Stanley looked. It was big enough, so Stanley fancied, to be seen as far away as Long Island Sound.

The great flare wasn't meant for distance. The signal was caught by men close by. Stanley heard voices, heard car doors slam. Figures were swarming past the limousine, bringing spotlights on the ends of long electric wires.

Looking back, Stanley saw to his amazement that the limousine was the lead car of a procession. He realized, to his bewilderment, that he must have drawn those vehicles along when he made the circuit trip that Cranston had ordered.

Reason returning, Stanley realized who the men were. Feds. They were carrying submachine guns and objects that looked like tear-gas bombs. The guns had steel shields.

The chauffeur heard a voice he recognized as belonging to a friend of Cranston's. Vic Marquette was giving the command.

Machine guns were already talking about the clearing when the Feds poured in through the woods.

The Feds chucked bombs at the nearest mobsters, used special guns to shoot the missiles at those farther away. Resistance melted under the attack. The Feds flooded the clearing.

One machine gun hadn't opened up at all. It was covering the doorway of the lodge. Marquette rounded the corner, hoping to catch the silent gunners unaware. Seeing him, they wheeled their weapon in his direction, forgetful that the scene was lighted.

A clang, like the clashing of a heavy metal door, came from the lodge. The staccato reports of a .45 joined with the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns. Marquette saw two figures jolt away, writhing; then he spied The Shadow coming from the doorway.

With flank shots, the cloaked fighter had eliminated Fenmore's two servants, who had been detailed to stop all comers from the doomed building. But The Shadow did not stop with that exploit. Aiming his automatic toward the roof, he picked off other crooks from their perch.

As sprawling men rolled topsy-turvy to the ground, they disappeared with sharp explosions that tore chunks from the walls of the building. So much for the bombs that Fenmore's specialists had intended for the chimney. The scarlet flare had driven them back, delaying them until the Feds arrived.

Two men were backing from the entry, shooting into the building as they retreated. Marquette was swinging toward them, when The Shadow held him back. Cliff and Hawkeye were covering The Shadow's departure, and making their own; the shots were warnings for Nick's captured mobbies to remain where they were.

The Shadow plucked a bulging object from Marquette's pocket. The thing was a tear-gas bomb. As Cliff and Hawkeye gained the open, The Shadow lobbed the bomb into a mass of frenzied fighters who were driving out, bringing all sorts of improvised weapons with them.

Chairs, fire tongs, lamps - all clattered to the floor, as the crooks staggered to the open air, clawing at their faces. They were captured without resistance by the Feds, a better fate than that of thrusting themselves into slaughter.

GARRET FENMORE was making his last stand on the far side of the clearing, where a machine-gun crew was too well fixed to be dislodged. The boughs of low-clumped trees were sheltering them from gas bombs.

The Feds were knifing in from angles, but the crooks were ready for flight should a wide-flank attack begin.

Marquette saw The Shadow fade from the edge of the glowing clearing. Promptly, Vic shouted to his men, giving orders to withdraw. The move deceived the foemen.

Thinking that they were beating off disaster, they held to their position. All the while, silent catastrophe was circling toward them in the person of The Shadow.

The cloaked fighter struck hard from the rear, falling upon the three-man gun crew with swinging automatics that served him as steel clubs. As the mobsters succumbed to the surprise attack, the dying rattle of their machine gun told that The Shadow had reached his goal. Marquette ordered a prompt advance.

Off in the darkness, The Shadow was meeting a counterthrust. Wheeling from the cluster of sagging gunners, he was just in time to grip a revolver that jabbed at him from the turf. Crawling up in the dark, Fenmore was trying to settle scores with his superfoe.

It was like the grip that The Shadow had put on Nick's gun when the fellow had tried to finish Fenmore. Again, the move was in time to save a life - The Shadow's own. In the darkness, Fenmore was just a second late with his trigger. Such time limits did not count with The Shadow. He worked in split seconds.

The gun twisted from Fenmore's clutch, unfired. Face to-face with a visage that he could not see, Fenmore snarled further challenge that faded as strong fingers clutched his throat.

Holding his prey half throttled, The Shadow took his opportunity to finish a highly important argument that Fenmore had begun.

"You say you brought me here," spoke The Shadow, calmly. "You are wrong, Fenmore. I brought you! I suspected you as the head of the Getaway Ring, from the night when your cabs and garage were first concerned in it.

"It was clever, getting rid of men like Storber, and keeping honest ones in their place, to work with the law. You still had your decoys, though they were no longer in your employ, officially, at least.

"I worked to crack the racket first; to have a showdown with you later. I brought Nick to your apartment, though he did not realize it, to produce that showdown. When it failed, I still had my opportunity, an even better one."

Lights were pouring upon the abandoned machine gun; the shield cut off the glow, keeping it from the two figures that still were gripped together in the darkness.

"An intriguing crime," chuckled The Shadow. "Nick Angreff, paying the getaway ring to spirit him out of town, then ignorantly trying to rob and murder the very man who had arranged the getaway for him! I knew you would lead the trail here, Fenmore. You knew where Nick was; you wanted to pay him off your own way."

Fenmore's throat was free. The Shadow was lifting him, thrusting him out toward the lights. He intended to give the head of the Getaway Ring to the law. But Fenmore was already trying to shriek denials of

guilt. He began:

"Speed Kinkel was -

"Your first client," interposed The Shadow, as Fenmore's strained throat failed. "He had five thousand dollars ready for getaway money the first time I encountered him. He made another payment later. I knew that neither case was bluff. As for the final proof: Speed Kinkel is -"

FENMORE wrenched free, tore out into the clearing, hoping to cut across to a new stretch of woods before either The Shadow or the Feds could recapture him.

The Shadow let him go, for he was trapped from all sides. But Fenmore was a madman.

With a terrific lunge, he fell on an approaching Fed, bowled him over, and came to hands and knees with a captured submachine gun. It was a rapid, startling tumble that Fenmore turned into an acrobat's trick, through sheer desperation.

He was ready to rattle shots at unprotected men, in a crazed effort to take a batch of them to oblivion with him, when a sharp shot tongued from the woods. Fenmore jolted under the crippling gun stab that The Shadow had delivered.

Before Fenmore could again tighten finger to trigger, shots came from all directions. The maddened master crook collapsed, riddled by shots that the Feds had been forced to trigger.

From darkness came a parting laugh; a mirthless knell, filled with strange significance.

Garret Fenmore was dead, deservedly so, slain by order of the law. But his death meant something else. The master of the Getaway Ring was one crook who had pierced the secret of The Shadow's double identity. It meant nothing now.

Fenmore was one dead man who would never tell his tale.

There were others to whom the same applied, but in a different fashion. Two of them, who became subjects of discussion when dawn was streaking over Manhattan.

A GROUP of men were in Fenmore's study, going over the contents of the box that the Getaway Ring master had reclaimed during Nick's frustrated raid. Producing five thousand dollars, Vic Marquette handed it to Lamont Cranston.

"Here is the marked cash that you left with Mann," declared Vic. "The money that Clicker Lordon paid for his getaway."

"Why... why" - it was Commissioner Weston who sputtered, as he turned to Cranston - "you said there was a lot more -"

"At my advice," interjected Marquette. "We wanted to find out where some of the getaway cash would show up. But it wasn't Clicker who sent it through to Fenmore."

"Who was it, then?" demanded Weston.

"The Shadow, I think," replied Marquette. "We not only have full proof that Clicker died in Chicago; we also have the men who were with him that night at Mann's. They were prisoners in a Maryland hide-away. They say The Shadow captured them."

The thing dawned on Weston. It was typical of The Shadow to hoist crooks on their own petard.

Weston looked at Cranston, wondering if his friend knew any more about the case. Cranston did not yield a smile.

The Shadow was thinking of the real Clicker Lordon - another dead man who would never tell a tale, because he had none to begin with.

"The Shadow was in it, all right," added Marquette, as he counted off twenty bills that totaled twenty thousand dollars, "because I sent him this batch of listed money myself. He must have guessed that Cranston had helped us, because he called up one day and said he would like to plant some for himself."

"In the Unity Savings Bank?" asked Weston.

"Exactly," replied Marquette, "where Speed Kirkel and Cal Grosham found it, and split it for their getaways. We're sure of that, because there was five thousand more in -"

"To think that this proof was here!" interrupted Weston. "Gad, Cranston! If we had only managed to get that box back, instead of Fenmore!"

This time, Cranston smiled. Such had been The Shadow's own plan. But its failure had not mattered. As with so many of The Shadow's plans, every miss could produce a future success. Fenmore's final fate had proved it.

"I was saying," reminded Marquette, a bit testily, "that there was five thousand dollars more. Speed Kirkel had it, and it has come back to us."

"You've captured Speed?" exclaimed Weston. "Alive or dead?"

"Dead!" emphasized Vic. "The Shadow sent word where to find him. In a crevice, over near the New Jersey gully. I should have known that The Shadow clipped him when they shot it out on the cliff. Speed took a nosedive into the crevice, that was all.

"But The Shadow didn't tell us. Instead, he plunged off through the brush, making us think he was Speed; then he doubled back again. I see what his idea was, all right."

Weston didn't see it, so Marquette explained.

"We were sure that Speed ran the getaway ring," he said. "As long as Speed was supposed to be alive, Fenmore could keep on with the racket. That's how we were able to get Fenmore with the goods. Finding Speed's body, knowing that he was dead before the Getaway Ring quit for keeps, is the final clincher in our case."

A bizarre thought had flashed to The Shadow. It produced the faintest flicker of a smile on Cranston's lips. While The Shadow considered the irony of the impression, the same thought struck Vic Marquette.

"We can say this about Speed Kirkel," declared the Fed. "He was one dead man who did tell his tale! But the real credit belongs -"

Pausing, Marquette looked about. Every listener knew the words needed to complete the sentence. But that was a trifling coincidence, compared to the fact that the very person to be mentioned was standing, incognito, in the group!

Impassively, as a statement of fact rather than praise, Lamont Cranston added the finish:

"To The Shadow."

THE END