



# CRIME OVER BOSTON

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## CHAPTER I. SHADOWS OF NIGHT

THE black coupe was creeping along the road that fringed the edge of the darkened bay. Lost beneath the boughs of overhanging trees, it was following an invisible path through cloud-blackened night, for the car was traveling without headlights. A glow from the coupe's dashboard was confined to the interior of the car, as muffled as the low purr of the smooth motor beneath the heavy hood.

Nevertheless, that dashlight was important. By its glow a driver, swathed in the darkness above it, was watching a remarkable road map. Set in a square, glass-topped frame, the map was shifting, like the coupe. Geared to the speedometer, the chart showed each road sector that the car approached.

With that guide, the driver kept to the road, using the wheel to hold the charged line along an arrow point. Not once did the tires jolt to the stony shoulder of the road.

A cross mark showed on the chart. As it reached the arrow, the driver applied the brakes with smooth, easy motion. Turning the wheel, he slid the car into reverse, backed it some twenty feet into the darkness.

The road had widened at that spot. So had the map by which the driver guided.

A breeze swept through the opened windows. Halted, the coupe's rear wheels were against a stone abutment, beyond which lay a sheer drop to the bay. Moonlight was struggling through the clouds, but its spotty beams were confined to the waters. The glow that did reveal the coupe was momentary. It came from the sweeping beam of an old lighthouse, situated on a rocky islet half a mile out in the bay.

That circling glare brightened the trees, showed the black coupe below them. It flashed upon the face of a young man seated by the window on the right; but in its passage, that glare did not disclose the car's driver.

He was cloaked in garments of black that made him as shapeless as a splotch of light itself.

The coupe purred forward, nosed back along the road to stop beneath the trees. The next sweep of the light showed vacancy beneath the cliff trees. This portion of the Rhode Island coast appeared devoid of human presence.

There was a whisper from the cloaked driver of the coupe. He was giving instructions to the man beside him. Gloved fingers adjusted the changing road map for the return trip. The being in black was turning over the car to his companion.

That done, The Shadow opened the door on his side of the coupe and stepped into the outer darkness of the night.

Whatever his reason for this journey to Rhode Island, The Shadow had so far carried his plans to perfection. He had driven miles along a road that was watched at many intervals. In completing that trip, he had assured himself that the return journey could be accomplished by his companion.

TO Harry Vincent, his long-trusted agent, The Shadow was delegating the task of removing the coupe from this vicinity. With the car's departure, all evidence of The Shadow's arrival would be vanished.

Sliding in behind the wheel, Harry passed a brief case through the window. Gloved hands received it. Harry was ready with the gear shift when a hissed tone ordered him to remain.

There was something sinister in that sibilant utterance; it was chilling, even to a listener who knew The Shadow for a friend. That whisper betokened ill to men who deserved The Shadow's wrath. Harry sensed instantly that The Shadow had caught some evidence of evil, present in the darkness.

Below an arch of tree boughs, Harry could see a stretch of bay, vague in the straggly moonlight. This was the direction that The Shadow watched. As Harry stared, he, too, was conscious of motion in the water.

A low, long sweep of blackness hulked through the moon-splotched water. It was gliding, like some monster from the deep that had come to seek the surface. A faint swash had caught The Shadow's attention; he had looked straight to the spot a few hundred yards off the shore.

Then, with a blanketing of the moonlight, the rakish apparition was gone. The beam from the lighthouse swept by, but it was above the level of the spot where the thing had been. Whatever the object was, it had vanished.

Moments passed. Another light swept from the night. It was a searchlight, beaming directly on the bay. Harry knew its source: a Coast Guard cutter was patrolling these channels, on

the lookout for stray craft.

The searchlight revealed nothing. Harry decided that he and his chief had actually glimpsed some sea creature that had later dived beneath the surface. Porpoises—even small whales—were common in these waters.

Apparently the cutter was satisfied, for its searchlight swept to a remote direction. The Shadow, though, was waiting in hope of a new flicker of moonlight. That glow was coming due at almost any moment—when another factor intervened.

The gleam of a flashlight sparkled from the trees on the land side of the road. With it, Harry heard the growl of a voice. Men were coming to cover this turn-out in the road.

The Shadow toned a single word in Harry's ear:

"Start."

The coupe eased away. Harry had started it in silent second gear, but the thrum of the motor was audible. Brushwood crackled; the man with the flashlight was dashing to the road. He turned his light in the proper direction, but he was too late to glimpse the car before he reached the road itself.

There was something else the arrival did not see—a figure that angled toward him with silent sweep, avoiding the flashlight's beam. That shape dropped low, met the man at the road edge. The flashlight took a long clatter as its bearer performed a headlong sprawl.

A second man arrived, blinking his flashlight on the fallen fellow. The first man was coming to his feet; a deputy's badge shone from beneath his outspread coat. The two turned their flashlights along the road, but the coupe was out of sight.

"SOUNDED like a car, all right," grunted the first arrival. "Guess I imagined it, though. What I didn't imagine was that bank I tripped over."

"What bank?" The second deputy was studying the road edge. "You must have fallen over your own feet."

From somewhere among the trees came a vague whisper; almost unreal, it seemed a taunt from some ghostly listener. The deputies forgot the vanished car. They were concerned with a different quest. That laugh, despite its whispery creep, was too timely to be mere coincidence.

The flashlights swept through the trees. One man shouted as he saw a streak of blackness shift away. Yanking a revolver, he fired two shots as he dashed forward. He stumbled past a tree, stopped in front of a bush that had received his bullets.

The other man blasted shots in another direction, with no result. Echoes brought a curious repetition of the whispered mockery, as though the gunfire had produced them. The deputies stared dumbly, then raised a shout.

More lights flashed, distant among the trees. The woods showed half a dozen men converging upon this sector. Hearing the news, they halted to aim, but did not fire. Wavery blotches were deceptive in those woods. It was useless to fire at shadows.

Spreading, the group formed a semicircle, moving inward from the road. They came to a clearing where a huge house bulked beyond the high picket fence that surrounded its grounds. A watcher came from the end of the fence, where it stopped at a cliff above the

bay. He had seen no one come in that direction.

Close against the fence itself, The Shadow was working at strands of barbed wire. Oddly, those wires were fitted to the outside of the pickets, indicating that the deputies had placed them there. The Shadow tightened the wires as he probed the positions of the barbs. A flashlight was approaching, but he coolly continued his task.

Just as the ray focused upon him, The Shadow dwindled. There was a surprised shout as an observer saw solid blackness melt groundward. The man sprang, spied nothing but the turf. The Shadow was lunging inward, coming up beneath the beam.

There was a jolt as figures met. The deputy's arms went wide. The flashlight scaled like a flare in the blackness. Somersaulted, the deputy flattened on the ground, too dazed to offer fight. The Shadow shoved the brief case through the pickets. Using the tightened wires as ladder rungs, he climbed the fence.

Hands gripping the posts, his shoes alone encountering the wires, The Shadow had no trouble with the barbs. Dropping beyond the top spikes, he scooped up the brief case. He was gone, past a series of hedges when an electric lantern glared through the picket posts.

Patrolling deputies were certain that they had encountered an intruder, but they could not vision his quick, vaulting climb over the barbed-wire pickets. They spread to search their own terrain; were astonished to find their quarry gone.

Other amazement was due elsewhere.

DEEP within the fenced grounds, the isolated mansion stood dark and formidable, except for a few dimly lighted windows. The house jutted almost to the cliff edge, but the spot that The Shadow chose was a massive front door at the center of the building.

There, he pressed a bell button. A clang sounded from deep within the house. Half a minute passed before bolts grated. The door opened and The Shadow stepped into a huge, dim hall, to face a stolid servant who stood with unbelieving eyes.

It was not the visitor's appearance that startled the servant, for The Shadow was no longer clad in black. Instead, he was attired in an ordinary business suit, wearing a dark-gray, flexible hat. In the light, his face showed as a thin, hawkish profile, bronzed of complexion, masklike in expression. What bewildered the servant, was the fact that such a stranger could have passed the surrounding cordon.

Though quiet in gaze, The Shadow's eyes saw much. Beyond the servant's shoulder, he spied the doorway of a room to the left of the big hall. There, a girl's pale face was visible. She was attractive, with light hair that showed plainly against the darkness of the doorway. Despite the strain that deepened her expression, she displayed a curiosity when she saw the visitor.

Another servant was arriving from the back of the hall. The girl darted from sight. The Shadow, still holding his brief case, indulged in a quiet smile as the servants ranged beside him. Coolly, The Shadow announced:

"My name is Kent Allard. I have come to interview Ferdinand Relf. He will know who I am."

The calm tone was impressive. One servant received the calling card that the visitor drew from his pocket. The other ushered Allard into a small reception room on the right. The door closed, leaving the visitor alone.

Placing his brief case on a chair, The Shadow strolled about the room. He paused to note a framed photograph upon the mantel; it was plain, in the light that came from a nearby floor lamp. The picture portrayed the girl whom The Shadow had seen across the hallway.

The lips of Kent Allard remained motionless, but through The Shadow's mind flashed the name of the girl herself: Ruth Bryand. There was reason for a smile, although The Shadow did not show one. The fact that Ruth Bryand was in this house was something that The Shadow had suspected. One purpose of this visit had been to convince himself upon that question.

That marked a good beginning to The Shadow's quest within the walls of this strange Rhode Island mansion. It was but the first episode, however, of many that were due before The Shadow left this house.

Other developments would come when Kent Allard met the owner of this house —the man named Ferdinand Relf.

## **CHAPTER II. THE WIZARD OF FINANCE**

It was musty, tomblike in that reception room where Kent Allard waited. Thick walls hushed the place; no sounds of outside activity could penetrate. Seating himself in a huge antique chair, The Shadow found himself surrounded by massive chunks of furniture that loomed like monsters in the dimness.

There was some reason for the delay that continued. Alert despite his impassive expression, The Shadow sensed that he was under observation. His gaze drifted imperceptibly toward the door. Although the eyes of Allard appeared to be looking elsewhere, they noted the ancient carving of the portal.

A carved fleur-de-lis showed a glister. That decoration was a peephole. Someone had slid it aside and an eye was peering through. For five seconds The Shadow noted that phenomenon, then it was ended.

The door opened. A smallish, drab-faced man stepped into the reception room. His eyelids were heavy; lowered, they showed a whiteness like his face and lips. There was a sparkle, though, from the slits below those lids.

This was the man who had viewed Kent Allard through peephole.

"Good evening. Mr. Allard." The voice from those drab lips was polite, in whiny fashion. "My name is Shervel. I am Mr. Relf's secretary. He is ready to see you."

Allard followed Shervel out through the large hall. The secretary walked briskly, but in a stooped fashion, keeping his hands clasped in front of his chest. His back was toward the visitor, but The Shadow could tell from Shervel's head motions that the fellow was darting glances in various directions.

Shervel was making sure that Ruth Bryand was out of sight. He was also nodding instructions to servants that he met along the way. Though Allard seemed interested only in the brief case that he carried beneath his arm, he was actually noting the number of Relf's retainers.

They passed half a dozen of those chunky servitors in the time they had ascended the great staircase in order to reach a remote corner room.

Shervel bowed the visitor through a small anteroom and into a lighted study. There, Kent

Allard came face to face with Ferdinand Relf.

STEADY eyes met. In Allard, Relf saw the man that he had expected, a personage whose face was stolid as that of a stone Mayan idol. In Relf, Allard observed a man whose features had the dominating set of a Napoleon. Of the two, Relf looked the sort who would issue orders, expecting them to be obeyed; but Allard was one person who would not yield to such stubborn will.

Relf recognized it. His lips set tightly; his black eyes glistened as he stroked his hand slowly along his glossy, blackish hair. With a gesture, he indicated a chair in a deep alcove at the back of the room.

"Seat yourself there," spoke Relf in choppy tones. "It is most comfortable. We shall have cigars"—Relf turned toward a big desk—"while we discuss the purpose of your visit."

Seated, The Shadow saw Shervel still standing at the doorway from the anteroom. The secretary showed an expectancy that Relf had not displayed. Shervel's eyes had opened slightly; they gleamed with hope of some insidious command from Relf. The Shadow foresaw that Shervel was to be disappointed. Opening the cigar box, Relf looked toward the secretary, to snap the command.

"You may leave, Shervel."

It was plain that Relf had sized Allard as a man who had a message. When they had lighted their cigars, Relf stood with his hands behind him.

"Your visit pleases me," he stated. Then, without change of tone: "How much do you know regarding me and my present circumstances?"

"They call you the wizard of finance," spoke Allard steadily, "because of your ability at raising vast sums through methods that should be outlawed."

Relf smiled. The analysis pleased him.

"Your latest operations were begun in Boston," resumed Allard. "You were prepared to acquire new millions, when you made the mistake of buying this Rhode Island residence."

Relf shook his head.

"That was no mistake," he snapped. "I could not foresee the motor accident that occurred near Providence. Bah! It could have happened anywhere."

"But in Rhode Island," reminded Allard, "the laws are such that, once arrested, you would be sentenced to a year in prison."

Relf grumbled an admission that the statement was correct. Suddenly, he snapped the impatient query:

"Well, why don't they arrest me?"

"Because they know that you prefer this residence to jail," returned Allard. "The government wants you out of circulation, Mr. Relf. The local sheriff has obligingly postponed your arrest. No warrant will be served unless you force it by trying to leave these premises."

"And if I should run the cordon successfully -"

"You would be confronted by the added task of leaving the State of Rhode Island. A real

difficulty, Mr. Relf, as I can testify. I have seen the preparations that await you."

ALLARD'S straight talk brought a response from Relf. Wearing his glower, the dark-haired man paced the study, muttering his own opinions of the matter.

"I have millions," he declared. "This place is ample. I could make it into a palace, spend the rest of my life here. The threat of arrest? Bah! It would never worry me. They know what would come after my year in jail.

"I could have my revenge through new schemes that would sweep this continent. No legal measures could obstruct me. I could drag the public into a wave of investment that would burst like the famous Mississippi Bubble.

"But why such measures?" Relf's eyes fixed upon Allard. "It would be simpler to return to circulation, as you term it. Anywhere except in Rhode Island, the law can not touch me."

Stepping into the alcove, Relf pointed to the brief case that lay beside Allard's chair.

"Come, Mr. Allard!" Relf was impatient. "You have a plan for my escape. Let me see the details."

He conducted the visitor to the desk; there, Allard opened the brief case. It was divided into two sections, with a partition between. From one side, Allard produced photographs of airplanes. Relf shook his head.

"Impossible," he declared. "No plane could land on these premises. Wait, I correct myself—he was looking at the photo of all autogiro - "this could land here. But the take-off would be a giveaway.

"The coast guards are active, Allard. They have planes as well as cutters. On a pretext that they are after smugglers, they would overtake a slow ship like all autogiro and force it to land in Rhode Island.

"You are a famous aviator, Allard. I know your reputation. But if I had believed that I could escape from here by air, I would have arranged it before the telephone service was cut off."

Relf started to turn away, but Allard had not finished with the photographs. He was bringing others from the second section of the brief case. Relf's eyes showed sudden interest. On the desk, Allard placed a picture of a baby blimp.

"This craft!" exclaimed Relf. "Do you own it?"

"I can acquire it," returned Allard. "On a cloudy night, with the proper wind, the blimp can come and leave without the need of its motor. It would be unseen, a ghost of the air."

"But the ground crew?"

"Three men could handle it. You have more than that number here."

Relf's eyes gleamed with eagerness. His head kept nodding as Allard supplied more details.

"Signals from below the lighthouse, answers from here"—the calm tone continued—"no need for codes that could be deciphered. Those flashes would simply set the hour, with your assurance that you would be ready."

"The plan pleases me," accorded Relf. He was standing with eyes set, fists clenched. Then

he grated grimly: "But there are others who will not be pleased— later."

RELF missed the momentary scrutiny that Allard gave him. The visitor's eyes had the gleam of The Shadow's. Relf had betrayed a point that The Shadow had sought to learn. Vengeance lay behind the financial wizard's hope for departure.

"How did you come in here?" demanded Relf suddenly. "You say the cordon is a strong one, yet you ran it, Allard."

"Because its purpose was to prevent your exit," reminded Allard coolly. "I managed to approach before I was discovered."

"But leaving here will be more difficult."

"I shall leave tomorrow; openly. I can admit that I was the person who entered. Once I identify myself, I shall be allowed to pass. The warrant applies to you, Relf, but to no one else."

Relf smiled. Allard was right. Though visitors were not allowed to pass the cordon, once someone had accomplished it, the sheriff and the deputies would rather have him leave than stay.

Relf reached to press a button on the desk. Allard stopped him with a new remark.

"Regarding this house," said the visitor. "It was formerly owned by a girl named Ruth Bryand."

"It was," admitted Relf. His eyes showed momentary suspicion. "I knew her father, and often visited here. That is why I bought the house after it was willed to Ruth."

"And Miss Bryand," added Allard, "is supposed to be in Europe?"

Relf's dominating gaze remained focused upon Allard's immobile countenance. Then:

"Ruth is here," declared Relf. "She stayed to manage the house. That was prior to the trouble that forced my self-imprisonment. Ruth's friends suppose that she has gone to Europe. She has found no opportunity to correct that wrong rumor."

Relf pressed the button. Shervel entered from the hall. He saw Allard packing photos in the brief case, but did not observe what the pictures were. There was a slight raise of the secretary's heavy eyelids as he glanced toward Relf. The master of the house ignored Shovel's quizzical expression.

"Mr. Allard is staying over night," informed Relf. "You will see that everything is comfortable for him, Shervel."

"In the Oak Room?" asked Shervel.

"No." Relf's tone was emphatic; his eyes sidelonged a sharp glance at Allard. "In the Walnut Room."

Shervel conducted the visitor into the hallway; once there, the secretary closed the door to the study. They were in the middle of a long corridor that ran like a balcony along the second floor. To the left was a wing of the house that stretched toward the bay edge. Allard was turning in that direction, when Shervel beckoned him to the right.

They went to the depths of a wing on the land side of the house, an oddity, in The Shadow's opinion, since the best guest room would logically be located with an outlook on the bay. It



didn't quite fit with Relf's orders to give Allard every comfort.

Shervel stopped in front of a huge paneled door; unlocking it, he entered a large room with a huge four-poster bed and other bulky furniture. There was a floor lamp in one corner. Shervel drew it out toward the center of the room, before he turned on the light. That done, the secretary bowed himself out, closing the door behind him.

Promptly, Kent Allard strode to the corner where the lamp had been. Shervel had so fixed it that the beams barely reached the gloom of the dark-stained, paneled wall. A flashlight glimmered from Allard's hand; its bright circle was concentrated upon the stained woodwork.

That panel was not walnut. It was oak. Relf's correction of Shervel's suggestion had brought a directly opposite result. Kent Allard had been shown to the Oak Room.

Firm lips whispered the faint echo of a laugh that was lost in the deep recesses of that dark-walled room.

The Shadow foresaw immediate peril within this mansion of gloom.

### **CHAPTER III. BLADE OF DEATH**

STEPPING to the big door, The Shadow tried the knob. As he expected, it was tightly latched. Shervel had attended to that from the outside. As a preliminary to the next events, Kent Allard had been made a prisoner.

That pleased The Shadow. It offered a chance to make his adversaries show their hand, with Allard as the focal point. As he moved away from the door, The Shadow removed his coat and vest. Choosing a writing table at the end wall of the room, he laid the garments there.

Next, the brief case.

Opening that flat bag, The Shadow revealed a fact that would have amazed Ferdinand Relf, had he viewed it. The brief case was actually constructed in three sections; but the center one was secret.

Tapering upward from the bottom of the brief case, it looked like a simple partition of thick leather, particularly since there was a permanent binding at the top. But when The Shadow turned the brief case upside down, to loose a strip of leather along the bottom, the secret cavity was disclosed.

From that space The Shadow removed his black cloak and slouch hat. There was still space for a brace of automatics, but they were not in the brief case. The guns were already holstered above The Shadow's waist. They showed there, strapped against his shirt.

Cloaking himself in the black garb, The Shadow began another process. He brought a pillow from the bed, placed it upon a chair in front of the writing desk. He fitted his coat upon it, the corners of the pillow poking into the shoulders.

Something was needed to form a head. The Shadow sought a suitable object in the room. He rejected a vase, also a roundish clock, the latter being too heavy. He finally chose the parchment shade of a small table lamp.

Propped upon the pillow, the shade did not look like a head until The Shadow added another decoration. He brought a flat make-up box from the secret section of the brief case.

In that box, wadded into the compass of a few square inches, was a finely made wig.

The smooth hair, fitted to a thin, silk base, was a lighter hue than Allard's, which explained why The Shadow carried the wig. A valuable item in quick disguise, it was to serve the opposite purpose for which it was intended. Fitted over the lamp shade, the wig had to pass as the back of Allard's head.

A slight shift of the floor lamp served in the deception. The Shadow fixed it so that the head barely showed. The shape was right; the hair was visible, but its color vague.

That was not all. The Shadow had discarded the pillow slip when he propped the coat in place, he used that slip to stuff the right arm of the coat. He laid the fattened sleeve so that it rested on the edge of the writing table.

In the light, The Shadow placed photographs and papers from the brief case. He had formed the excellent illusion of a man seated at the table, studying the photographs; the one fault was the empty cuff of the sleeve. A stuffed glove would not do for a hand, but it was possible to create a substitute effect.

Finding a large ash tray, The Shadow placed it just to the right of the sleeve cuff. The ash tray was not quite high enough, so he set it upon a hook. The combination hid the spot where the imaginary hand was supposed to be. All that was needed was a reason for the ash tray.

The Shadow supplied that by lighting a cigarette. After a few puffs, he put the cigarette on the edge of the tray, right where the supposed hand could logically reach it.

The Shadow surveyed his work from two angles. First, from beside the floor; next, from the opposite side of the room. He made a few adjustments, edged the floor lamp a few inches in another direction.

THE final illusion was a good one.

In that light, any one would be apt to mistake the figure for Allard. If a shrewd observer suspected it to be a dummy, the only way he could assure himself would be by close approach. Such a step would doubtless be preceded by a scrutiny of the room to learn if the real Allard lay hidden there.

Curiously, despite its gloom, the room lacked hiding places. The four-poster bed was built almost from the floor, with a scant four inches beneath it. The room had no closets; its big chairs were planked close against the walls, with little space behind them.

One portion of the wall was gloomy enough to offer a concealing background. That space was near a rear corner of the room, where another floor light stood. The Shadow pulled the cord of that large lamp, thus providing a glow that ended all doubt.

The status of the dummy figure was established through the fact that Kent Allard could not be hidden in the room. But the limitations that restricted Allard did not apply to The Shadow. He picked a hiding place of the most unexpected sort—an octagonal table that stood near the rear wall.

That table had eight thin legs, set in pairs. It looked flimsy, almost spidery. Its top cut off the lamp glow, blurred the space beneath the table. That was sufficient for The Shadow. He crouched beneath the table, his legs on each side of a cross-brace near the floor.

A glance at the octagonal table would be sufficient for any suspicious eye. After that,

inspection would be elsewhere. The Shadow had no doubt regarding the surety of his position. The only disadvantage was the cramped limitation of his bold hiding place.

The Shadow could not leave that space in a hurry, and his view was restricted to sight of the dummy figure at the other end of the room. A big chair intervened, to hide the door. The end of the four-poster bed blocked all view of the wall at the inner side of the room.

To move any of the heavy furniture would be a mistake, for a person who knew this room would immediately suspect preparations. Therefore, The Shadow accepted the lack of visibility that the hiding place gave him.

SMOKE from the cigarette curled slowly from the ash tray. That cigarette was a slow-burner, filled with Turkish tobacco. The Shadow had extended it well into the ash tray, so that overweighted ashes would drop as they increased.

It was good for five minutes, that cigarette; after that, The Shadow would have to substitute another one. But with the tenseness of the moving moments, he sensed that it would not be necessary. There was a stillness in the room, as though the hush of the house had gained a grip upon the oaken walls.

If murder had been decided upon, there could be little reason for its delay.

The cigarette was two-thirds burned when the expected token came. From somewhere the hushed room picked up a click that only The Shadow's ears could have heard. He was unable, however, to locate that solitary sound, except to know that it came from some spot in front of his present position.

The cigarette smoke curled into a question mark; its waver changed to an upright position, with little quivers to the column. This indicated that a draft had crept into the room. A spying eye was noting the figure at the writing table.

A dozen seconds went by. Thrust or advance was due; which would come, The Shadow was not sure. At last the decision was made, but with a surprise beginning that The Shadow had not anticipated.

Someone must have pressed a remote switch, for the floor lamps suddenly blinked off. The darkness came at an instant when a stroke was fully prepared, for the sound that followed came an instant later.

A driving object whirred through the blackened air. Whistling in from an unknown source, it sped for the front of the room. The zimm of the flying missile was followed by a hard thud from the front wall. The room absorbed the dull echoes. Again, The Shadow heard the faint click.

Creeping from beneath the table, The Shadow moved forward along the floor, keeping close to the four-poster in case the lights returned. At the end of the bed he paused, for this was the limit beyond which he could not make a quick return to the eight-legged table.

An assassin had struck. Stifled silence, perhaps, had made him feel sure of his deadly work. In that case, he might delay entry into the room. Still, it was better to wait a few minutes longer; then, The Shadow would be sure of his enemy's state of mind.

One minute went. Its completion proved The Shadow's wisdom. Again a faint snap occurred; this time, The Shadow was certain of its location. It came from the room's inner wall. Just past the end of the bed The Shadow could feel the breeze from an opened panel. He drew back into cover.

A flashlight blinked; inquisitively, it swept the room in intermittent fashion, missing the present spot that The Shadow had chosen for concealment. The light reached the front wall and its glow became steady.

SLUMPED across the writing table was the dummy figure, a tribute to The Shadow's skill. He had done more than fix it for the first deception. That pillow had been balanced forward, ready to topple at the slightest jog.

The stuffed coat gave the impression of a sprawled human figure. The wigged head had tilted down upon the extended arm, hiding the lower sleeve completely. Even more than before, the dummy looked like an actual shape.

The light still shone while its bearer crept toward that table. The Shadow could hear creaks from old floor-boards as the intruder advanced. His own progress made no sound. Step for step, The Shadow was following the person who approached the dummy figure, but his strides were longer.

He intended to be on hand when the ruse was discovered. The flashlight was shifting to the left. A side view would give the game away. The Shadow took two more paces, prepared himself for a long lunge.

The flashlight showed the surface of the writing desk. Instantly, it was extinguished. There was the sound of a quick motion in the darkness; the intruder wanted to make a hurried retreat to the wall panel.

That was too late. The Shadow had launched his drive. The swish of his cloak was a betraying token that did not matter. His adversary heard him, made a sudden scramble without avail. Shoulder first, The Shadow struck the fugitive. A moment afterward he was on the floor, suppressing his opponent.

The flashlight thudded from a limp hand. The Shadow scooped it up and turned it toward the face of the dazed intruder, who was too jolted to offer battle. Muffling the flashlight in the folds of his cloak, The Shadow pressed the button.

Whatever the startlement that had struck that fallen foe, The Shadow's own surprise matched it. The face that lay upturned in the fight was neither the Napoleonic countenance of Relf, nor the smug, shrewd visage of Shervel.

It was the face of a young woman, beautiful despite its pallor; a paleness intensified by the stray locks of light-brown hair that had drifted from rounded forehead, across well-molded checks.

The prisoner that The Shadow had captured in the darkness was Ruth Bryand, former owner of this mansion where murder had become a pastime!

#### **CHAPTER IV. FLIGHT PREARRANGED**

WHILE The Shadow was lifting Ruth to a chair, the lights of the room returned. In the glow the girl stared dazedly at her black-clad captor. She sensed a connection between this cloaked being and the toppled shape by the writing table.

Sincerity flashed to the girl's face as she pleaded her innocence.

"I knew nothing—nothing of this!" stammered Ruth. "I came—came here—to warn you. Or perhaps"—she was puzzled as she eyed The Shadow—"perhaps to warn someone else who may have been here."

The Shadow stepped to the writing table. He removed the pillow from the coat, took the wig from the lamp shade. In the wall beyond the table was a knife driven half to the hilt. The throw behind that blade had been a powerful one, as the splintered woodwork testified.

The knife itself was proof of Ruth's innocence.

Not only had the throw exceeded the girl's strength, but the angle of the handle showed that the knife had come from the door of the room. Ruth had entered by a secret panel in the opposite wall.

The Shadow went to the door, fingered the edges of its panels. He found the one that the would-be assassin had opened and closed, accounting for those original clicks. Like the door itself, the special panel had been locked from the outside.

The wall entrance that Ruth had used consisted of two large panels and was about four feet high. The girl had left it open; the room lights showed a narrow passageway beyond it. That secret corridor evidently skirted the Oak-paneled room. When Ruth saw The Shadow looking toward the secret doorway, she tensely explained the reason for her entry.

"I knew that you were in the house," she told The Shadow. "That is, I knew a visitor had come, because I saw him. I feared that Relf had lured one of the persons upon whom he seeks vengeance."

"Name those men," spoke The Shadow, "with the reasons why Relf seeks revenge."

"I do not know who they are," insisted Ruth, "but I can explain why Relf hates them. He had commenced some huge financial scheme, when he was forced to imprison himself in this house.

"Persons who were entangled in his web were able to free themselves. Some were dupes; others, I believe, worked with him. Whatever their circumstances, they benefited by the collapse of manipulations.

"There are three whose lives he hopes to threaten. He has so declared, in stormy outbursts that I have witnessed. He recognized the horror that I felt; that is why he made it impossible for me to leave here."

THE girl's testimony fitted with The Shadow's knowledge. Whatever Relf touched he turned to gold, leaving a path of ruined investors whose cash he had actually filched. Relf's open transactions were always kept within legal bounds; his secret ones were never revealed.

His latest swindle, however, had died in its early stages. Relf had started it in Boston, and had hoped to revive it. Meanwhile, scandal had developed. With Relf gone, men of repute had united and, finding themselves dupes, they had disclosed the facts. Others, persons of doubtful status, had admitted that Relf had approached them to gain their services. They had washed their hands of him.

The three mentioned by Ruth were conspicuous cases. The Shadow could have named them at that moment, had he so chosen.

He could also have told Ruth why he had come here. In proffering a plan of escape to Relf, The Shadow had actually been sounding out the master mind to learn if he already had made arrangements of his own. Relf had convinced The Shadow that he had no such plan.

That knife thrust from the doorway gave the situation a different angle. It might be that Relf suspected Allard was The Shadow. It was possible that he had merely wished to dispose of

a stranger whose aid he did not need.

The latter case would mean that Relf had already planned escape. If so, Ruth might know something of the details.

Rather than slow the girl with questions, The Shadow let her proceed with her own story; for Ruth was talking rapidly, breathless with eagerness to supply her cloaked friend with facts.

"I SAW Shervel conducting you here," whispered the girl, "to the Oak Room, with its secret passage. That could mean danger. I entered from the far hall, came here to warn you."

She paused. The Shadow put a question:

"Where is the Walnut Room?"

"It opens above the bay," replied Ruth. "It is in the new wing which has no secret passages. Tonight, though"—her tone was puzzled - "I saw Shervel lock the door of the Walnut Room. That was before you arrived. I can not understand why he locked that door."

The Shadow had a theory on that point. He intended to test it later. Meanwhile, he had other questions.

"These passages"—The Shadow's tone was sibilant—"does the house contain others -"

"Many," inserted Ruth. "My father showed me some of them, but not all. He regarded them merely as curiosities. The house was once a smuggler's headquarters."

"And you revealed your knowledge to Relf -"

"No." The girl's head shake was a decided one. "It was my father who did that. Relf visited here often, and was interested in the mansion. He knows much about it that I have never learned."

"And Shervel -"

"Is in Relf's confidence. He knows everything. The servants are Relf's trusted men, but I believe that they are ignorant."

The Shadow was ready for a final question, but it proved unnecessary. He had expected Ruth to bring up the proposition of Relf's escape. She came to it.

"Day and night," she declared, "I have heard Ferdinand Relf pace his room. I know that he is concentrating upon one plan, upon which depends all others. He wants some way to leave here.

"He has three cars available, a dozen servants to man them. But he knows the strength of the surrounding forces. He believes that he can smash the cordon, but he is not sure. That is why he has not tried it. Ferdinand Relf deals only in certainties."

All the while that Ruth talked, The Shadow was watching the door of the room. Minutes were gone, and in that space, no one had come either by the door or the passage. Remembering Ruth's reference to the Walnut Room, The Shadow was considering other developments that might be under way within this house. He had not forgotten the swash of the bay's water that he had observed from the cliff.

The two cases linked. Together, they might be important enough to make other matters trivial. Such a matter, for instance, as the removal of a body from the Oak Room.

The Shadow extinguished the floor lamps. His flashlight glimmered toward the opening to the secret passage. He whispered for Ruth to join him there, told the girl that he intended to foray out into the house.

In case anyone entered through the door, Ruth was to take refuge in the secret corridor, locking the panel when she went. The Shadow would make sure that no one entered by its other inlet.

Using the flashlight, The Shadow moved rapidly through the passage. As Ruth had declared, it ended in a panel that opened into a remote hallway. Picking his way through darkness, The Shadow passed the door of the Oak Room. From there he saw the feeble reflection of the dim lights in the center of the mansion.

REACHING the balcony that formed the main hallway, The Shadow heard the buzz of voices. Shervel and most of the husky servants were congregated near the door of Relf's study. The murmur ceased; Shervel alone was speaking. The Shadow edged along the balcony's inside wall. With a dozen paces, he was close enough to hear all that the secretary said.

"We'll run for it," announced Shervel, "in the three cars. One is sure to get through."

There were questions from the servants. What if Relf's own car was not the one?

"Mr. Relf is not going with us," said Shervel wisely. "He is leaving by boat. We are to start trouble along the shore. The master's escape will then be easy."

The servants showed surprise. They knew nothing about a boat. Shervel told them that one had arrived; that the crew was ready beneath the windows of the Walnut Room.

Singling out certain servants. Shervel ordered them downstairs to bring the automobiles. He told others to wait at the head of the stairs. Picking out two more, Shervel gave them a special task.

"At the end of the north wing," he said, "You will find a loose panel. It opens into a secret passage. Follow it through to the Oak Room. There"— Shervel's tone showed malicious pleasure—"you will find our guest, Mr. Allard, either dead or nearly so.

"Since he may still be alive, it is better for you to use the passage; for if he has a gun, he will be watching the door, not the wall. Dead or alive, bring him into the study. It is the master's order."

The Shadow moved back into darkness as the servants began to take their stations. He could hear a reluctant mutter from them. Evidently they preferred to take commands from Relf in person, rather than through his toady secretary.

Those who were to get the cars went no farther than halfway down the stairs. The pair ordered to the Oak Room halted a dozen steps from the study door. Shervel saw that they were dissatisfied. Testily, he snarled:

"You won't obey? Very well—wait until the master sees. I told him that this would happen. He will be displeased to learn that you are fools!"

From his pocket Shervel produced the big key of the Walnut Room. He dangled it while he opened the door of Relf's study. The dim light showed a glare on Shervel's drab face. A moment later he had turned to announce:

"All really, Mr. Relf."

THE servants saw their master step from the study, muffled in a great coat that he had chosen because of the cold bay air. He gestured toward the Walnut Room, and Shervel showed him the key. At Shervel's request, the muffled master turned his head toward the stairway, to see the servants clustered there. He gave an impatient gesture. It was enough.

"Get to your posts!" snarled Shervel. "As I told you—at the master's order!"

It was Relf's order, not Shervel's, that had the electric effect. The men on the stairs dashed downward. The pair who were to bring Allard's body began a scamper along the hall. Shervel turned to hurry ahead to unlock the Walnut Room before Relf arrived there.

All that activity forced an issue upon The Shadow. He had only to draw back into the darkness. Once the servants had passed him, he could overtake the important persons who had headed for the Walnut Room. But there was a factor that prevented The Shadow from taking up that skillful pursuit.

Servants were going to the Oak Room, not by the door, but through the secret passage. Their arrival there would trap Ruth Bryand. The Shadow's only course was to block them. That meant battle, but The Shadow was prepared for it. Most of Relf's servants were already downstairs. That divided the opposing force.

With a long spring, The Shadow came from darkness into the dim light of the balcony, squarely into the path of the two servants who approached him. His automatics swinging from his gloved fists, the cloaked fighter made a formidable sight.

That was not all. The Shadow did not stint his challenge. From his lips came a taunt, fierce enough to startle an antagonist of Relf's caliber.

The laugh of The Shadow quivered through that gloomy space, defying all who heard its mockery!

## **CHAPTER V. DEPTHS OF DEATH**

THE SHADOW settled the two servants with expert speed. They expected slashing, downward strokes, and tried to ward them. Instead, The Shadow feinted, hooked hard punches for the jaws of his opponents. His fists landed, and they were weighted with the guns they clutched.

That gave the punches a terrific knockout power. The servants flattened almost without a struggle. Aiming along the balcony, The Shadow challenged with another laugh as he heard Shervel's frantic cry:

"Hurry, Mr. Relf!"

Shervel had reached the turn where the passage led into the bay wing. His companion made a spry spring to the same safety. Both were out of The Shadow's range. A quick chase was needed.

In that pursuit, The Shadow was due for trouble. A pair of servants were scarcely down the stairway; they bounded up the steps as The Shadow charged along the balcony. The men had guns, and they used them before they reached the top. Halting, they opened fire through the balcony rail.

Some bullets were deflected by the metal posts, but others whizzed close to The Shadow.



Those servants were marksmen—cool ones. They were getting the range; they needed prompt attention.

Wheeling suddenly, The Shadow outwitted the sharpshooters as they aimed ahead of him. He jabbed quick shots in reply, hurried, cut close. The servants dropped to the cover of the stairs. The Shadow resumed his dash for the bay wing.

A darkened corridor slowed him. Next, a sharp turn; beyond it, the door of the Walnut Room. Shervel had shown speed in reaching it. He had unlocked the door.

Logically, Relf should have lost ground in the race, for The Shadow had sized him as a man unused to physical exertion. Instead, Shervel's companion was almost at the secretary's heels. Shervel pointed him through the open door. He was gone before The Shadow could aim.

The Shadow wanted that chief fugitive. He gestured his gun toward Shervel, but the fellow dived for a corner of the hall, neglecting to close the opened door. The Shadow arrived there with long strides, swung toward the opening where the glow of the lighted room cast a luminous stretch upon the hallway floor.

The Shadow gained no sight of Relf.

Sweatered men had helped the fugitive through a window. He was on a ladder, going downward. Those outside helpers had heard a warning yell from Shervel. They were aiming point-blank at the door.

The Shadow sidestepped as they fired. Bullets thudded the corridor wall. Poking his gun past the door edge. The Shadow triggered his replies. One man did a quick slide down the ladder; the other toppled through the window.

BEFORE The Shadow could spring into the Walnut Room, others had arrived to battle him. They were Relf's servants in from the main hall. In firing a barrage to drive them back, The Shadow was forced to ignore Shervel. Fear, not gameness, brought the drab secretary to attack. Yanking a gun of his own, Shervel sprang for The Shadow.

With a quick, flinging twist, The Shadow sent Shervel in a headlong sprawl. Shervel had no time to tug his trigger, but his brief attack impeded The Shadow's flight. It gave the servants time to rally, and The Shadow had flung himself several paces from the open door.

His only course was to forget the outside crew and deal with those within the house. The maddened servants would go to any extent if they could aid Relf's flight. The best way to cool their savagery was to let them feel that Relf was safely away. With their own hides at stake, they might break.

Having flung Shervel toward the servants, The Shadow was temporarily shielded. He pressed that advantage by starting a bold drive back along the corridor. His guns sputtered as he came. The servants forgot their rally. Dread started their retreat; then, they sensed that they were drawing The Shadow with them. Such tactics struck them as clever.

Guns blasted all along the route, but even The Shadow's shots found no targets. He had no direct quarrel with these servants of Relf's; as Shervel had said, they were dumb as well as faithful. They could get to their cars more rapidly if they did not have to drag wounded comrades with them. Once outside, the deputies could handle them.

It was working as The Shadow wanted it. Reaching the balcony passage, Relf's retainers realized that they were open targets. They had done enough, bringing The Shadow after

them. They were spurred by the challenge of a chilling laugh that came from darkness. They broke for the stairway.

It was then that chance thwarted The Shadow's plan to return to the bay wing.

ONE servant shouted from the head of the stairway, pointed toward the Oak Room. Another saw Ruth Bryand. The girl had come out through the secret passage, alarmed by the sound of the gunfire. Perhaps that pair remembered how The Shadow had flung Shervel as an obstacle to gunfire. Gripped by a similar idea, they made a grab for Ruth, tried to drag her with them.

The Shadow drove along the balcony. He reached Ruth's captors, slugged them as they dodged. The pair spilled down the stairway as The Shadow caught Ruth with one protecting arm. He had swung the fight in his favor; but again, ill luck was to intervene.

Shervel had come back into the picture. Out from the bay wing, he was leaning across the balcony rail, his scrawny face turned toward the stairway. He shrieked an order that aroused the fleeing servants.

"Get them both!" shrieked Shervel. "We want the girl dead, too!"

Servants responded. They were too scattered in the great hall below for The Shadow to pick them off. Ruth's life depended upon quick reverse action, and The Shadow supplied it. Whisking the girl to the top of the stairway, he plucked her from the path of fire just as it commenced.

The servants showed glee at The Shadow's retreat. They came pounding up the stairway to resume the battle. The Shadow sent Ruth back toward the passage from which she had come. He diverted the attack by heading for the center of the balcony.

He fired as he went, unsparing in his shots even though the servants were safe on the stairs. The Shadow had to bring that massed group in his own direction, and he had chosen a suitable stronghold. His objective was Relf's study.

Shervel saw it. He supplied shots to halt The Shadow's course. The Shadow returned the fire, but Shervel was safe behind a pillar at the end of the balcony. The brief duel gave the servants time to launch their drive, but The Shadow wheeled through the study door.

His automatics were empty; he needed time to reload. That was not given. A bulky servant blocked the door as The Shadow tried to slam it. Quickly, The Shadow sprang through the anteroom and into the empty study. A single lamp was glowing from Relf's desk; before The Shadow could reach it, his enemies were coming through.

THE SHADOW flung an automatic at the first attacker; the heavy weapon hit the side of the fellow's head, felled him, and The Shadow hurled his second gun at the next man. That servant dodged, losing his chance to aim. The Shadow scooped up the revolver that the first man had dropped.

His next move was a quick surprise. Instead of driving for the doorway, The Shadow faded across the room toward a darkened wall. Inspiring foemen aimed for that gloom, riddled it with bullets. They suddenly saw The Shadow elsewhere. He had reversed his dodge to reach the alcove at the depth of the study.

With his free hand, The Shadow grabbed up the chair that stood in the alcove. He made a gesture that looked like a coming fling. Remembering the automatics, the servants dodged before they aimed. At the door, The Shadow saw Shervel flattened against the side of the

little passage that connected with the anteroom.

It wasn't time to think of the treacherous secretary. That would come later when The Shadow could use the bullets in a lone revolver to real advantage. What The Shadow needed was immediate darkness wherein every man would be his foe, and none would know their friends. With such advantage, The Shadow could drive through to safety. He knew the bedlam, the bewilderment that such a stroke could produce among massed enemies.

From the back wall of the alcove, The Shadow gave the light chair a sideward swing. It left his hand, hooked the desk lamp and carried it to the floor. As the lamp crashed, its light was gone. The Shadow's laugh shivered the blackness along with the smash of glass.

The one danger spot was the alcove; if allowed brief seconds, Relf's servants would direct a blind fire there. In providing the darkness, The Shadow had calculated on what would follow. His moves were timed to split seconds, when required. Even while the chair was carrying away the lamp, The Shadow had recoiled to the rear wall, ready for an outward spring.

Through the scattered servants—past Shervel—to the anteroom. That accomplished, The Shadow would have his enemies boxed. There was time to accomplish it. The Shadow considered the deed as done when he started his prompt lunge.

HIS leap was not the sort that he had planned. Somehow, his stride went short. The Shadow's feet did not seem to leave the floor of the alcove. Instead, the floor itself slithered away beneath his tread, slicing into the rear wall.

The mechanism was smooth and rapid. It whipped The Shadow's spring into a plunge. Letting the revolver go, The Shadow grabbed for the floor edge of the room, where he could hear the snarl of foemen. His downward progress was too rapid. The Shadow's hands were inches short.

Guns barked above The Shadow's head as he felt the swallowing darkness in the opened pit. He was lurching into dooming depths, his forward angle the only saving factor. That fall was short, before The Shadow struck the stone wall of the pit itself, but it seemed interminable.

As his shoulder jolted, The Shadow clawed for stone. He gained a grip on rocky projections, but his fingers slipped from the slimy surface. A toe hold saved him. Chance had furnished a stretch of ledge beneath The Shadow's descending foot.

For a prolonged moment, The Shadow steadied; then, the reason for the ledge's existence was explained. A huge stone had loosened from the moldering wall, its very projection proof of its insecurity.

As The Shadow shifted weight, the stone broke free. He jolted downward as it fell. The foothold was completely gone.

The Shadow was not the only person who was conscious of that catastrophe. Above, gunfire had ended, thanks to Shervel's high-pitched voice. A flashlight was glimmering from the very edge of the open pit, where Relf's awed servants gaped downward.

It was Shervel who held the flashlight, motioning the others back as he listened from the brink. He had heard the clatter of The Shadow's slipping form. Shervel counted the three prolonged seconds that elapsed.

A huge splash resounded far down in the blackness. The swash of waves succeeded it; unseen waters were slapping against shallow rocks. The ominous sounds faded, to bring

utter stillness. It was Shervel who supplied the next laugh. Though whiny, nervous, Shervel's chuckle carried ugly glee. To Shervel, that splash from below was final.

It could signify but one result: The finish of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER VI. THE LOST CHASE

WHEN he led the servants out through the anteroom, Shervel explained how he had settled The Shadow. He shone his flashlight on a little recess in the wall of the connecting passage. The servants saw a switch located there.

"I helped Mr. Relf install it," Shervel asserted proudly. "He always invited guests to seat themselves in the alcove. Should he find occasion to dispose of them, a mere signal to me would be enough."

Shervel did not explain why Relf had failed to give such a signal in the case of Kent Allard. It would have been easier than sending the visitor to the Oak Room. If any of them wondered over the matter, they probably came to the conclusion that Relf had decided to discuss Allard's case with Shervel before making a final decision.

Relf's servants, however, were not trained to think. Their master did that for them. Even Shervel had been something of a human automaton until tonight, but the servants were not surprised to hear that he had worked so closely with Relf.

None of that crew connected Allard with The Shadow. They supposed that a body lay in the Oak Room; they reminded Shervel of the fact. The secretary laughed.

"Let it slay there," he told them. Then, harshly: "But there is one person we mustn't forget—Miss Bryand. Find her."

Ruth's capture proved simple. A husky turned a flashlight's beam along the passage to the Oak Room. He spotted the girl darting for a turn. Accompanied by another servant, the fellow bounded after Ruth. Shervel left it to those two, while he ordered the others downstairs.

Ruth was grabbed. As she was being brought along the hall, Shervel heard news from downstairs. A servant had peered from the big front door. Lights were bobbing outside the grounds. Shervel snarled an oath that applied to the deputies.

"They heard the shots!" he exclaimed. "They'll be crowding in here first thing we know. Hurry—get the cars! We've got to cover things so the boat can get away with Mr. Relf."

Servants scurried. Impatiently, Shervel waited until the upstairs pair arrived with Ruth. He nudged his thumb toward Relf's study, then gave a downward gesture. The servants understood. Ruth was to follow The Shadow into the pit.

"Afterward," remarked Shervel significantly, "stay here. Just play dumb. Say that you know nothing. Mr. Relf may want to hear from you later."

With that, Shervel hurried downstairs to board an automobile. Ruth's captors started her toward the study.

IT wasn't three paces before Ruth realized that her murder was intended. The disappearance of The Shadow seemed proof that all the servants were killers. Valiantly, Ruth began a fight; it took the two men to muffle her outcries. In her struggle for escape, she almost freed herself when she tugged her arm from a sleeve of her dress.

The silk sleeve ripped away to remain in a captor's clutch. With a thrust of her bare arm, Ruth reached to the balcony rail; seizing it, she tried to fling herself across, but the second servant stopped her. The loose sleeve became a gag that stifled her. Ripping away its mate, one captor used the second sleeve to bind Ruth's hands behind her.

Kicking, wrenching, Ruth was shoved into the study. One man found a corner lamp, and pulled the cord. The light showed the alcove, its floor closed. Shervel had left it in that condition. When the other servant dragged her toward the alcove, Ruth had no inkling of his next intention.

Her knowledge came when the first man pressed the switch in the anteroom passage.

The floor coasted away before Ruth's wide-eyed gaze. She saw blackness below, realized that it signified a depth of many feet. She could guess what had become of The Shadow.

With desperate effort, Ruth tugged loose from the silk bonds that held her wrists. Clawing frantically, she fought off the man who tried to thrust her over the edge. His pal in crime leered from the doorway, confident that he wasn't needed. Half a minute would settle that struggle, with Ruth the loser.

The girl was bending over the pit. Her husky torturer was breaking the hold that she held upon his arm. He was letting her see the blackness that awaited her as a foretaste of the plunge. But Ruth's strained eyes saw more than motionless darkness.

Out from the pit came living hands, like tentacles of the blackness itself. They gripped the floor edge at Ruth's feet. Up stretched a black-hatted head, followed by cloaked shoulders. Eyes met Ruth's. They were burning eyes— The Shadow's!

His form unnoticed by the watcher at the door, The Shadow propped himself upon the floor edge. He could not wait to emerge farther. Ruth's strength was almost gone. A gloved hand drove upward like a trip hammer. It clamped the forearm of the man who forced Ruth toward the pit.

The fellow felt the menace before he saw it. The grip pulled him down. He tried to wrench from this new clamp that had come from nowhere. He lost his hold on Ruth and she rolled away from the pit. The man at the door stared in the girl's direction. He was wide-eyed when he saw what happened to his pal.

The man at the pit was struggling with a mass of blackness. The Shadow was twisting him toward that edge. The servant was gulping something about fighting a ghost, which he took The Shadow to be.

Even Shervel had not guessed how circumstances had favored The Shadow. The fall of the loosened rock had not paved a path to doom. Instead, it had left a large hole in the pit wall, wherein The Shadow had managed to lodge himself.

Shervel had taken the stone's splash for The Shadow's fall. So had the listening servants.

WHEN the second man saw his pal's plight, he hesitated. Suddenly convinced that The Shadow was human, not ghostly, he sprang into the fray. The shock jolted The Shadow toward the pit. He hadn't quite gained the advantage that he needed in order to put up double battle.

Ruth's quick judgment served in that emergency.

Instead of making a futile effort to aid The Shadow's fight. Ruth ran for the doorway. She

tugged away the gag with one hand, while she yanked the switch with the other. She was turning to shout to The Shadow.

He had already seen.

Back to the pit, The Shadow threw himself off balance. He was flung backward by his opponents, much harder than they needed, for he helped their lunge. The floor was sliding toward him from the wall; spread-eagling across the intervening space. The Shadow landed on the solid planks.

Automatically, the incoming floor brought him straight toward the men who had flung him. They were grabbing for the walls beside the alcove in order to save themselves from sprawling into a pit that no longer existed.

The Shadow was on his feet before they rallied. Girding one killer with a cross-armed grip, he rammed the fellow headlong, straight for the other foe. That ended in a long, hard spill, The Shadow topmost of the three.

Plucking a revolver that a pocket had disgorged, The Shadow covered the pair. The gesture was unneeded. Both were too dazed to put up immediate fight. Joining Ruth, The Shadow took the girl out through the anteroom.

There was one detail that The Shadow noticed in departure. The spring panel that covered the control switch went shut of its own accord. The secret of the movable alcove floor was covered. That was why a strange laugh came from The Shadow's lips. He foresaw that the fact would be an asset in the future.

The Shadow had his own automatics, gathered from the study floor. Downstairs, he paused to load them. He and Ruth were at the big front door when the men from the study arrived upon the balcony. The Shadow jabbed back warning shots; a stretching, aiming killer took a neck-breaking dive over the rail. The other grabbed up his clipped comrade's gun and dived for cover. When the man poked his nose into view, The Shadow and Ruth were gone.

OUTSIDE, there was all the commotion that The Shadow expected. Cars had run into trouble at the barricaded gates of the estate. The sheriff and his deputies had forced one machine to the ditch. Its occupants had scattered, but stubbornly refused surrender.

The Shadow put Ruth in the abandoned car. As he took the wheel, he heard shots from the front door of the mansion. The last servant in the house was firing at the flashlights of the deputies. They gave him a return barrage that felled him.

In that hubbub, The Shadow started the car. Its tires gripped and it hoisted from the ditch. Amid yells and frantic shots, The Shadow sped for the open road.

He slowed the car, extinguished the lights as he neared the cliff. Off at an angle, The Shadow saw the coast guard cutter. Its big searchlight was turned toward the land. Like a theater's floodlight, it showed another of Relf's cars taking to a road that led along a bare cliff a quarter mile away.

The car looked toylike at that distance. The spurt of guns formed puny spots of light. There were other tiny tongues of flame. Men set to blockade the road were fighting it out with the car's occupants.

Ruth gave a stifled gasp when she saw the finish.

Bouncing over rocks, the distant car skewed sideways. It tilted at the bay edge. Overturning,

the car flung tiny figures ahead of it to the rocky shore below. Its own plunge followed.

The Shadow's eyes were elsewhere.

He saw that the sacrifice of that car and its human load was not a vain one.

Off past the lighthouse isle, a low, dark, rakish ship was clearing for the outer bay. Fading from the trickle of the moonlight, the craft completed its escape unnoticed by the coast guard cutter.

Nothing could be done to halt that flight. The Shadow turned on the headlights of his car, drove along the road at top speed. His own departure was imperative.

Ruth's tenseness ended when she saw the way was clear. The Shadow was outdistancing pursuers, for there were no more cars back at the mansion. Deputies who had chased the first pair of automobiles had cut over to the cliff where one car met disaster.

There was another car ahead, probably with Shervel in it, for the secretary would have valued his own hide too much to make that sacrifice on the rocks. Seeing no sign of the fugitive automobile, The Shadow deduced that it had completed its escape.

Thus the law had lost its chase.

Word would go out that Ferdinand Relf had broken through by land. A search would begin for him throughout Rhode Island. Such search would be futile, based on ignorance.

There would be no mention of the mystery boat that had nosed in from the bay, to make a getaway with an important fugitive from Relf's mansion. Relf's whereabouts would become as great a mystery as that unknown ship itself.

Shervel, a few others perhaps, could tell important facts, but there was little likelihood that they would be captured and made to talk.

Aside from those few men of crime, one being only could furnish tangible evidence regarding the disappearance of Ferdinand Relf.

That person was The Shadow.

## **CHAPTER VII. IN SOUTH STATION**

ALONG the road to Providence, The Shadow made a detour. It brought him to an isolated byway, where a coupe waited. Harry Vincent was in the coupe. The Shadow transferred Ruth to the other car.

From here on they would be questioned. There was little chance that Ruth would be recognized, for no one knew that she had been in the old mansion. Her dress, however, showed that the sleeves had been ripped away, so Ruth accepted the light overcoat that Harry had with him.

Thrown across her shoulders, the coat concealed all evidence of her struggle with Relf's servants.

Harry drove toward Providence. The Shadow followed in the car that he had appropriated back at the mansion. Ruth realized that he was watching whatever happened to the coupe. If Harry should be stopped by State police, The Shadow would not follow into the trap with his telltale car.

Harry stopped at a little store to put in a call to Providence. After that, The Shadow no longer followed. Harry told Ruth that he had arranged for another car to come out from the Rhode Island capital. The Shadow would use it for the remainder of his journey.

What amazed Ruth as they rode along was the fact that Harry understood her dilemma. That meant definitely that The Shadow had expected to find her at the mansion; and had made plans for her afterward. She was to keep up the supposition that she was abroad; meanwhile, she was to stay with certain friends who lived near Boston.

Thereby, Ruth would be safe. Moreover, she would be available in case The Shadow needed her. Evidently The Shadow had planned a campaign of his own to offset moves from Ferdinand Relf. That thought gave Ruth both thrills and shudders.

She knew that Relf was evil, and she was elated because The Shadow intended to oppose him. Nevertheless, Ruth remembered Relf with horror. Though her own security seemed certain, she feared for others - and always would, until convinced that Relf was no longer at large.

The coupe was stopped before it reached Providence. Harry talked with the police, and was allowed to pass. But he did not take the shortest route to Massachusetts. Instead of turning east from Providence, Harry drove north to Blackstone.

From there he took a paved highway to Framingham, twenty miles from Boston, where Ruth's friends lived.

MEANWHILE, another car was speeding along the coastal highway, following Route No. 1 straight in to Boston. The car was a powerful, imported roadster, its driver a personage who bore an elusive resemblance to Kent Allard.

He had a hawkish expression, a firm-featured face. But his manner differed from Allard's, as did his expressions. His pose was idle, leisurely, rather than stolid.

The Shadow had adopted the guise of Lamont Cranston, a part which he often played. Cranston was known as a millionaire globe-trotter who usually preferred New York when in America. It was not remarkable, however, that Cranston should be making a trip to Boston, for he had many friends there. None, it happened, had ever identified Allard as Cranston.

The swift car clipped off the miles into Boston, where The Shadow picked a course that finally brought him beneath the superstructure of the elevated. He was on Atlantic Avenue; to his right loomed the blocky bulk of the South Station. Parking his car behind a row of taxicabs, The Shadow alighted.

He was approaching a long passage into the terminal when a man came hurrying from it. With a darting look back over his shoulder, the fellow boarded the front cab in the line. The street lights gave The Shadow a view of the man's face.

The arrival was Shervel.

Relf's secretary was luckier than he supposed. His cab was off to a quick start, swinging left just as a traffic fight changed. The Shadow had no opportunity to follow him, either in the roadster or another taxi.

The best that The Shadow could do was check the cab's number as it swung west on Summer Street. Traffic swallowed the cab, and its destination was guesswork even for The Shadow. Once started on that trip, Shervel might be heading to any of a hundred places in the maze of streets that formed downtown Boston.



The Shadow decided to learn the reason for Shervel's precipitous exit from South Station. He entered the big terminal, with its long line of kiosks that served as magazine stands and other types of shops.

There was a cluster of persons near the central information stand, where a lighted clock was topped by a garish dome of luminous purple capped with red. There was another crowd near a train gate, but people were detaching themselves from the group.

Comparing his watch with the station clock, The Shadow saw that his time was right. He noted, also, that he was correct on another supposition. The Comet, speedy streamlined train from Providence, had arrived a minute ahead of schedule.

Shervel must have been the first person off that train. He had lost no time in coming through the train gate.

THE SHADOW approached to watch proceedings. Everyone who passed was under the scrutiny of three men, one of whom The Shadow recognized. He was a short-built man. Swarthy of complexion, with a heavy, dark mustache. The watcher was Vic Marquette, of the F.B.I.

Vic and his companions were looking for Ferdinand Relf. Seeing no one who looked like the financial wizard, Marquette strode through the train gate to the track where the Comet stood. He went the whole length of the double-end streamliner, peering through its windows to make sure that all passengers had left it.

The Shadow had been watching for any of Relf's servants, but none were in sight. Probably few had escaped with Shervel, and none of them had come along to Boston. Strolling over to the train gate, The Shadow lighted a cigarette in Cranston's leisurely style. He was puffing his smoke when Marquette arrived.

"Mr. Cranston!" Marquette's jaw dropped in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"Taking the Owl for New York," replied The Shadow in Cranston's leisurely style. "Tell me—what is the trouble?"

"Plenty," confided Marquette. "You've heard of Ferdinand Relf, the financial wizard? Well, he's the guy we're looking for."

"It was my understanding"—Cranston's lips formed the faintest of smiles—"that Relf's affairs never reached the point where they could come under government investigation."

Marquette's expression became grim.

"You've about sized it," he admitted. "But this Boston shipping scandal has given us a wedge. Enough to bring in Relf as a witness. Certain persons— three, in fact—claim that Relf tried to entangle them in his affairs.

"He'll deny it, of course. They can never prove a case against him, but there's one of those three who is a bad egg in his own right. What we intend to do is question Relf about him. Maybe you've heard of the person I mean. His name is Nick Langion."

That name flashed home to The Shadow. Nick Langion was a notorious Boston racketeer, a chronic trouble-maker. He had the reputation of a big shot— one-time king of the numbers racket.

Marquette had gone quite far in mentioning Langion's name. He felt free to do so with

Cranston, who had Washington connections. But he balked when it came to naming others.

"They're different from Langion," stated Marquette. "Men of good reputation, the sort that Relf always uses for goats. I can't state who they are—not even to you, Mr. Cranston -"

Vic stopped abruptly. Though he didn't realize it, he was about to bring those very names into discussion. A tall, heavy man had approached. His square-jawed face registered alarm. It was an expression that looked out of place, considering the man's keen eyes and forceful forehead.

"Hello, Mr. Danner"—Marquette was shaking hands as he spoke— "you've heard about Relf?"

Danner's alarm increased. His question was hollow.

"You mean that Relf has left Rhode Island?"

"That's it," replied Marquette. "We tried to reach you at your apartment, but learned that you had gone to the theater. How did you happen to come here?"

The big man could not manage a reply. His lips were moving, but they failed to form words. The Shadow recognized the reason for the man's terror. Danner was another of the three.

JAMES DANNER, Midwest promoter, had lately moved to Boston. The Shadow had heard of him, but had not connected Danner with Relf's schemes. Marquette had referred to a shipping scandal. The Shadow knew the name of the company it concerned—the Inter-Coastal Lines, but the officers had been unimportant persons.

Obviously James Danner was the promoter who had built up the newly formed Inter-Coastal Lines.

At last, words came to Danner. With them, he named the last man of the trio.

"You've notified Tilmot?" he questioned. "Henry Tilmot—the banker?"

Marquette nodded.

"How did Tilmot take the news?" demanded Danner. "About Relf?"

"He didn't like it," admitted Marquette. "But there's no reason to worry, Mr. Danner. You both did your duty. You pulled the shipping company out of its hole. Tilmot spiked those fake loans that Relf wanted to put over.

"We didn't keep him in Rhode Island, but his game here is finished. He can't threaten you and Tilmot, because the only fellow he could do it through is Nick Langion. And it happens"—Marquette seemed highly pleased—"that Nick has already squealed on Relf. That leaves Relf helpless."

Danner nodded, but he seemed unconvinced. He looked at the clock above the information booth.

"I'm leaving for Washington," he said, weakly, "on the Federal. I'd better be getting aboard the train—to get some sleep -"

Danner paused. His eyes were shifting, as if he expected to see Ferdinand Relf bob from a train gate. He muttered a good-night, started to turn away.

"One question," put Marquette. "We asked Tilmot if he could describe anyone who worked for Relf. He said he couldn't. But we know that Relf had a secretary."

"The man who came to see me was named Shervel," returned Danner. "A sly-looking fellow; rather frail. Dull-faced, but quick in step. He has a shrewd way about him, but he's rather furtive—yes, that describes him. Furtive."

Marquette snapped his fingers.

"The first man off the train!" he recalled. "I'm going out to see if the cab starter spotted him."

Marquette took the long trail to the station exit. Danner watched him, then made a hurried departure of his own. He had scarcely noticed Cranston, for Marquette had not introduced his friend, hence the shipping promoter did not realize that Cranston had him under observation.

Instead of turning toward the gate that announced the Federal, Danner strode for the waiting room. Strolling after him, The Shadow saw the promoter leave by the Summer Street doorway and hurriedly climb into a cab. Danner was excited when he spoke to the cab driver.

There was no doubt in The Shadow's mind that Danner had planned to go to Washington, for the promoter had a suitcase with him. The facts showed that Danner preferred to remain in Boston, to keep his exact whereabouts unknown, having learned that Relf was no longer isolated.

What applied to James Danner, also concerned Henry Tilmot. Like the promoter, the banker could also fear Relf's return to Boston. Having viewed Danner, The Shadow could picture Tilmot in a similar state.

Those two, sought by Relf, would receive The Shadow's close attention; but there was another man, one belonging to a totally different class, who also needed observation.

The Shadow was considering the case of Nick Langion. He intended to probe deeply into the affairs of that local racketeer.

## **CHAPTER VIII. THREE MEN GATHER**

DUSK had come to Boston Common. Across the darkened stretches of green, the sun's last rays tinged the high roof of a proud greystone residence that fronted on Beacon Street. This house was one that appeared modern, though old. It was the home of Henry Tilmot.

A taxi wheeled past the banker's house, stopped some twenty yards beyond. From it stepped a tall man who tried to disguise his height by a stoop. He hurried up Tilmot's steps, rapped at a big iron knocker. The door opened to admit him.

Shortly afterward, a craning servant again opened the door, took a two-way look along Beacon Street. Satisfied that no one had followed the visitor, the servant retired.

Darkness detached itself from gloom that fringed the Common. A figure crossed the street, picking obscure stretches to reach those same steps.

Oddly, the new arrival managed to blot himself against Tilmot's door in a fashion that seemed ghostly.

A gloved hand worked the knocker with slow, short jabs that had a muffled stroke. Those

sounds quivered through the door, to carry a low thump to listeners. They were like echoes, those knocks—the sort that would puzzle a person beyond the door.

The black figure faded, slid downward beside the stone steps just as the door opened. The servant was peering out again, his long face puzzled. He descended the steps, glanced along the sidewalk. The sun had fully set and the deep dusk was elusive. The servant stared across toward the Common.

That was when the black-clad figure reappeared. It lifted itself up beside the steps, glided through the open front door. The fleeting form was gone before the servant turned about and went back into the house.

By that time, The Shadow was shielded by the gloom of a curved staircase that led up to the second floor. He waited until the servant had gone, then continued his upward progress.

There was a front hallway on the second floor, with a window that opened on Beacon Street. A servant was pacing back and forth. Temporarily, The Shadow was forced to choose the spot near the window. Corners were deep on each side of the opening. The Shadow used one for concealment.

There was a loud rap from below; some new visitor at the front door, pounding hard and impatiently. The upstairs servant halted, looking downward. The Shadow side-stepped in order to gaze from the window.

A BIG, oversize limousine had halted in front of the house. The glow from the street lights gave a good chance to observe it. That car was bulky because it was armor-plated. Only one man in Boston had need for such a vehicle: Nick Langion.

It wasn't the racketeer who had knocked for admittance. He had sent some lieutenant to perform that task. A couple of others had stepped from the heavy car. They were bodyguards, ready to protect Nick's path up the front steps.

The front door must have opened, for the racketeer stepped warily from his car, then hurried into the house. Soon his footsteps sounded on the stairway. The servant conducted him to a room near the rear of the hall.

Simultaneously, The Shadow moved from cover. He was visible in the hallway light, had either Nick or Tilmot's servant turned to see him. They happened to be otherwise engaged. The servant was ushering Nick into a room. The Shadow passed while they were in the doorway.

The next door was The Shadow's goal. Silently he opened it, found exactly what he wanted. This rear room was a narrow one, scarcely more than a storeroom, but it had a connecting door to Tilmot's study.

Just past the connecting door was a window with a low roof beneath it. The window offered an excellent exit should The Shadow need it. The connecting door was locked, but not difficult. The Shadow unlocked it with a skeleton key that failed to give a click. Inching the door open, he peered into the study.

Henry Tilmot was a thin-faced, gray-haired man whose expression showed weariness. He was stooped over a desk. His hands were frail and quivery. He was a man who had some taste for simplicity, for although the downstairs furnishings were elaborate, the study was done in severe style. The desk was plain mahogany, square-edged. Chairs were straight-backed and uncomfortable.

Opposite Tilmot was the man who had first entered. The Shadow had recognized him on the street. That visitor was James Danner, and his nervousness had increased overnight. Danner's rumpled clothes looked as if he had slept in them. His broad face and square chin were stubby with a growth of beard.

It was Nick Langion who finally drew The Shadow's gaze.

The racketeer had a long, tapering face; its hollow cheeks were a nearly olive hue. He was of middle height, but fairly heavy in proportion. His teeth showed long and yellow when he smiled. The curl of his lips was not pleasant. Langion's eyes had a flash, but they were restless.

He was smooth-voiced, but seemed to force his words; at times, he stroked stubby fingers through his oily, blackish hair. Danner and Tilmot were listening to Langion when The Shadow first heard their conversation.

"Glad you wanted me to come here, Mr. Tilmot." Nick's purr had a sarcastic touch. "Of course, I don't suppose you would have invited me if I hadn't suggested it. But since we're all friends, we can forget it."

Pompously, Tilmot adjusted a pair of pince-nez spectacles, to glare at the racketeer.

"We are not friends," snapped Tilmot crisply. "We are merely persons who are confronted by a common difficulty. If you hold the impression, Langion, that my accession to your request was an invitation, it is time that I corrected it -"

"Please!" The interjection came hoarsely from Danner. He had leaned forward, was clutching the edge of the desk. "Let me do the talking, Tilmot! We agreed upon it."

Tilmot shrugged, spread his hands as he leaned back in his chair.

"My position is this," stated Danner to Langion. "I was invited to organize and promote the Inter-Coastal Lines, to receive a fair proportion of the stock as my share. I came to Boston, found that certain ships could be acquired at low cost. Rather than delay, I put a half million into the enterprise."

"Of your own money?" questioned Langion, his tone interested.

"Certainly," insisted Danner. "Then more ships were offered. I had to promote stock rapidly. A man named Shervel called on me. He spoke of raising funds; but to hold control, I needed to raise cash of my own from investors in the Middle West. Then came this Relf trouble. Shervel disappeared along with him. I connected the two."

Langion nodded.

"You were lucky," he said with a grin. "Relf would have taken the whole thing away from you. Did you ever meet Relf?"

"No," returned Danner. "Only Shervel."

"I met neither," put in Tilmot. "I was asked to provide a million dollar loan, with Inter-Coastal stock as security. I actually had arranged the matter of the funds, when I suspected that Relf was behind it. The money would have gone to him, not to Inter-Coastal."

Nick Langion looked past Tilmot to a big safe at the wall. His gaze shifted to Tilmot, then to Danner.

"I've met Relf," boasted Nick. "He wanted me to do the strong-arm work. That's how he intended to put Inter-Coastal on the rocks. Sabotage aboard those boats; mutiny among the crews. Your stock would have gone down to nothing, Danner.

"It would have been good-by to your million, Tilmot"—Nick looked toward the banker—"and any other loans that came Relf's way. More loans would have been a cinch, once other bankers knew that you were in it."

LANGION'S admission of his crooked part brought a glare from Tilmot. Danner assured the banker that Nick was all right. He had not taken Relf's offer. The statement pleased Langion. His tone became affable.

"Relf has it in for us," he declared. "I'll tell you something about Relf. He won't stop at murder. I know the Feds say it's bunk, but they're cuckoo. Both of you know it, and you're scared, Danner. As for you, Tilmot"—Nick looked at the banker—"you ought to be."

"I am guarded by my servants."

"What could they do if Relf shot up the place? There was plenty of fireworks in Rhode Island, wasn't there? Last night, when Relf got away?"

"But Relf was not concerned in it."

"He never is," sneered Langion. "That's why the Feds think it's hokum, this talk of Relf being a killer. But they're a million miles wide. Listen— I've got a proposition."

Langion leaned half across Tilmot's desk, pointed to the door from which The Shadow peered. The racketeer did not notice that the door was slightly ajar.

"Take that door, for instance," said Nick. "Some guy could poke a gat through there and drop you in a hurry, Tilmot. But it couldn't be done if this place was lined with armor plate, like my joint."

Tilmot's eyes showed sudden interest. Langion swung to Danner.

"The same way with your apartment," he insisted. "I could rig it into a steel box. You could sit there tight, until the goods are pinned on Relf."

Danner looked at Tilmot, who nodded his approval. It was Danner who asked hoarsely:

"How much would it cost?"

"Not a cent," returned Langion smoothly. Then: "You have guys with you that you can trust, haven't you?"

"Two Filipinos," returned Danner. "With me for years."

"Two are enough," purred Langion. Then to Tilmot: "How many flunkies do you have?"

"Five," replied the banker. "All trustworthy."

"Keep three," decided Langion. "Lend me the other two. I'll rig this joint as good as mine; and Danner's too, even if the two together cost me fifteen grand."

It was Tilmot who caught the reason for the proposition.

"I understand," declared the banker, dryly. "With all the men at your disposal—some of them

most dangerous, I understand—you have none that you can trust."

"Not one," admitted Langion, "if Relf tries to reach them. He could buy out any mug in my outfit. I've got to have some guys that have never been in any racket. It's the only way."

Nick watched Tilmot narrowly, then quizzed:

"Is it a deal?"

Tilmot hesitated. Danner went frantic. It was the promoter's plea that finally decided Tilmot. He gave a nod. Langion arose.

"Get with the Fed, to-night," advised Nick. "Both of you. Hold a long conference. I'll have the boys in here and at Danner's place, rigging those steel walls. After that—no worry."

The Shadow was gone by the time a servant came to usher Langion downstairs. The Shadow's exit was the window. He was gliding from a space beside the gray house when Langion reached his armored car. Keeping to the blackness of adjacent building fronts, The Shadow arrived at a parked coupe.

When the big limousine pulled away with Nick Langion as passenger, The Shadow wheeled out from the curb. He followed the route that the big car took, but as they rolled along a twisty course, The Shadow became interested in an object other than Nick's moving fortress.

The Shadow was watching the mirror above his windshield. He noted that a low-built sedan had taken up the trail. Whether the sedan was tailing Nick's limousine or The Shadow's coupe, was a question that would soon be decided.

In either event, The Shadow expected battle. His low laugh betokened his readiness for coming trouble.

## **CHAPTER IX. THE BLIND TRAP**

NICK LANGION had talked sound sense to Danner and Tilmot. Nick had inside facts regarding Ferdinand Relf that the law did not possess. If Relf had the habit of murdering persons who had irked him, Nick was the man who would know it.

According to their own testimony, neither Danner nor Tilmot had actually profited through Relf's temporary banishment. Danner had merely managed to preserve his legitimate control of Inter-Coastal Lines; while Tilmot had staved off the loss of a million dollar loan that would never have been repaid.

Nevertheless, Relf had expected to acquire the shipping interests and the cash. He had counted upon matters remaining at a standstill during his absence from Boston. Danner and Tilmot had altered the circumstances, thereby ruining Relf's schemes.

It was possible—in fact, highly probable—that both had received veiled threats from Relf. The Shadow had definitely learned, from Ruth, that Relf intended to even scores with three persons. Danner, Tilmot and Langion were the logical three.

From Vic Marquette, The Shadow had gained the law's viewpoint.

A few million dollars were nothing to Relf. Why therefore, should he bother Danner and Tilmot?

Nick Langion was a different case, but the law regarded him as able to take care of himself.

The law would protect Danner and Tilmot. Langion, too, if any of them demanded it. But such protection would leave flaws, because the law would regard it as unnecessary. Even the arrest of Relf couldn't help. Neither the Boston police nor the Massachusetts authorities had any charge against Relf. The most that the Federal agents could do was question him, and they had no proof that Relf's financial schemes involved a swindle.

Reef was free, and his ways were cunning. He might overstep himself if he indulged in murder. But that wouldn't help Danner and Tilmot— nor Langion— after they were victims.

Danner and Tilmot possessed the lawful privilege of turning their homes into castles. Since Nick Langion had long ago taken advantage of that right, they had accepted his expert services.

Considering all those angles, The Shadow was forming certain conclusions that fitted with facts he already knew. All the while he was keeping Langion's limousine in sight, and also spotting the sedan that followed his own car.

The limousine had taken a roundabout course, apparently for the purpose of discovering if trailers followed it. The Shadow offset observation by keeping under cover of occasional traffic, but in so doing, he informed the sedan that he was on Nick's trail. That could not be avoided.

ROLLING along a dark side street, the limousine came to a more important thoroughfare: Washington Street. Instead of crossing, it turned into Washington Street and approached the glare of bright lights. Poking its way through traffic, the wheeled fortress passed the brilliant fronts of theaters.

Policemen and pedestrians recognized the famous car; they saw the olive face of Nick Langion grinning from the window. Every time the limousine halted near a theater marquee or a wide store front, little throngs began to form. When the car started again, Nick waved his hand like some celebrated visitor touring the city.

That ended when the limousine suddenly lumbered into a more rapid speed, took a sharp turn right into a deep but narrow alleyway. The Shadow's coupe swung the same corner. The alley was black except at the inner end. There, the flicker of a red neon sign announced the name: "Caravan Club."

Nick Langion owned that night club. Above its broad first floor were gloomy windows fitted with steel shutters. They marked the location of Nick's stronghold. The limousine swung to the left, pulled up in front of a door that led to the second floor.

The turn that the big car took indicated that another alley ran from this one. The Shadow pushed the coupe forward, swung left past Nick's car. He saw the end of the side alley; it was a blind one, but it ended in the sliding door of a garage.

That door was open, and The Shadow could see clear through the garage to another street. His best plan was to drive through the garage, then circle back to Washington Street, letting Nick wonder who he was.

Things happened to change all that, and they started in a hurry.

A sudden glare bathed the alley. It came from a searchlight moving inward. The sedan had swung into the outer alley. Its big light showed Nick Langion stepping from the armored car, on his way toward the door beside the Caravan Club.

Nick cheated death with skillful care. Instead of reaching for the doorway, he dived back into



his big car and slammed the door just as a machine gun began its rat-tat-tat. One of Nick's bodyguards was flattened by the barrage; the bullets bounced his dead form all over the sidewalk.

The others, though, were either through the doorway or safe with Nick. The hail that hit the armored limousine was utterly harmless.

Revolvers began to answer from the windows of the Caravan Club. The windows were fitted with loopholes. Nick Langion had plenty of henchmen on the premises; they were putting the sedan gang on the spot. But the balked assassins had already picked their way out.

The sedan whipped left, took up The Shadow's plan of driving through the open doors of the garage.

SPEEDING through the alleyway door, The Shadow skewed his car to the right. It was a timely move, for the sedan started a new outpour with its machine gun just as The Shadow wheeled from view. The gunners hadn't forgotten the coupe that they had trailed. They wanted to get rid of it.

They had missed, and The Shadow awaited them. That wasn't all. As he swung from the door of the coupe, The Shadow heard a clashy, grinding sound.

The big street door of the garage was shutting of its own accord; it came to a hard-slammed stop just as The Shadow noticed it!

The answer came instantly to The Shadow.

Nick Langion owned this garage. It was where he kept the armored limousine. There was a plate set at the alley door, that caused the street entrance to shut the moment that an unwanted car drove in from the alley.

Someone in the garage had heard the gunfire and had promptly yanked a switch. The Shadow's car, first into the garage, had set off the mechanism.

There were yells from the sedan as it roared into the garage. Its crew saw that their path was blocked. They tried to turn about before someone closed the alley door to fully trap them; but the rear door wasn't scheduled to go shut.

More guns were speaking from near the Caravan Club. If the sedan's crew wanted to run that gantlet, they were welcome.

Forgetting their machine gun, the thugs pulled revolvers. They were shouting among themselves as they spread to the rear walls of the garage.

"C'mon! Make a run for it. Those mugs out there are yellow-bellies -"

"Sure—the boobs that work in the club. They ain't got guts enough to even come after us."

There was a different reason why the personnel of the Caravan Club was merely keeping up a distant, haphazard fire. The explanation was voiced suddenly by one of the gang from the sedan when the fellow peered into the alley.

"Cripes!" he snarled. "The bulls!"

Staged close to the center of Boston, that attempt to assassinate Nick Langion had brought police in plenty. The racketeer had wisely kept his own men back, to let the law handle it.

Edging from beside the coupe, The Shadow could see others advancing along the alley, choosing sheltered spots as they came. Their guns were talking louder and louder as more police arrived.

"The typewriter!" shouted a crook. "We'll clean that alley!"

The five scrambled for the sedan and hauled the machine gun from its sheltered side. Four set it up, while one man, crouched behind the sedan's steering wheel, prepared to remove the car from line of fire.

Nearly a score of police were centering in the alley, encouraged by the halt of the gunfire from the garage. They were awaiting the order to charge; after that, they expected to round up scattered hoodlums in the garage itself.

As the sedan shoved away, police raised a shout. They didn't guess what was planned for them. Once the "typewriter" began its clatter, the alley would become a shambles of uniformed officers.

The crooks at the machine gun heard the shout, but it was not the sound that startled them. From a spot only a dozen feet away, they caught the chill challenge of a mocking laugh; a fierce challenge that identified its author.

"The Shadow!"

TWO thugs turned, hurrying their revolver aim as the other pair tried to put the machine gun into operation. The speed of The Shadow was the only human power that could stop those separate efforts. He was driving forward as he stabbed a shot to the heart of the nearest thug. With the recoil, his arm shifted; his finger triggered another bullet that dropped the second foe.

While two unfired revolvers were hitting the concrete floor, The Shadow surged upon the pair at the machine gun. A sledged blow from an automatic staggered one hoodlum; the other dodged, making a scramble away from the machine gun.

He was pulling a revolver. So was the fifth thug, who jumped from the wheel of the sedan. In their frenzy they forgot the law's invasion. Police revolvers roared. The machine-gunner took a whirl like a toy top. The thug from the car went staggering toward a deep corner of the garage.

The Shadow was heading toward the same cover. He saw the staggering crook's objective—the open door of a big elevator that hoisted cars to upper floors. As the wounded rowdy sprawled panting on the elevator floor, The Shadow joined him. Closing the heavy door, The Shadow started the elevator upward just as police poured into the garage.

Four crooks were dead; the fifth of the band was dying at The Shadow's feet. Moments remained, though, in which the hoodlum could speak. Stooping close to the dying man's ear, The Shadow demanded, in a cold, low-toned rasp:

"Who told you to rub out Nick Langion?"

Glazed eyes showed sullenly from an ugly face. They were stubborn, even though they met The Shadow's burning gaze. The Shadow delivered a significant laugh. He remembered what Nick had said about not trusting his own mobs. It was a good gamble, to sound out this dying crook.

"You worked for Nick," accused The Shadow. "But you sold out on him. Somebody talked

you into double-crossing Nick. Maybe the same fellow double-crossed you."

The words had logic, for they seemed backed by knowledge, not guesswork. Dying eyes showed a venomous flash; blood-flecked lips phrased the words:

"Maybe—maybe he did -"

"And his, name -"

"It's—Shervel. He had dough—plenty of it—that some big shot handed him -"

The crook slumped. He tried to mouth a name that sounded much like Relf. He heard the query that The Shadow put, asking where Shervel could be found. The thug attempted to answer, but failed. His hoarse gasp was accompanied by a death rattle.

From the elevator, The Shadow reached the darkness of a low roof. He had left the blind trap wherein double-crossers had met doom. His laugh was subdued in the night air, but its tone was sinister.

The thrust against Nick Langion was but the first. Others would be due; it would be The Shadow's task to meet them. Behind them all would lurk vague, unproven testimony, attributing them to the genius of a master brain.

The name involved—by word, but not by evidence—would be that of Ferdinand Relf.

## **CHAPTER X. THE CLUE FROM THE PAST**

EARLY the next evening, Harry Vincent stopped in the drugstore at the corner of Tremont and Boylston. While waiting to buy a pack of cigarettes, Harry looked at a newspaper that he had purchased on the street.

Big headlines still talked of the attempt to assassinate Nick Langion; but the columns didn't contain much real news. Most of the comment concerned Nick's unsavory past, with reference to buried feuds in which the racketeer had participated.

Any of a dozen old enemies might have been responsible for the thrust, but Nick wasn't saying which one.

From Nick's actual comments, he seemed to think that he deserved a medal for leaving the battle to the law. The police did not share that opinion. There had been too many guns around the Caravan Club to suit them. They had ordered the place closed.

There was one subject that Nick had shrugged away when interviewed. Reporters claimed that the murder crew was composed of men who had recently worked for Nick himself; in fact, had been seen in his company. Nick didn't remember anything of the sort.

Naturally he wasn't going to admit that he had ever hired self-proven murderers, even though it was obvious he wouldn't have paid them to kill himself. So the matter rested in the air.

There was mention in a tenth page paragraph, that Nick Langion had been linked with the financial schemes of Ferdinand Relf; but that fact seemed of little importance. To Harry, it proved the very point that he had learned from The Shadow. The law did not class Relf as a murderer. It would take more than an underworld feud to change the law's opinion.

What had become of Ferdinand Relf?

That was a question that perplexed Vic Marquette and the other Feds in Boston, but it didn't interest the newspapers. Relf's enforced stay in Rhode Island had been entirely unofficial. Since it was conceded that he had left Rhode Island, Relf was not regarded as a fugitive from justice.

No one, apparently, was looking for Relf—not even The Shadow.

There was a man in Boston, however, who was actually sought by The Shadow. That man was Shervel. The secretary had been Relf's proxy in more than one shady enterprise. Once located, Shervel could be made to talk. He could tell as much as Relf, and much more easily.

In fact The Shadow held to the conclusion that Relf, when found, would prove to be the sort who would not talk at all. That made Shervel the man to be uncovered.

There were others, though, who might provide valuable information. The Shadow had not forgotten the mystery ship that had put out through the bay. There was a strong chance that it had come to Boston, even though it might have touched elsewhere during its cruise. The Shadow wanted facts about that craft and the men aboard it. Busy with other matters, The Shadow had left much of that investigation to Harry.

AFTER receiving his cigarettes, Harry remained in the cigar store while he smoked one. Noting his watch, he waited until an appointed minute, then entered a telephone booth. He dialed a number; at last a thick voice came across the wire.

"Hello..." The tone was suspicious. "Who's that?"

"My name's Vincent," informed Harry. "Are you Barney Faskin?"

There was a pause, then a grunted admission. After that "Barney's" tone became a hoarse whisper.

"Can't talk to you from here... I'll meet you somewhere, Vincent... You pick the place."

"Larry's Corner. In half an hour."

Finished with that call, Harry put in one to a hotel and asked for Mr. Cranston. He learned that Cranston was not there, so he simply left word that he had called.

Harry entered the near-by subway station and soon arrived at South Station Under, via the Tunnel. He came up to the street, stopped in South Station to make another phone call, only to find that Cranston was still absent. Climbing the elevated steps, Harry took a shuttle train, bound north.

The line ran above Atlantic Avenue, where the harbor wharves lay on the right. At the second station, Harry alighted. On the street, he turned in the direction of India Wharf; but it wasn't long before he turned away from the water front.

The obscure corner of a tiny street showed a dingy building that was a combination eating house and grog shop. The place had another name; but to dock workers it was known as Larry's Corner, in remembrance of a former owner.

The night was murky, with fog filtering in from the harbor. That suited Harry as he picked the side door of Larry's Corner. No one had seen him come here, which fitted with The Shadow's orders. The fewer persons that Harry encountered, the better—with the lone exception of Barney Faskin.

The eating joint was a sprawly place, badly lighted except near the front and along the bar that followed the inner side wall. Harry found a dingy corner; sat there, unnoticed by the few waiters who were conspicuous because of their dirty aprons. The way to get service at this place was by pounding the table, as some other customers were doing. Harry kept quiet, hence remained ignored. Meanwhile, he was picking a better place for conference than this corner. He saw one, an empty room in the back wall.

That settled, Harry kept watch toward the front door.

A stooped man entered, stopped at the bar. He was clad in baggy khaki trousers, wore a frayed jacket and a rough cap. Shaggy, grizzled hair poked from beneath the tilted cap; below, Harry saw eyes that squinted from a pock-marked face.

The newcomer answered the description of Barney Faskin.

THE fellow belonged to a forgotten epoch. He had known his prime in the days when seamen were shanghaied aboard schooners. Barney had plenty of such jobs to his discredit, probably with a few murders on the side.

He had been known to boast of kills that he had made during a cruise with a treasure-hunting expedition, the time when he had wound up with smallpox in Maracaibo. But that had been aboard a foreign ship. Evidence suppressed, Barney ran no risk when he bragged.

Barney had made a come-back during the days of rumrunners. He had made his quota of dirty deals offshore, even shoving counterfeit money to the skipper of European ships that had brought liquor to America. Bill Barney had been something of a has-been even then, and at present looked like a well-frayed wharf rat.

However, Barney still prowled the Boston waterfront. On this occasion, it made him useful to The Shadow. Winnowing through various sources of information, The Shadow had decided that the one man who might know something—and be willing to tell it—was Barney Faskin.

The frizzle-haired man squinted a sharp look beyond the bar. Harry gave a nod. Barney downed a drink. When he started a shamble toward the rear corner, he saw that Harry was gone. That didn't force Barney to strain himself with too many guesses. He also saw the open door of the darkened room.

Once Barney was inside, Harry closed the door. He had found a hanging electric light and switched it on. The grimy bulb threw light upon bare walls with battered window shutters. There was an old table, rough-built but strong, and three clumsy chairs.

Above was a trapdoor, apparently nailed in place, for its corners were streaked with ancient cobwebs. A brief inspection convinced Harry that there would be no interruption from that source.

As preliminary, Harry pulled a wad of bills from his pocket, planked the roll on the table. He was glad that he was in Boston, not in some remote foreign port where murder was a routine. The look that Barney gave to both Harry and the money was proof that if the fellow couldn't earn the cash, he would seek other ways to acquire it.

"SOME dough for you, Barney," informed Harry briskly, "- if you give me the dope I want. About a ship that went out of Boston a few nights ago, and may have come back."

"What kind of a vessel?" demanded Barney.

"Tell me the ones you know about," replied Harry. "We'll get to that afterward."

"Got a pencil and paper?"

Harry supplied them. Barney drew a rough plan of the water front, indicated an obscure, abandoned dock.

"There was a ship used that pier," he told Harry. "She's likely to dock there again if she's needed. She ain't in the harbor right now, but when she does come in, that's where she'll be."

"What kind of a ship?"

"A ghost ship," croaked Barney with a grin. "Leastwise, she came from a fleet of ghost ships."

"An old freighter?"

Barney chuckled scornfully.

"Dockin' there?" he questioned. "Not a chance, matey. This vessel was an old rumrunner. Built for that trade."

The description was the one that Harry wanted. It fitted the ship that The Shadow had observed in the Rhode Island bay. Harry asked Barney what else he knew about the craft.

"I know her name!" Barney was triumphant. "She's the Escapade. What's more, I can tell you where she come from. She was with that bunch of tubs that was bought cheap by Inter-Coastal Lines."

"Inter-Coastal bought the Escapade?"

"Naw. You got it wrong. Whoever peddled them ships to Inter-Coastal, owned the Escapade, too. When they'd sold what they could to Inter-Coastal, they sent the rest to the ghost fleet. The Escapade went along, but she didn't stay there."

"Do you know any of her crew?"

Barney scrawled some names on the piece of paper.

"I ain't sayin' for certain," he declared. "But some of 'em may be aboard her. That's all I can tell you."

Harry pocketed the paper, pushed the money to Barney. The squinty man was stuffing the bills in his pocket when Harry turned out the light. Harry heard Barney move toward the door, then return. He whispered to Harry and shoved the money into the younger man's hand.

"There's a fellow out there"—Barney was hoarse—"lookin' in from the side door. He knows me, because I seen him comin' off the Escapade. He warn't with the crew, though. He was a passenger.

"There's others with him, an' maybe they'll be askin' questions. I'll tell 'em I ain't talked to nobody; an' if they find my pocket empty, they'll believe it. I'll trust you to get the cash to me tomorrow."

In darkness, Barney left the room. Harry approached the door, held it ajar while he listened. He heard Barney shuffling toward the side door, but the clatter of dishes from the front

drowned any conversation that Barney might have had with the man who awaited him.

The next minutes were tense. At last Harry placed his eye to the crack in the door. He saw Barney seated at a table near the side door, with a glass and bottle in front of him. Probably the men had gone; Barney had just stopped for a drink. If so, he would soon be back.

But Barney wasn't coming back.

As Harry watched, the stooped shoulders swayed. Barney was sliding sideways like a drunken man. He slipped from the chair; his cap came off as he struck the floor, to be face upward. Glassy eyes were staring from the pock-marked face, their squint gone forever.

From Barney's chest projected the handle of a knife, an inch of glimmering blade showing beneath.

Barney Faskin had been stabbed to the heart by the passenger from the Escapade. That signified swift murder, delivered personally by Ferdinand Relf.

The killer was gone, but Barney had stated that there were others. Barney was right; Harry saw them. Sweatered men who looked like hired mobbies had come in through the front door. Harry gripped an automatic, and with good reason.

There was one spot toward which the newcomers turned their shifty, suspicious glances.

That spot was the door behind which Harry stood!

## **CHAPTER XI. FOGGED FIGHT**

APPROACHING crooks were speaking to a waiter. Harry heard their growled questions:

"You seen a guy named Barney Faskin?"

The waiter nodded, nudged a thumb toward Harry's door.

"Yeah. He went in there."

"Alone?"

"Sure. I saw him go."

"Anybody waitin' for him?"

The waiter shook his head. He looked around for Barney, but didn't see him. The dead man was sprawled out of sight.

Harry relaxed. He hadn't been noticed; that helped matters. Aside from Harry's present predicament, he knew that The Shadow wanted no one to suspect that Barney had been tapped for information.

Barney couldn't have talked to Relf; nor to any one, except to deny that he had met a person in that back room. The knife thrust had come too soon for Barney to have changed his story.

Harry's temporary elation ended as he heard the toughs confer.

"Let's case the place," suggested one. "Then we'll be sure."

"Yeah," agreed another, "an' all we gotta do is wait to see who shows up. We'll find out who

Barney wanted to talk to."

The pair were coming to the door, and they were backed by others. It meant a fight against big odds. Harry would have to use The Shadow's tactics of getting the start. But he held back for the moment, partly to be ready in surprise, partly in the pitifully slender hope that something would stop that crew before they reached the door. As long as there was any chance that Harry could cover the fact that Barney had talked, The Shadow's agent intended to stay with it.

The last instant arrived when a thug laid his fist upon the door knob. Harry drew back, leveling his gun, expecting the door to whip open.

Instead, there was interruption, the sort which Harry had thought impossible.

A fierce laugh riveted the crooks in the outer room. It pealed, mocking, from the side door of the grog shop. There, above Barney's corpse, stood a new challenger who had somehow managed to penetrate a mesh of outside watchers.

THAT invader was The Shadow.

He had received Harry's message, had correctly guessed his agent's destination. In his black cloak, with slouch hat lowered, The Shadow had come here to make his entrance through the outside fog. Sight of Barney's body told him enough. The Shadow knew that Harry was still in that inner room.

The Shadow's challenge had a double purpose. It defied his enemies, bringing them to battle. It made them think that The Shadow was the person expected by Barney Faskin, thus covering the fact that the dead man had talked.

Instead of being forced to imitate The Shadow's tactics, Harry was treated to a demonstration of his chief's swift measures.

The moment that the crooks turned in his direction, The Shadow opened fire. He was weaving along the rear wall, pumping bullets from guns that spoke alternately with split-second action. With each shot, he picked another opponent, taking no time for accurate aim.

His purpose was not to clip those foemen, but to scatter them, flaying them toward the front of the eating place. Moreover, the quick fire stopped the guns of crooks. Every one of those thugs saw a gun jab in his own direction. The whole lot had a mutual thought: they wanted cover from which to battle back.

There were spurts from enemy revolvers, but they were hasty, inaccurate. Two of the half-dozen thugs were wounded, despite the fact that The Shadow hurried his own fire. That was because The Shadow, even when indifferent regarding targets, had an amazing aim.

There was another purpose behind his method. The Shadow wanted chaos in the place. There were rough-clad customers present, who might decide to aid the thugs if given opportunity. The Shadow ended that chance. The patrons of Larry's Corner saw his aim coming in their direction. They dived under tables, behind doors. A few who did decide to fight, through lack of cover, took up the policy of flinging chairs at the retreating thugs.

They did that to put themselves in right with The Shadow, whose guns covered the area where they were. Thus forcing patrons to become his allies. The Shadow had a momentary respite that he needed.



A surge was coming from the side door. The Shadow directed his fire there. The first of the outside crooks went headlong; the others ducked for shelter. But they were preparing for another charge the moment that the front crew rallied.

In that brief interval, The Shadow chose a new position. He wheeled to the door of the rear room, hissed a low command for Harry to dive back out of sight. Shouldering the door open, The Shadow delivered a weird, shivering laugh like a sardonic challenge for all comers.

It brought temporary hesitation among his foes, then came shouts of triumph.

They had boxed The Shadow, thanks to his own foolish policy. Once he was beyond that door, they could finish him. His ammunition couldn't hold out forever.

The Shadow knew that well enough. While those yells mingled with the echoes of his laugh, he treated the rallying crooks to a well-calculated surprise.

BEHIND the bar, The Shadow had spotted a wall switch, with the bald-headed proprietor near it. The man was too dumbfounded to think of the lights; but it was an easy matter to jog him. Leveling a .45 along the bar, The Shadow fired a single shot.

The proprietor was standing with arms akimbo. That bullet whistled through the space between his ribs and the crook of his outstretched elbow. Why The Shadow had aimed for him, the fellow couldn't guess; but he did what The Shadow wanted.

With a frantic scramble, the proprietor dived in the opposite direction from the side where the bullet had scorched. The wild move brought him to the wall switch. He yanked it. The whole place, with its mixture of fighters, was blacked from view.

With a quick word to Harry, The Shadow sprang out from the door, his agent close at his heels. They met a surge coming from two directions. The Shadow began a slugging battle with his guns. Close against the wall, Harry slashed in similar fashion. Shots were blasting all the while, but they were toward the room that The Shadow and Harry had left.

Flashlights glimmered, showed the room empty. Thugs howled the news that The Shadow had slipped them. Some had already learned it, but they were lying on the floor, felled by the strokes that The Shadow and Harry had given them.

A fierce laugh answered from the blackness. The Shadow opened fire on the men with the flashlights. Some sprawled; others flung away the telltale torches. The Shadow was putting things back to their former state, so that he could begin a new slugfest.

Harry had already caught his cue. His part was to get to the front of the place and out through the door with other customers. The Shadow could fight his own way out; meanwhile, Harry's departure would end the evidence of a meeting with Barney.

Harry started for the front. Something coming at him blocked the blackness. It was a chair, flung for The Shadow. Harry took the missile with his head and shoulders. It floored him, half senseless, at The Shadow's feet.

How The Shadow knew of Harry's plight was something that was to bring Harry much wonderment later. It was another evidence of The Shadow's amazing perceptions. Even in total darkness, the cloaked fighter could sense what happened about him.

Half dropping to the floor, The Shadow caught Harry under the arms, snatched him from beneath trampling feet. Shouldering a path through blundering enemies, The Shadow carried his agent into the only refuge, the back room.

There, The Shadow closed the door and bolted it. Coolly, he turned on the light. Harry stared, half stupefied, when he realized where he was. He could hear shouts from the howling mob that thought they still had The Shadow in their midst.

Noting the heavy shutters of the windows, The Shadow looked up to the ceiling. He decided to attack the trapdoor. He dragged the big table beneath it, put a chair upon the table. Mounting there, he began to jimmy the trapdoor with an automatic.

Muffled shouts took a sudden change. Crooks had again risked flashlights. They had seen their pals sprawled about the floor; but The Shadow was gone.

Someone spied the barred door.

THEIR number swelled, the crooks attacked the wooden door. It quivered under their pounds. Word went outside; others smashed at the shuttered windows.

The Shadow had the trap half jimmied. No reason remained for quiet. He splintered away one edge with a well-placed gunshot. Shoving the trapdoor upward, he left the space open.

Harry was on his feet, clutching the table edge. The Shadow hauled Harry up beside him and hoisted him to the chair. Harry gripped the edges of the trap; The Shadow shoved him through.

The door splintered under the rap of a revolver handle. A thug's face shoved through. Before the fellow could reverse his gun, The Shadow flung the chair at him. While the crook ducked away, The Shadow slashed the hanging light with a gun muzzle. The little room went dark.

A long reach upward, and The Shadow was through the trap just as the shutters cracked open. Revolvers were barking from door and windows, but bullets found only the blank walls. On the floor above, The Shadow was hunting an exit, hurrying Harry with him.

Finding a trapdoor to a roof, The Shadow took his agent there. The damp air had a reviving touch; Harry would soon be able to travel unaided. Up a short climb to another roof, The Shadow found a sheltered spot beside a chimney. He told Harry to lay low, to leave after the battle had ended.

Reversing his route, The Shadow reached a roof edge just as the first of his pursuers appeared. They heard his taunting laugh, saw The Shadow outlined against the dull glow of the city's lights. They didn't realize that The Shadow had chosen that open spot in order to draw them on.

His gunfire was first. Crooks dropped back. When they looked again, The Shadow was gone over the roof edge. Hurrying there, they found that he had worked his way to the sidewalk between the walls of two buildings.

While gunners fired uselessly into the fog, others hurried the word below. Soon the search for The Shadow was spreading through alleyways. Roofs were forgotten. Harry was safe.

The search for The Shadow was not without result; but it worked against the hoodlums. Three of them came upon The Shadow near a street lamp. He whipped into the darkness, fired his reloaded guns from the blanketing fog.

Two of those thugs flattened. The third scurried away, to tell that he had met The Shadow.

There were no other encounters. Rumors of battle had reached the wharves. Big-throated steamship whistles were sounding the alarm. The shrill notes of police whistles answered

them. The Shadow was gone; crooks were in flight.

One pair of fleeing thugs glimpsed The Shadow a few blocks away. He was stepping into a taxi; his form seemed to melt inside the cab. The crooks had a car, and they followed The Shadow's trail. They lost the cab, but they knew its number. They chanced upon it later, stopping at the side entrance of a hotel.

Guns ready, those emboldened thugs pulled up in back of the taxi. Each sprang for a window, shoving their guns inward. Then they halted, to stare at their own ugly faces.

The cab was empty. The thugs took to the night. As they fled, they imagined a sound that was actually a recollection of mirth that they had heard before.

The thick air of the incoming fog seemed to shudder with the ghostly echoes of The Shadow's laugh.

## **CHAPTER XII. THE SHADOW'S APPOINTMENT**

TWO successive days brought little change. The water-front brawl had cut less figure than the attempt on Langion's life. Nothing had developed concerning Ferdinand Relf. Apparently Vic Marquette was expecting the financial wizard to finally make known his presence in Boston. There was no rush to locate him.

Nick Langion and his armored limousine were no longer a common sight. The racketeer was keeping to his stronghold over the deserted Caravan Club. Nick wasn't taking chances, so he said, unless the Boston police were willing to fence off the city's sidewalks with steel barriers.

Nor was Nick fully trusting his own followers. He had two new servants. Vic Marquette saw them when he called at Nick's headquarters. They were the men supplied by Henry Tilmot. Nick explained how he had acquired them.

That was when Marquette first learned that Henry Tilmot and James Danner had both installed steel bulwarks in their residences. Tilmot was safe in his Beacon Street home; Danner had returned to his Cambridge apartment.

Marquette gave that situation some thought; finally, Vic dismissed it. He decided that Tilmot and Danner were merely jittery. That attack on Langion had increased their alarm. But Marquette was not ready to concede that Relf was in back of the attempted assassination. He would not admit that until he learned more about the many enemies who had grudges against Nick Langion.

The Shadow, meanwhile, had called on Tilmot; not as himself, but in the guise of Cranston. The banker had been confined to his room with a severe cold, and could not see the visitor. The room was obviously the newly armored study, even though The Shadow did not view it. His visit, however, paved the way to a future call.

With Danner, The Shadow had better luck. He called the shipping man by telephone, arranged to interview him regarding a purchase of some Inter-Coastal stock. The appointment was scheduled for this evening.

The visit to Danner's promised results. Through it, The Shadow might learn something regarding the Escapade. Danner had probably seen ships other than those he had purchased. By tracing back through former owners, The Shadow might gain stray facts.

The crew members named in Barney's list had so far been impossible to find. They were

with the Escapade, wherever that ship had gone— which left The Shadow with a solitary clue; namely, the dock marked on Barney's crude chart.

ODDLY, there was a clue in The Shadow's own hotel, where he was stopping as Cranston. There, shortly after six o'clock, a bellboy carried some bags out to the street, then headed for the adjoining drugstore.

He was buying some items for a hotel guest, so he said, and while the druggist was making up a prescription the boy went into a telephone booth. As he dialed a number, he pulled a folded slip of paper from his pocket. When a voice answered, the bellboy read a list of a dozen names.

Among those names was that of Lamont Cranston, but the fellow gave it no more emphasis than the others. Then:

"Yeah," said the bellboy. "That's all there are... There were some others, but they checked out... This bunch? Sure, I just went over the list. Most of them are around the hotel... Maybe the others will be coming in soon..."

That telephone call connected with two nights ago, when a pair of thugs had spotted The Shadow's cab near the hotel. That news had been passed. Someone higher up had followed the hunch that The Shadow might be living at the hotel.

The Shadow had been waiting for the master crook to again show his hand. That event was due. But it would not be another thrust at Langion, nor drives at the stronghold of Tilmot and Danner. Those might come later.

For the present, a big brain was thinking of The Shadow.

Had Vic Marquette known that, he might have formed a new opinion of the genius for which Ferdinand Relf was famed.

AT seven o'clock, Lamont Cranston appeared in the hotel lobby. He was just another of the dozen guests on the bellboy's list; a few of them were in the lobby, others in the dining room. The Shadow himself was going in to dinner, when he paused at the cigar stand.

He was lighting a thin cigar when his keen eyes fixed upon a man who had entered the lobby. Not a flicker of recognition came to Cranston's calm face. His eyes did not betray their momentary flash. But The Shadow knew the newcomer well even though he had met him upon but one occasion.

The arrival was Shervel.

Relf's secretary was playing a clever part. He was doing his best to render himself inconspicuous. He had his usual furtive style, and it was specially appropriate on this occasion.

To all appearances Shervel had come from hiding, thinking himself no longer hunted. He had apparently chosen this hotel to eat his first square meal in days.

Shervel went into the dining room. So did Cranston, but he chose a table remote from Shervel's corner. While he ordered dinner, The Shadow secretly penciled a note. When the head waiter came to take the menu, The Shadow handed him the slip of paper.

He wanted the head waiter to call Mr. Vincent at another hotel, to tell him that Mr. Cranston could not join him that evening. That signified that Harry was to go alone to Danner's, where

The Shadow had intended to take him.

Cranston left the dining room before Shervel. He picked up a package at the check room, started for the elevators, then changed his mind. Going out to the street, he hailed a taxi and told the driver to take him to a downtown theater.

That was for the benefit of any spies who might be covering up for Shervel. It was unnecessary, for the crooked bellhop had already gone off duty and was not coming back to his job.

When the cab paused at a traffic light, its occupant quietly opened the door and alighted. Another cabbie was promptly favored with a passenger who told him to drive to the same hotel that Cranston had left. Near there, he received an order to join a parked line and wait.

Shervel came from the hotel, darted quick looks along the street. He showed the same haste that he had displayed outside South Station. Boarding a cab, he rolled away. The Shadow's cab followed. Soon its driver was receiving instructions that amazed him.

THE SHADOW used Cranston's tone in ordering the driver to pass Shervel's cab. But The Shadow was no longer Cranston. He was cloaked in black garb that he had taken from the package. His cab looked empty when it went by Shervel's.

Ordering a slower speed, The Shadow kept lookout through the rear window. He saw when Shervel's cab turned. He gave the driver new directions. Twisting through another street, the cab again came in back of the one that it had originally followed. The Shadow's cabbie began to catch the idea.

He'd carried a local detective, once, who had ordered him to follow a cab ahead; but the dick hadn't been smart enough to trail a cab by going ahead of it.

The Shadow repeated the same tactics later. If Shervel thought himself trailed at first, he had forgotten the idea when he reached his destination, a dingy, brick-fronted house in the North End.

The place looked unoccupied, but Shervel entered it. The Shadow's cab had stopped back at another corner; its driver pulled away, fondling a five-dollar bill. He hadn't even looked to see his passenger alight. But he would not have seen him had he tried.

The Shadow entered the old house by a ground-floor window. Picking his way through empty rooms, he reached a stairway to the second floor. He heard a stir from a front room. Peering from the darkened hall, The Shadow could see Shervel's outline against a front window. The fellow was staring toward the street, to see if any one had followed him.

Soon, Shervel crept along the hall. The Shadow drew back to let him pass. Darting quickly into a rear room, Shervel closed the door behind him. The Shadow could hear its bolt slide shut. Approaching, The Shadow listened. No sounds came from within for several minutes.

Then, stealthily, the bolt was drawn back.

The Shadow regretted later that he did not make a sudden entry at that moment. It seemed that Shervel must have been listening at the door; that he had satisfied himself that all was well. Therefore, The Shadow's policy was to let the fellow's nerves steady further before stepping in to confront him.

The safer Shervel felt, the greater the surprise would be. There was one flaw to that theory. Shervel's nerves were no longer a matter of moment, as The Shadow was soon to learn.

Carefully, The Shadow turned the doorknob. He had allowed a full two minutes since the bolt had been pulled. He noted a jerk to the knob, the sort that might come if it were fixed with all alarm. But The Shadow had the door open a few seconds later, and neither saw nor heard anything to indicate that his entry had been detected.

THE room was pitch-black, without any fringe of light from window shades. That betokened tight shutters; natural enough, since this was Shervel's hideout. Moving through the room, The Shadow listened for any sounds of Shervel's presence, but heard none.

Sensing an open doorway at the left, The Shadow crept toward it, for it indicated an adjoining room where Shervel might be. The room was a small one; its air seemed cramped. It was as black as the other, and it lacked all sound. Stooped, The Shadow felt for furniture. His fingers touched cloth.

An instant's probe told The Shadow that the object was a man's shoulder. He flicked a tiny flashlight. The beam fell full upon a face. It was a drab visage with bulging eyes, mouth open in a fishlike gape.

The dead man was Shervel!

It was murder, of the sort that had missed The Shadow, but had later disposed of Barney Faskin. The glide of The Shadow's flashlight revealed the cause that had produced this rapid, silent death.

A knife was driven hilt-deep in Shervel's puny chest.

There, in the darkness, The Shadow recognized the reason for Shervel's death. The man—like others associated with Relf—had been duped.

Tonight Shervel had been sent as a decoy to bring The Shadow here. The Shadow's actual disguise had not been penetrated, but a good guess had been made as to his hotel. Shervel had accepted the job, probably because he believed The Shadow dead and considered that he was to lure an impostor who could not possibly be as dangerous as The Shadow.

In return for his service, Shervel had been slain by a chief who no longer considered him useful. The murderer had lurked here, awaiting Shervel's return. He—not Shervel—had slid back the bolt of the door.

The Shadow rapidly connected events.

Shervel had supposed, correctly, that he was leading The Shadow into a trap. But he had been in error, thinking that the snare lay somewhere on the way to this house.

Shervel's murderer, having finished the secretary, had deliberately drawn the bolt so that The Shadow could enter.

The doorknob had given a signal, but it had been flashed elsewhere to a spot where other men were ready.

These facts gave one answer. This hide-out was the trap that Shervel had been told about. He had never suspected that it would be fitted here during his absence.

In canceling his appointment with Danner, to make one with Shervel, The Shadow had stepped into a mesh. If all went as a master brain had planned it, The Shadow's appointment would be kept with death!

## CHAPTER XIII. THE WAY OUT

THE SHADOW wasted none of the few moments that remained. He knew that disaster threatened; that it would come through massed attack. This place had been trapped during Shervel's absence; but preparations could not have been elaborate, otherwise Shervel would have suspected them himself.

There was one avenue of entry—the door from the hallway, that The Shadow had left open. Opponents could not be close, for The Shadow would have heard them. His course was to be away from here before invaders boxed him.

The Shadow sprang through the larger room, straight for that all-important door. He was halfway to it when he halted, no longer obscured by darkness.

With a sudden flash, the room glowed with light. Someone had pressed a downstairs switch.

Caught in the very center of the room, The Shadow was a target for enemies in the long hallway. They had arrived there at the far end of it. The moment that the lights appeared, their creep from the front stairs became a charge.

Revolvers spat, aimed for the wheeling figure of The Shadow. His answer was a gibing laugh delivered as he whisked from the doorway. Then, close at the front wall, The Shadow poked a gun muzzle through the door crack. His .45 began its answer.

While men were shooting into the blankness of the lighted room, The Shadow ricocheted shots along the hallway. He did not have to fire pointblank. Those glancing bullets were quite effective. Gunners were clinging close to the walls, to hide themselves if The Shadow suddenly reappeared. Their own tactics put them where The Shadow wanted them.

Yells changed to howls. Crooks were sprawling in retreat. Remnants of the band that had battled The Shadow at Larry's Corner, these fellows knew the payment that the cloaked fighter could give. They broke, diving for the stairway. Swinging to the doorway The Shadow jabbed one shot from each gun, as he prepared to give pursuit.

The Shadow never made his intended drive along that hall.

THOSE broken shock troops were not taking to the stairs, although they had started in that direction. They were flocking to the front room, though it was more distant. The stairs had been blocked against them. If The Shadow drove along the hall, he would be flanked, not by a mere crew of hoodlums, but by something more formidable.

Fleeing men would have fought their way through their own pals, had they been able. The fact that they couldn't use the stairs was proof that it was barricaded against The Shadow also.

Hardly had The Shadow halted his intended lunge, when the menace showed itself.

A sloping sheet of steel wheeled from the corner of the stairs, into the center of the hall. It was a bulky, bulletproof shield that had required at least four men to get it up the stairs. From its center poked the muzzle of a machine gun. That muzzle began to spatter bullets, but it was angled toward the wall. The Shadow dived back into the room, slamming the door before the gun aimed toward him.

A half second later, the machine gun was blasting directly toward the room.

Its streaming bullets drilled the wooden door, ripped it into shreds. The Shadow was away, in a far corner of the room, but the door was falling apart before his eyes. The machine gun seemed to choke in spasms, which meant that the crooks weren't wasting bullets until they again saw The Shadow.

Once that shield reached the doorway, The Shadow could be trapped. He could take to the cover of the little room where Shervel's body lay, but that wouldn't help. Once his foes wedged the steel shield through the doorway, they could shove it farther. The little room was too cramped to offer any cover.

Instinctively The Shadow had foreseen that fact the moment that the rolling shield had appeared. Instead of leaping toward the little room, he had gone in the opposite direction. He was beside a tight-locked door in the opposite wall of the big room.

To ordinary appearances, that door was simply a closet, but The Shadow held a different opinion regarding it.

Shervel's murderer had left this place in a very few seconds, a fact that indicated another outlet. There was only one possible exit— that door in the wall. If The Shadow could make his own departure in a short-time space, he would be clear of the machine gun's fire.

The door was locked; there was no time to work on it with skeleton keys. Pressing a gun muzzle to the lock, The Shadow blasted it to chunks. He wrested the door open. It showed the exit that The Shadow expected. A steep stairway led below.

This was the second way out of Shervel's hide-out; but Shervel had never used it. Instead, it had been used against him. The stairs had a little landing at the top, but The Shadow did not step there immediately. Instead, he jabbed a gun down the angle of the steps and cut loose with a quick spray of shots. If any guards were posted at the bottom, that would drive them back.

A thump from the hallway door. The steel shield had arrived. Its crew started to thrust it edgewise, to cover the little room. One shouted as he sighted The Shadow at the opposite wall. The cry was timely.

CHANGING tactics, The Shadow was starting a lunge toward the machine gun, hoping to flank in and settle its crew. The bold move would have been successful had no one spied his charge. The man who shouted came leaping through the doorway, shoving a revolver in The Shadow's face while the others yanked the shield back to the hall.

The Shadow was forced to deal first with the husky who had sprung to block him. That required a reverse twist. The delay brought security to the crew at the machine gun.

With his backward wheel, The Shadow faded. The big thug fired, but his bullet scorched above The Shadow's head. Half to the floor, The Shadow jabbed an upward shot. It took the lunging crook like a knife thrust; staggered him. Then, swaying from the bullet's impact, the gorilla floundered onward, blundering straight toward The Shadow.

There was no danger from that overbold foeman. The fellow's gun hand had dropped. He was keeping his balance only by convulsive jerks that he gave to his sagging knees. But the machine gun had again become a menace. Its handlers had hauled the shield back into the hall, were ready to turn the gun muzzle toward The Shadow.

It was time to use the stairway exit. The Shadow stepped back to the little landing, twisting to avoid the sprawl of the mortally hurt hoodlum who was making a final, forward topple.



The instant that The Shadow's weight struck that landing, its floor ripped like tissue.

The surface was nothing but thin strips of painted wood, as flimsy as laths. It had been prepared to bring calamity to pursuers in case Shervel had to use the emergency exit in a hurry. The proper method of flight was to avoid the landing entirely, to step across it to the solid stairs.

Not only had The Shadow missed that system, his momentary twist was in the wrong direction. As the landing splintered downward, he had no chance to grab for the steps beside him. There was only one object that he could clutch; that was the form of the dropping hoodlum, the one he had tried to avoid a moment before.

The Shadow caught the toppling fighter. With a last, convulsive effort, the big gorilla locked his own arms around The Shadow's neck. The grapple came too late. The dying man was over the edge of the landing.

They were plunging into darkness, The Shadow and his tight-locked burden. In the fall, quick flashes were coming to The Shadow's brain. He was wrestling in mid-air, desperately trying to break his fall by the time they hit the ground floor.

There was no such floor; the space beneath the trapped landing had been cut away. It meant twenty-odd feet to the cement base of the cellar, a crippling drop for anyone who took the fall without a buffer.

For The Shadow, those extra feet were helpful. In that space a change occurred, not so much through his own efforts, but because of gravity's law.

Each locked with another figure, The Shadow and his helpless adversary had become a single falling body. The heavier portion of that plunging mass was represented by the blocky thug. Like a weighted plummet, they did a turn in the air.

THE crash came, with thug beneath. What little life the fellow still retained, was knocked from him by the impact on the cement. Though the top man, The Shadow felt the heavy shock. It was a jolt that shivered through his frame, brought a blinding spurt of imaginary light as his back buckled. Sending his head on a sideways thump against a wall.

Dazed, The Shadow could feel claws that dug into his flesh—the dead man's fingers, with a titanic clutch. Wresting away, The Shadow felt his cloak rip from his shoulders, hooked by those tightened hands. His hat was gone; but that meant nothing.

The Shadow's one instinct was to leave this spot. He felt boards in the darkness; clutching a crack between them, he dragged himself toward the rough wall that his head had hit. The fringe of his cloak was beneath the dead thug's hip. The ripped garment peeled clear as The Shadow crawled away.

From above, the beam of a flashlight carved down into the opened pit. Leering observers saw a flattened body, the folds of the back cloak raised across its face. Close by lay The Shadow's slouch hat. The figure did not move; but the killers above still wanted satisfaction.

Shoving revolvers downward, they emptied them into the black-shrouded figure that lay on the cellar floor.

The Shadow heard that gunfire as it poured into the dead body of the cloak-draped gorilla. The man did not know that the stiffened hoodlum was receiving bullets from his own pals, under the mistaken impression that the dead man was The Shadow.

Those shots, to The Shadow, were like echoes of the past—a memory of many battles contorted into a fantastic dream. The Shadow was groping along the wooden wall of the bin that formed the bottom of the pit. Fortunately, his instinctive crawl had put him out of sight from the killers above.

Harsh voices were carried to The Shadow's ears. They became excited, then faded. Crooks had heard police whistles outside. They were making a hurried scramble, lugging their machine gun with them. The light from above the pit was gone. That, again, was fortunate.

In his dazed crawl, The Shadow was taking the wrong direction. He came against the dead body, felt his cloak, grasped it, wonderingly. It brought back other recollections. The Shadow felt about for his hat; found it.

Tugging the cloak free, he clutched it with the hat, began a circling crawl. He shouldered against boxes that blocked the outlet of the bin. They tumbled away. In a pocket, The Shadow found a flashlight. Using it, he saw a door. Finding his feet, he stumbled there, staring half blankly as the flashlight wavered in his hand.

Outside, fresh air had a reviving effect. Feeling along brick walls, The Shadow worked his way toward the lights of a street. He could hear the roar of motors, the wails of sirens accompanied by a fade of gunfire. The last of The Shadow's recent foemen were away, with police making a vain pursuit.

A taxi driver, peering from his halted cab, heard the thump of the rear door. He turned about anxiously, fearing that some crook had boarded his cab. Instead, he saw a well-dressed man sprawled in the rear seat, his arms crossed, clutching something that looked like a hat and coat.

The passenger muttered the name of a hotel, then changed it to another. The correction pleased the driver, for it meant a longer haul and hence a larger fare. He thought that his passenger was drunk, so he decided to start before the man in the back seat again changed his mind.

The cab moved away. As it jounced, The Shadow rolled. His lips—Cranston's lips—were stuttering, incoherently at first, but they formed words gradually.

At that rate of recuperation, The Shadow would be himself again when his twenty-minute journey ended.

## **CHAPTER XIV. STEEL-WALLED DEATH**

"MR. DANNER will see you, sir."

The glib, white-jacketed Filipino servant spoke the announcement. Harry Vincent arose from beside the window, where he had been staring at the low, broad sky line that represented the lighted center of Boston.

Between, Harry had noted the blackish stretches of the Charles River, crossed by strips of light that were the bridges between Cambridge and Boston.

Yet the water, with its sullenness, had most impressed him. Somehow that dark expanse was like a sodden monster. It betokened that hidden, unseen dangers could lurk anywhere, even within the boundaries of a great metropolis.

The Filipino led Harry along a hallway to the rear of Danner's apartment. A second servant met them at a doorway, ushered Harry into a suite of rooms. The moment that he was

across the threshold, Harry heard something slither heavily behind him. He turned to see a steel door clamp shut.

Looking about, Harry saw that two tiny rooms were lined with steel. The outer room, wherein he stood, was furnished as a parlor. Through a wide connecting doorway, Harry saw an office. Not a window showed in either room. There were steel plates everywhere, with overlapping edges held together by rivets.

James Danner bulked forward to greet the visitor. The shipping man showed a smile on his wide jawed face. As he shook hands, he rumbled briskly:

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Vincent. Sorry Mr. Cranston could not come with you," Then, turning to gesture toward a sharp-faced man in the corner: "Meet Detective Wadkin, of the Cambridge police."

Wadkin nodded a greeting without disturbing the derby hat that he wore tilted over one eye. The detective was smoking a fat cigar, and had a reserve supply in a box that lay on the table beside him. Danner had evidently insisted that Wadkin make himself at home.

"Perhaps these arrangements surprise you," said Danner, pointing to the steel walls. "You will understand their purpose. Mr. Vincent, when I mention that I have enemies—or, I should say, one enemy—who may threaten my life."

Danner meant Relf, although he did not mention the financial genius by name.

Harry nodded his approval of the steel walls. Danner took pride in declaring their merits.

"Every portion of the room is bulletproof," he said. "The only space left open is the fireplace, but it has a steel grille above it. Of course, it is inconvenient to have no windows."

"And no fire exit," put in Wadkin, his tone drawly.

"The fire exit was in a corner of the little room," said Danner, to Harry. "It leads to the tower, and Detective Wadkin insists that it was illegal to block it. But he is wrong. The fire laws compel the apartment house owner to install a fire exit, but a tenant is not required to keep it open."

WADKIN gave a shrug, indicating that he was willing to forgo further argument. Danner turned to Harry and apologetically explained the reason for the detective's presence.

"I know Mr. Cranston by reputation," stated Danner, "and he said that you are his friend. Still, with all these precautions of steel walls, it would be poor policy for me to admit visitors without leaving an inside guard.

"The Cambridge police understood the situation, and provided Wadkin. There is no reason why he should not be present during our conference. Mr. Cranston is interested simply in the purchase of some Inter-Coastal stock."

Harry acknowledged that fact. Danner produced a portfolio that contained photographs of the ships that formed the Inter-Coastal Line. They were not new vessels, but Barney's term of "tubs" could scarcely apply to them.

The merit of Inlet-Coastal, as Dander explained it, was that the ships had been purchased at a remarkably low price; therefore, the line was sure to pay big dividends.

"Of course," admitted Danner, "there was a catch to the deal, although I did not know it at

the time. Ferdinand Relf was in back of the sale. He wanted Inter-Coastal to start well, so that he could gobble it later, and then wreck the enterprise.

"That manipulation was stifled just in time. Inter-Coastal is at last on a solid basis. Sale of stock is slow because of the scandal, but that is an even greater inducement to him. Those who come in early, will profit most."

To prove his point, Danner turned toward the little office, remarking that he would bring audited copies of the company's books. That promised to lead the conversation away from the course that Harry wanted. He stopped Danner with the question:

"Are these all the ships that were bought by Inter-Coastal?"

Danner returned, nodding as he came. He asked why Harry had put the question.

"I merely wondered," he remarked, "why you did not purchase more vessels from the ghost fleet."

"These did not come from there!" exclaimed Danner. "You are misinformed, Mr. Vincent. These—and other vessels—were on sale; the ones that I rejected went to the ghost fleet."

Harry nodded as though he began to understand.

"The others would not do," declared Danner. "I am long experienced in the shipping business, Mr. Vincent."

"You inspected the other ships?" asked Harry.

"Most of them," returned Danner. "Why does that interest you?"

"I heard some mention of a ship called the Escapade. One that I understood was rejected."

"What was she? A tanker?"

"No. A rumrunner."

Danner looked horrified.

"Never!" he exclaimed. "There was not such a vessel in the lot. Probably the Escapade was sold before I was asked to buy. But tell me" - Danner's eyes had narrowed—"why does the Escapade interest you?"

"I merely wondered who owned her."

Danner stroked his chin, resting his elbow in his other hand. His eyes were firm, his tone bitter as he stated:

"I am convinced that all those ships were owned by Relf, because I bought them from a salvage company that later proved to be a sham. That was probably why the Escapade was gone. I would have recognized some crooked work had such a ship been with the others. This news interests me, Mr. Vincent. I shall add it to the notations that I am sending to Washington. Anything that may expose Ferdinand Relf, is valuable."

Considering the subject settled, Danner turned about and went into the office. Harry could see him at the desk, opening a drawer to bring out the books that he had mentioned. Across the parlor, Wadkin was leaning back, puffing smoke rings. The two Filipinos were standing at the side walls, with arms behind them and eyes straight ahead.

HARRY'S own gaze had wandered for the moment, when he heard Danner give a frantic shout.

First to look into the office, Harry caught a glimpse of Danner springing away from the desk toward a rear corner of the room. The shipping man was out of sight when Wadkin sprang to his feet. Nor did the Filipinos see him as they bounded from their posts.

The thing they viewed was the slow slide of a steel door that rumbled from the wall between parlor and office. With increasing glide, that barrier was closing the doorway between the two halves of Danner's armored suite!

Harry was already electrified to action. Realizing that Danner was in danger, he had grabbed a weapon that chanced to be close at hand. The object that Harry seized was a heavy poker, resting beside the fire place.

Harry's instinctive quickness was remarkable when he came to consider it afterward. As the steel door started shut, he was already springing toward the office, although Wadkin was stopped, flat-footed, and the Filipinos were stupidly slow in motion.

Harry was too late, though, to pass the sliding door. There was less than a foot of space remaining when he reached it. Again guided by sheer instinct, Harry used the last fraction of a second to supply the only possible move.

He shoved the poker between the edge of the heavy door and the steel channel which waited to receive it.

The door clanged heavily, wrenching the poker from Harry's hand, twisting the iron into an odd-shaped curve. There was a crack, though, between the door and the frame. The poker had stopped the door from locking shut.

Detective Wadkin grabbed a pair of tongs, shouted for a Filipino to bring the ash shovel. Harry pried with the bent poker, while they used the other implements. The big door wouldn't budge, until the second Filipino aided with another improvised tool. He pulled a floor lamp apart, brought its metal standard for a lever.

Though minutes had been lost, they at last made progress with the door. It inched open under the leverage. Harry and Wadkin shoved their shoulders into the space. A Filipino plugged the gap with the base of the floor lamp. The four went through.

During that hard work, Harry had been conscious of a squidgy sound that had come from the little office. He would never have classed it as a muffled gunshot, had he not viewed the result. There had been no outcry from Danner during the activity at the door. His silence was explained.

James Danner was back at the desk, half sprawled from the chair. His body lay askew across the desk itself. His face was turned upward, dead. His shirt front was stained with blood.

Beneath Danner's right hand, its fingers star-spread on the desk, lay the weapon that had caused his death—a .32 caliber revolver. All about was the glimmer from steel walls, like myriad eyes that had witnessed doom.

Except for James Danner, the steel-lined room had no occupant. If this death proved murder, it must seemingly have been accomplished by a ghostly hand.

## **CHAPTER XV. DEATH'S PROMISE**

THEY stood, a strained group, within that hushed room where death had come despite the most elaborate precautions. Detective Wadkin was stooping above Danner's body, while Harry Vincent stood in a corner of the room. The Filipinos, awed, were just inside the doorway.

Then, into that place of death, came a sound that was almost a ghostly manifestation. It was a muffled tap-tap-tap, its exact source uncertain.

"What was that?"

Wadkin had sprung about. He was staring toward the wall near Harry. Again the taps sounded; they seemed nearer to the corner of the room. Wadkin moved there, listened. He heard nothing, although Harry sensed faint beats from somewhere.

Wadkin pounded the steel wall with his fist. He was rewarded by its solid clang. Patrolling the room, he picked up the twisted poker and hammered elsewhere, always with the same result. He kicked up the edge of the carpet and thumped the floor. It was steel-plated; so was the ceiling.

Coming back to the desk, the detective swept a hand toward Danner's body, with the comment:

"Suicide."

The case looked it, but Harry didn't agree.

Why had Danner first given a shout of alarm?

What had he seen that made him spring from the desk?

How had Danner managed to press the switch that controlled the steel door, when it was on an opposite wall from the direction toward which he had gone?

Those were questions that perplexed Harry Vincent, but they were no more puzzling than the problem of how a murderer could have come and gone within this steel-clad chamber.

Detective Wadkin had formed a suicide theory by totally ignoring the questions that bothered Harry.

Wadkin had heard Danner's cry, but considered it unimportant. He had not seen Danner's scared face when the victim sprang from the desk. In fact, Wadkin had not seen Danner at all; therefore, he wasn't puzzled over the matter of the wall switch.

All that Wadkin observed was Danner's body at the desk, shot through the heart, with a gun close at hand. In a room as tight as this one, that meant suicide.

Danner had been troubled, nervous about business matters. Maybe a bit off mentally, thinking a man named Relf was after him. That was the way Wadkin analyzed it, and his idea was supported by a search of the desk drawers.

THEY were empty, yet the Filipinos testified that Danner had kept thousands of dollars here. There were books to prove it, there on Danner's desk. Thumbing through one, Wadkin found transactions that totaled half a million dollars.

"He'd lost his money," said Wadkin to Harry. "Poor guy, putting up a big front after he'd been cleaned out. Look at all these sales he'd marked up, the cash and stocks he was supposed

to have here. All on paper, but none of it real."

That analysis simply served to increase Harry's certainty that murder was the cause of Danner's death.

Harry could picture Danner's archenemy, Relf, lurking in this very room. He visualized Danner threatened by a revolver. Relf could have pulled the switch when Danner dived away.

After that, there had been a time element in which the steel door had screened events in this office. That time had been at least five minutes, maybe more. The revolver shot could have come early, as Harry remembered it.

That gave the picture of the intruder, plopping Danner's body in the chair, putting the wiped gun in the dead man's nerveless fingers—which had promptly dropped it. Next, a quick clean-out of Danner's stocks and cash, funds that he had kept here as the safest place, considering that the room itself was steel.

Another fact occurred to Harry.

If that steel floor had shut completely, it would have taken a long while to open it. Harry's thrust of the poker had partly spoiled a perfect set-up for a murder.

It all depended, though, on the assumption that a killer had found a way in and out. There, Harry's well-formed theory flopped. The room was definitely solid. Those curious taps, coming afterward from a corner near the fire tower, were certainly mysterious, but they helped very little.

Harry began to wonder. His mind jumped to the fantastic possibility of some remote cause. Perhaps Danner had heard the mysterious taps; had taken them as a threat from Relf. Danner might have found his funds were gone. Such coupled events could have maddened him into a suicide that could almost be classed as murder.

Harry's thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a jangle of the telephone on Danner's desk. Wadkin took charge of the call, after glaring suspiciously at the telephone.

"Hello..." Wadkin hesitated. Then: "Who wants to speak to him... Mr. Cranston?... All right. Vincent is here..."

Wadkin handed the telephone to Harry with the admonition that he make sure that it was Cranston. After a few words, Harry nodded. Since Wadkin offered no objection. Harry spoke the news of Danner's death.

THERE was something odd about Cranston's voice, even though Harry recognized it. Some of the questions that he put were a trifle disjointed; this forced Harry to repeat things that he had said. In turn, Wadkin became annoyed.

"Say!" snapped the dick. "You ain't talking to the D. A.; who does this guy Cranston think he is? Let me talk to him."

Snatching the telephone from Harry, Wadkin began to shout into the mouthpiece. Soon, he was impressed by the calm tone of Cranston. Harry grinned when Wadkin politely furnished the very details that Harry had been unable to supply because of interruption.

There was one point, though, that Wadkin did not mention—the matter of the raps.

The facts that The Shadow received made the case sound definitely like suicide, although it could be the sort that Harry had so fantastically imagined —practically a self-murder on Danner's part, induced by some outside influence.

Impatiently, Harry waited to take the telephone from Wadkin. He saw the dick stare open-mouthed, nodding at something that Cranston said. A few seconds later Wadkin abruptly clanked the receiver on its hook and stood gaping at the wall.

Harry pulled the telephone from the man's grasp, tried to resume the connection. It was too late. Cranston was cut off. Harry started to call the hotel where Cranston had been registered. Wadkin interrupted savagely:

"What are you trying to do?"

"Call Cranston again," replied Harry, "at his hotel. You didn't tell him all of it."

"He ain't at his hotel. He's calling from a pay station. I heard the coin clink. Anyway"—Wadkin took back the telephone—"I got a call of my own to make."

He began to dial the number. During that process, he told Harry more.

"This guy Cranston," commented Wadkin, "has got a bean. He says no matter what happened to Danner, it looks bad. Yeah, bad enough so that we ought to warn others like him.

"There's a bird in the same boat, a fellow that's got a joint fixed up like this one because he's scared of Relf, the way Danner was. The guy's name is Henry Tilmot. He's a banker in Boston, and Cranston gave me his number. I'm calling Tilmot."

THERE was no response to Wadkin's call. The dick dialed again, then looked up Tilmot's number in the telephone book. It was unlisted, but Wadkin said he could get it through persons who knew Tilmot. He finally did acquire the number after three calls that consumed a full ten minutes.

The number was the one that Cranston had given.

Wadkin rang it again. This time his face showed conviction.

"Something's screwy with that number" he declared. "Say—you don't think anything's gone wrong there at Tilmot's?"

"It looks that way," said Harry.

"I'll call headquarters," decided Wadkin. "They'll notify Boston. There'll be detectives up to Tilmot's place in no time. Don't worry about him."

Harry worried despite that assurance. He chafed to think that valuable minutes had been lost getting a warning to Tilmot. For The Shadow had definitely depended upon that being done.

Behind the death of Danner lay an insidious prowess, whatever it might be; and that same menace threatened the life of Tilmot. The fact that the banker's telephone line had been cut off, was mute proof that The Shadow was right.

Harry Vincent could do nothing until word came. Here in Cambridge, he was too remote to aid Tilmot. Moreover, Harry could not travel across the Charles, to Boston, because he had to stay here as a witness in the case of Danner's death.



To Harry's mind, however, there came one definite hope, a logical conclusion in itself.

The Shadow had left it to Wadkin to call Tilmot. That meant The Shadow intended to waste no time of his own. The Shadow had chosen a set mission, and Harry was confident of what it was. The Shadow was already on his way to visit Tilmot in person.

That surmise was correct. At that very moment, a taxicab was twisting from a mass of traffic clear Boston Common, getting clear for its last spurt to an address on Beacon Street. In the rear seat of that cab sat a calm-faced, steady passenger who looked fit for action despite the paleness of his hawkish features.

Soon, Henry Tilmot would receive a caller, in the person of Lamont Cranston.

From the moment that the new visitor entered the house, Tilmot would be under the protection of The Shadow.

## **CHAPTER XVI. THE VANISHED MILLION**

HENRY TILMOT already had a visitor: Vic Marquette of the F.B.I.; they were seated in the banker's upstairs study. The room was much different than when The Shadow had last seen it. In most details it resembled the stronghold that Harry had viewed in Danner's apartment.

Like Danner, Tilmot had no windows in his room. Also, in order to give his tiny fortress some privacy, it had been separated into two sections. These simply had a partition between. The partition lacked a steel door. A curtain hung over the small doorway that connected.

They were seated in the outer of the two rooms; there, Marquette was coming to the purpose of his visit.

"Relf's chucked a bad scare into you, Mr. Tilmot," declared Marquette. "Bad enough to make me think that maybe you have heard from him."

Tilmot shook his head.

"Then why all this steel work?" asked Marquette. "It doesn't seem worth the bother, unless it's needed."

"It was Danner's idea," declared Tilmot. "I installed these walls chiefly to humor him."

"And to humor Nick Langion?"

Tilmot winced. He didn't like the connection. Marquette saw the banker's fists clench.

"Langion is nobody," declared Tilmot harshly. "He thrust his acquaintance upon me. He offered to fortify Danner's apartment in return for the services of two servants that I could supply.

"I've seen them down at Langion's place. He says he wouldn't trust his own men.

"Precisely the way he stated it to me. To help Danner, I had to favor Langion. Since I was included in the arrangement, I merely took advantage of it."

Marquette eyed the steel-faced ceiling. There was a glint in his darkish eyes. Then, abruptly:

"If Relf hasn't threatened you," put Marquette, "why have you got a million dollars here?"

THE question startled Tilmot. For a few moments, he seemed ready to deny it. It struck him, finally, that Marquette must be too well informed to be bluffed.

"The million," admitted Tilmot, "is the amount that I once intended to lend Inter-Coastal Lines; cash that would have eventually reached Relf."

"I know that," chided Marquette. "But it ought to be in a bank."

"Not necessarily," argued Tilmot. "The funds are quite secure here. Besides -"

He hesitated. Marquette's tone changed. It was understanding, friendly.

"I know your trouble," he told Tilmot. "You think that Ferdinand Relf may pop in here despite all your precautions. If he does, you'd rather settle than take the death you think he can give."

Tilmot furnished a weak nod.

"Maybe you're right," soothed Marquette. "Relf might be a murderer. Anyway, I can't stop you from keeping the cash here for him. If Relf did extort that money from you, though, we'd have a charge against him. Wouldn't we?"

Tilmot gave agreement.

"All right," decided Marquette. "That's why I'd like to see that cash. Let me take a list of the serial numbers. If Relf ever gets the dough, we'll have a tracer to him."

Slowly, Tilmot arose. Without a word he walked past the curtain, into the room where the big safe was. Marquette lolled back in his chair. He heard a slight thump, as though Tilmot had knocked over something close to the safe.

After that there was the gurgly sound of water being poured into a glass. Marquette decided that Tilmot had paused to take a drink.

A minute later another sound actually puzzled Marquette. It was a tap-tap-tap, that might have come from the inner room, but Vic decided it was too remote. It might be something in the hallway; perhaps a noise from the roof.

Certainly the steel walls would muffle noises. Certainly that they would be difficult to recognize. The tapping was repeated; it faded, but Vic still thought he could hear it. It annoyed him so much that he was about to call to Tilmot—when he heard a louder rap.

The new sound came from the sliding steel door that closed these rooms from the hall. It was a signal from one of Tilmot's servants. There was a switch close by. Vic pulled it. The door slid open.

"Mr. Cranston is here," announced the servant. "Does Mr. Tilmot wish to see him?"

"Certainly," replied Marquette. "Tell him to come up."

"There was something else," declared the servant. "The telephone downstairs—it's out of order -"

"I'll tell Mr. Tilmot to try his extension. Meanwhile, usher Mr. Cranston here."

When Cranston stepped across the threshold, Marquette greeted him with a handshake. Pulling the switch. Vic closed the steel door. Cranston looked about for Tilmot. Marquette

pointed to the curtain.

Before he had a chance to state that Tilmot was busy at the safe and would not wish to be disturbed, Cranston sprang toward the connecting door. Marquette followed, telling him to come back. Instead, Cranston whipped open the curtain.

With that move, Cranston stepped sideways. It was Marquette who halted on the threshold with horrified stare.

ON the floor in front of the open safe, lay Tilmot, stone dead. His head could have struck the edge of the safe door, for there was a bruise behind the banker's ear. On the desk stood a glass of water; beside it, a box of pills.

To Marquette, those elements did not account for Tilmot's death. Vic looked for someone in the room. He was holding a stubby revolver as he stared about. But the room was empty.

Cranston had turned, was heading out through the hallway. Marquette heard him unlock a door farther along the hall. Soon he returned. Marquette demanded:

"Where did you go?"

"Into the adjoining storeroom," replied Cranston coolly. "It used to connect with this room—at that corner. But there was no one in the storeroom. Only an unlocked window."

Marquette went to the corner indicated; he hammered the steel wall. It was solid.

"Nobody could have gone through there," he declared. "But say! Look at that safe! It's empty—but Tilmot says he had a million bucks in it. Could Relf have -"

Marquette paused. He shook his head, bewildered.

"Quite odd," mused Cranston. "Danner had half a million—so it was said— in stocks and cash. They are gone."

"Gone!" echoed Marquette. "What does Danner have to say about it?"

"Nothing. Danner is dead."

That news shook Marquette from his lethargy. He shouted for Tilmot's servants. When they arrived, he told them to send for a physician and call the police. Marquette was already juggling the receiver hook of Tilmot's telephone, to find the instrument dead.

The physician's examination proved that Tilmot could have died from either of two causes. The pills, it proved, were poison of a most virulent sort. There were traces on Tilmot's tongue to show that he had swallowed some of them.

The blow against the banker's head was close to the base of the brain, a sort that might easily have been fatal.

Marquette came to the conclusion that the death was suicide. Tilmot didn't have the million dollars, decided Vic. What he had done with it, was a guess; but he was in a pinch, like Danner, especially when Marquette had demanded to see the cash.

In a sense, Marquette was showing himself as blind as Detective Wadkin— but with more logic. He made a full report to the police, then went out to find Cranston, who had been allowed to leave at Vic's own urge. Quite a while had passed. When Marquette found Cranston in the lobby of the Parker house, he apologized for having kept him waiting so

long.

"I HAVE been to Cambridge," stated Cranston, "to talk with Vincent, who is staying there as witness. He mentioned an odd fact, Marquette— one that the police have practically ignored."

"What was it?"

"A corner of Danner's strongroom once opened to a fire tower," explained Cranston. "Much like the door to the strongroom at Tilmot's house. After they found Danner's body, Vincent heard a tapping. It sounded from that corner of the room -"

Marquette thwacked his left palm with his right fist.

"I heard taps at Tilmot's!" he exclaimed. "They could have come from the corner at the strongroom door. Say—that may make it -"

"Murder?"

"Yes." Marquette was grim. "What's more, you've jogged me into remembering something else. I heard a gurgle of water when Tilmot swallowed those pills. I heard the thump when he hit his head. But -"

"The thump came before the gurgle?"

Cranston's keen question took the words that Marquette intended to utter. Vic nodded.

"Somebody could have shot Danner," declared the Fed. "And the same man could have tapped Tilmot's skull and forced those pills down his throat. It's double murder. Two deaths to pin on Ferdinand Relf."

"Why not a third?" asked Cranston.

"A third?" returned Marquette. "Who?"

"Relf's other enemy, Nick Langion. Have you seen him tonight, Marquette?"

Vic was on his feet, beckoning his companion to the door. They took a cab on Tremont Street. Marquette told the driver to rush them to the old Caravan Club.

"There's been plenty happened tonight," declared Marquette as they rode along, "and maybe a lot more is due."

Marquette did not see Cranston's face at that moment, for his companion was leaning back in the cushions of the seat. But the smile on Cranston's lips would have told Vic more than words. Marquette was right; more events— startling ones—were still to come. The Shadow knew.

That was not all. There were things to happen that even The Shadow did not foresee.

## **CHAPTER XVII. THE THIRD THRUST**

THE stronghold above the deserted Caravan Club was far larger than those that Nick Langion had provided for Danner and Tilmot. It had half a dozen armored rooms. The outer ones were peopled with some of Nick's former bodyguards.

The racketeer's own quarters were in the closest room. There, his only companions were the

two servants that he had borrowed from Henry Tilmot. The pair closed a steel door as soon as Cranston and Marquette had entered. The servants remained outside.

Nick was wearing a garish dressing gown, and seemed half asleep. He shook hands with Cranston when Marquette introduced him. Hearing that Cranston was a wealthy New Yorker, Nick made a remark while pouring drinks:

"I guess you know my friends—Danner and Tilmot? Am I right, Mr. Cranston?"

"I did know them."

Nick looked puzzled. He turned to Marquette.

"Say!" put in Nick, "What is this—a gag?"

"Not much," replied Marquette. "Danner and Tilmot are dead."

Nick staggered two steps backward. He steadied himself, gave a short laugh.

"What did they do—try to get together somewhere?"—Nick's tone was forced—"outside of those castles I rigged up for them? The saps! I told 'em to stay where they belonged—like I've been doing—on account of Relf."

"That's what they did do," informed Marquette. "Each died in his own place, with no visible sight of a murderer."

Nick's hand tightened about a glass that he had started to offer to Marquette. With a quick gulp, the racketeer swallowed the drink, then followed by drinking one he had poured for Cranston. Whether it was the raw liquor or his shaken nerves that made him choke, Nick didn't state. After he had slumped to a chair, he managed to cough:

"Tell me about it."

MARQUETTE gave the details. The more that Nick heard, the more nervousness he displayed. His olive face looked sickly; he kept shoving his hands through his slick black hair.

"Relf couldn't have done it," he insisted. "He couldn't. Those joints were rigged as good as this one. Those boobs got jittery; they croaked themselves— that's all."

Nick was so positive that he almost persuaded Marquette. It was Cranston who quietly provided the evidence that changed Nick's tune. From his pocket The Shadow produced two envelopes, handed them to Marquette. One was marked "Tilmot"; the other, "Danner".

From the first envelope, Marquette brought two steel rivets; in the second, he found another. With it was a loose rivet head.

"Where did you get these?" demanded Marquette.

"From Tilmot's storeroom," replied Cranston, "and from the fire tower outside Danner's apartment."

Marquette began to understand.

"Those steel plates were fixed", Vic didn't realize that Cranston had already proven the fact. "They had dummy rivets on the overlaps. One was fixed at Danner's; another at Tilmot's."

Marquette was so elated at what he thought was his own discovery that he pictured the scenes aloud, without waiting for Cranston's further theories regarding them.

"Relf came in from the fire tower and murdered Danner," continued Marquette. "There were stocks there—and cash. He took them. He came through from Tilmot's storeroom, staged another murder and got away with that million.

"Each time, he had to pound in some solid rivets to replace the dummies, so the walls would stand inspection. He thought the steel door would give him time at Danner's. Maybe he didn't know I was at Tilmot's.

"Anyway, he had to work quick after he got started. He'll have to keep on working quick if he's coming here. This time we'll be ready for him."

Marquette's final words were assurance for Nick Langion, but the racketeer didn't look pleased. Then, before Cranston could speak, Marquette suddenly demanded:

"What about those strongrooms, Nick? Didn't you guarantee Danner and Tilmot that you'd make them right?"

Nick nodded hopelessly. His lips were twitching when he answered.

"That's what I said," he asserted. "Only there was something else I told 'em. I said I didn't trust my own mob. That's why I wanted a couple of Tilmot's flunkies down here. There ain't a guy in my whole outfit that wouldn't sell out to Relf.

"He got to 'em quicker than I thought—him and that guy Shervel who worked for him. They bought out the bunch that put the steel work in at Danner's and Tilmot's. Only I never guessed it until right now.

"You know who brought over the crew that tried to rub me out a few nights ago? Relf did it. And there was a fight down near the water front, with guys in the mob that used to work for me. And tonight— here's news for you, Marquette— Relf croaked Shervel!"

It was news for Marquette. So much so, that he didn't believe it. Nick insisted that it was a fact.

"The cops just called up," declared Nick. "Told me that they'd knocked off a couple of gorillas who quit on me pretty near a week ago. They found Shovel with a knife in him.

"He knew too much to suit Relf. Say—did you ever meet up with Relf? He 's powerful, that guy. He could drive a knife right through a wall."

Nick gestured forcibly, to illustrate the point. He finished his arm thrust, then talked excitedly as he paced the room, pawing at the steel walls.

"He'll be coming here next"—Nick was panting his words—"to get me. Only he won't cut in here—He can't—because these walls were put here before I ever met Relf. Go ahead—tap 'em—see for yourself that they're solid.

"The lights are working, too"—Nick motioned to a row of them— "and these alarms. Watch—they'll bring everybody in a hurry." Nick stopped to press buttons along the wall. "And the floor plugs are in tight. I'm safe here —only I'll never leave the joint until you've sent Relf to the hot seat where he belongs."

Nick was rising, having tested the last floor plug in a corner beneath a table. There were

pounds at the steel door; guards had arrived, as Nick said they would. The racketeer thumped the door, giving a signal. He turned around, mopping his forehead with the sleeve of his dressing gown.

"That'll send 'em back," said Nick as he paced across the room. "Cripes, Marquette! You got me in a sweat with all this talk. I've got some dough of my own—in there—and I guess I'd better see that none's gone."

Nick indicated a steel door at the side of the room. He pressed a switch. The door slid back to show a tiny, metal-lined room that housed a safe half its size. Nick began to work the combination. He had made the final turn, when he paused to beckon.

Marquette approached while Cranston watched. There was a new glint in The Shadow's eyes.

"Hear it?" Nick whispered to Marquette. "It ain't taps, like you heard— It's a tick -"

"Comes from the floor," inserted Marquette. "What's underneath here, Nick?"

"The kitchen of the Caravan Club. No—it ain't the kitchen. It's the refrigerator room."

"How do you get to it?"

"Through the club—or from outside the -"

Nick's own words produced the startled look that came to his face. He gestured wildly with his arms, then jumped for the switch that controlled the outer floor.

"Get going!" he yelled. "Relf's mined the joint. He's going to blast it!"

NICK pulled the switch. As the door slid back Marquette grabbed Cranston, started him out through. Nick was close behind them, shoving hard. At the door he suddenly gulped:

"The dough! I got time to get it!"

He dived back to the safe, yanked it open. They saw him pulling out bundles, then his nerve seemed to leave him. Nick sprang away with only a few bundles under his arm. Apparently figuring that the vault room would muffle the explosion, if closed, he grabbed for a switch.

In his haste, Nick pulled the wrong one. They saw him staring, a puzzled look on his nearly greenish face. He was looking at the vault as if expecting it to shut. Instead, the outer door slid across its doorway, cutting Nick from view.

Marquette was starting to pound that door in order to attract the attention of the stupefied racketeer. This time, it was Cranston who provided the urge for prompt departure. He shoved Marquette toward the outer rooms, voiced a command in quick tone strangely like The Shadow's—though Vic didn't notice it.

"Get away!" was the order. "Nick can release himself. Nobody else can. Don't wait to help him."

They dashed through to the final door where Nick's henchmen were already diving through, followed by Tilmot's servants. The Shadow turned, to propel Marquette down the stairs. At that instant Marquette was taking a last look back through the passages.

There was no sign yet of Nick Langion. The maddened racketeer had lost valuable seconds.

"He'll be killed!" shouted Marquette. "If he doesn't get here -"

Marquette himself was close to death. As The Shadow shoved him down the stairway, following with a dive of his own, the big blast came. The whole premises of the Caravan Club rocked with the titanic explosion. There was a crackle of steel as Nick Langion's stronghold warped like tissue paper.

The stairway crumpled, with masonry crashing down from above it. But with the cyclonic burst of air that roared from the lower doorway, came two figures that staggered, fell, recovered themselves to seek the shelter of the alley.

The Shadow had brought Vic Marquette alive from that shattered building where death was certain for any who remained.

## **CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME'S COUNTERSTROKE**

BIG fire engines were clanging in from surrounding streets, to fight the blaze that engulfed the Caravan Club. Midtown Boston was lurid with wavering light that flickered its vivid reflections along Washington Street to the somber building fronts of Newspaper Row.

Seldom had The Hub viewed so swift a holocaust as this; but the speed of the fire's sweep was fortunate. That blaze was burning itself out, before it could reach adjacent buildings that firemen worked to save. Luck was with the smoke-eaters. There was no breeze tonight.

Meanwhile, the conflagration roared and crackled with the gorging rage of an inferno. In the midst of that volcanic hell were the withered, melted remnants of the steel stronghold that Nick Langion had once regarded as secure.

Vic Marquette watched the destruction from a block away. He was within the fire line, with Cranston beside him. Refugees were pouring from neighboring buildings; cars were being wheeled from the garage where Nick had kept his armored limousine.

The big, bulletproof car was forgotten. Nick Langion would never again have use for it.

The glare of the dancing flames brought a glinted reflection from Marquette's dark eyes. The Federal agent was grim; there were mutters from his lips. They included imprecations against the man who had eluded Vic too long: Ferdinand Relf.

Marquette phrased coherent words. Cranston heard them.

"He got in there," affirmed Marquette, "just like he did at Danner's and Tilmot's. Relf was there, all right, in the refrigerator room. He had to be, to set that time bomb.

"It couldn't have been long ago. Just the same, he got away too soon. Without a trace to where he's gone—not a trace. You can't even see Relf, let alone locate him."

Marquette turned to Cranston with his appeal. Vic was recalling how his calm-faced companion had doped out affairs at earlier scenes of crime. Above the crackle of the fire, Marquette snapped the almost hopeless question:

"Where could Relf have headed? Could you give me any kind of a guess, Mr. Cranston?"

Cranston's eyes looked far away. A slight smile came to his thin, even lips.

"It is possible," spoke Cranston, in reflective tone, "that Relf has returned to Rhode Island."



MARQUETTE looked startled; then, he laughed, shortly.

"That won't do," he said. "The one place Relf ought to stay away from is that house in Rhode Island."

"And that," observed Cranston, "is precisely why he might be found there."

There was an odd emphasis to that steady tone, but Marquette did not detect it. The suggestion had awakened other ideas. Marquette began to sum them.

"There's a couple of deputy sheriffs on duty at that house," said Marquette, stating a fact that was also known to The Shadow. "But it's just routine, having them there. I know what you're getting at, Mr. Cranston—the old stuff of a murderer returning to the scene of crime. But it won't go, in this case. Relf didn't murder any one in that bay shore house of his."

Cranston's gaze was still reflective.

"There was a girl," he said to Marquette. "Her name was Ruth Bryand."

"Yeah," put in Marquette. "She used to own the old Rhode Island house. But she is in Europe."

"You have heard from her?"

"No, we haven't. Because we didn't have reason to talk to her."

"Who has heard from Ruth Bryand?"

Marquette didn't answer Cranston's question. Firemen were hauling up a reserve hose in order to attack the fire at closer range, for the flames had shown a marked ebb. Marquette was separated from Cranston, but he flashed a look toward him.

"Maybe Relf did kill the girl!" shouted Marquette suddenly. "Still, he's not the kind of murderer to go racing back there."

Firemen were coming through in a squad, carrying big axes. Marquette was farther away from Cranston when he heard his companion call back:

"Any murderer would return to remove a body—one that might prove a corpus delicti—to convict him, afterward -"

The rest of Cranston's words were drowned by shouted orders from a fire chief. New fire lines were being formed. Marquette flashed his badge, to hold his place, but Cranston had no badge. Firemen were jostling him toward a corner. Marquette cupped his hands around his lips.

"I'm going to Rhode Island!" he yelled—"with a squad. We'll rip that house apart from top to bottom -"

There was no use continuing the shouting. Cranston was out of sight. Marquette saw an opening to his right, hurried through the ropes. He was on his way to summon a picked batch of operatives. Inside half an hour, they would be riding for Rhode Island.

AROUND the corner, Lamont Cranston was showing the same speed that he had utilized in rescuing Vic Marquette. He hurried for his new hotel; reaching there, he took a suitcase from the check room. At a writing desk he penned a brief note with a fountain pen.

Putting the note in an envelope, he used a desk pen to address it to Harry Vincent. Giving the envelope to the clerk, Cranston placed a dollar bill with it. The clerk agreed to send the note by messenger to Harry's hotel.

Boarding a cab, Cranston rode past Faneuil Hall, down South Market Street, where the long market buildings stretched on the left, with North Market Street on the other side of them. He was not interested in that odd arrangement of Boston thoroughfares, for he was directing the cab driver into a maze of narrow streets where some squalid dwelling houses were located.

During the last stretch of that ride, Cranston changed identity. From his suitcase he produced the black garb that transformed him into The Shadow. As soon as he had paid his fare, he slid a black glove over his hand. He was gone into darkness before the cab driver wondered what had become of the aristocratic passenger who had business in so disreputable a district.

Soon, The Shadow was listening in the darkness of an upstairs room, where a man's harsh, raucous breathing came muffled from a corner cot. Ignoring the room's occupant, The Shadow glimmered his flashlight into a closet. The Shadow was busy there for a short while. He was familiar with the place, for he had visited it earlier today.

Finally the flashlight vanished. A whispered laugh crept through the blackness, drowning that heavy breathing from the corner. Chill echoes faded. The Shadow was gone. His own plans had reached another stage, one that promised no complications.

THAT prospect was not so smooth as The Shadow supposed it. In his note to Harry, The Shadow had ordered his agent off duty. There were links from the past that made it necessary. Crooks had connected The Shadow with Lamont Cranston; in turn, they might tie Cranston with Harry Vincent. From Harry, there was another lead—to Ruth Bryand.

In the haste of coming events, crooks would have little time to join those links. Harry was keen enough to outsmart them if they tried. He could detect fake messages supposedly from The Shadow. Once he picked up the real one and read its code. Harry would understand all matters thoroughly.

Such was The Shadow's logic, and it was sound. But even The Shadow's calculations could go astray when remote factors entered. Tonight, trouble was due from a person who had no desire to cause it.

The Shadow had not reckoned with the part to be played by a man who no longer seemed important: Detective Wadkin, of the Cambridge police.

Harry Vincent was still at Danner's apartment wondering how long he would have to remain there. Some Boston detectives were present, checking Danner's death with that of Tilmot. Harry intended to ride across the river with them when they left, to make sure he encountered no trouble before picking up the expected word from The Shadow.

There was a ring from the telephone bell. It was Wadkin who answered it. The Cambridge detective was grinning when he finished the call. He turned to Harry, with the remark:

"It was your friend, Cranston."

"You're sure?" questioned Harry.

"Positive," replied Wadkin. "I recognized his voice. He had a message for you."

Wadkin hadn't recognized Cranston's voice; the one that he had heard had actually been

quite different. But the caller had announced himself as Cranston, and had sold the idea. After that, Wadkin would have imagined that any voice was the right one.

"Cranston wants to see you," chuckled Wadkin. "He'll be at the Eastern Coffee Shop, near Scollay Square. And he says to bring your girl-friend; he's anxious to meet her."

"Which girl-friend?" quizzed Harry.

"The one you met last week," replied Wadkin. "That's what Cranston said. I told him okay, Vincent. We don't need you here any longer."

RELAYED through Wadkin, the message was just subtle enough to carry weight. Harry already knew that The Shadow was keeping Ruth ready as a witness, regarding that night at Relf's. He supposed that his chief must have cracked the case; that The Shadow was ready to expose a murderer to the law.

The Eastern Coffee Shop, a quiet place on Cornhill Street, near Scollay Square, was an ideal spot, the sort that The Shadow would choose for this meeting. Harry asked Wadkin if he could use the telephone. The detective nodded.

Harry called Ruth at Framingham.

Luck was with him, Harry thought, after he had talked to Ruth; and that, again, influenced him to believe that the meeting was of The Shadow's design.

Inquiring from her friends, Ruth told Harry over the wire that an inbound express was due on the Boston and Albany in just ten minutes. She could make the Framingham Station in time. She would arrive at South Station in exactly three-quarters of an hour.

Such prompt connection was purely a coincidence. To Harry, it indicated another of The Shadow's well-timed arrangements. He told Ruth to start immediately. Hanging up, he chatted for a while with Wadkin, shook hands and made his departure.

Riding into Boston by tunnel, Harry kept sharp lookout to make sure that he was unwatched. The car in which he rode was almost deserted, for it was an off hour in evening travel. None of the few passengers were suspicious characters, and Harry was soon convinced that he had not been trailed from Danner's apartment.

In that conclusion, Harry was correct. After their unfortunate experiences with The Shadow, crooks had been warned not to spoil their traps by springing them too soon. Harry Vincent was practically forgotten for the present.

But he would be remembered later—he and Ruth—when the right time came. Again the hand of a master murderer was tugging the cords to thwart The Shadow.

This time, the plotter had pushed his threat against two persons whose lives The Shadow valued.

## **CHAPTER XIX. MEN FROM THE SEA**

It was not until he reached Cornhill that Harry began to suspect brewing trouble. He had met Ruth at South Station; she was with him in the cab when it stopped in front of the Eastern Coffee Shop.

The place was closed; so were other coffee shops and the little book stores that lined the crooked walls of the curved street. Half out of the cab, Harry decided that there would be no

use hammering at a blank door.

Taking his seat beside Ruth, Harry wailed, hoping that there might be some signal from The Shadow. He looked back toward the lights of Scollay Square, realized something that had not occurred to him before.

The square was about midway between North Station and South Station. If it had been close to one, it would not be a likely place to bring a person who had come in from the other.

What if the call from Cranston had been a fake!

Harry hadn't stopped at his hotel; he had been too anxious to meet Ruth. He was realizing that some crafty enemy could have arranged this rendezvous, picking this location as a neutral midpoint on the guess that Ruth was in some Boston suburb and might arrive at either depot.

The Shadow did not appear. The best plan was to get clear before a menace came. Harry ordered the driver ahead. Without knowing it, he was putting himself deeper into the snare.

Another cab rolled in from Scollay Square, to follow Harry's. At the next corner a second cab cut in from the right. In the multitude of variegated taxis that cruise Boston's streets, Harry was unable to distinguish these as crook-manned vehicles, brought from cover especially for this occasion.

They were boxing Harry and Ruth; ready to smash the helpless cab should it break their cordon. Instead, Harry's driver happened to take the direction that the crooks wanted. Harry had told him to get out of traffic. He was doing it.

Caught in a web of narrow streets some blocks from Cornhill, the cab's dilemma was revealed.

A GRIMY taxi suddenly swooped around from a coming corner, blocked the path. Another wheeled up from behind. Both machines disgorged thugs. Amid the echoes of shrieking brakes, Harry tightened his fingers on an automatic.

He realized, an instant later, that fight was useless. His own chances of escape were slim; there would be none for Ruth.

Gunfire wouldn't come, if they surrendered, for this street, though dark, was too close to larger thoroughfares. Harry spoke quickly to Ruth; when guns poked through the windows, they both stretched their arms.

Bound and gagged, on the floor of another cab, Harry and Ruth were soon riding through a section that Harry recognized. Staring upward, he could see the superstructure of the elevated that ran above Atlantic Avenue.

Sounds from the harbor kept Harry informed of their progress along the water front. When the prisoners were finally hauled from the cab, darkness prevented Harry from learning the exact location. But he soon guessed it.

He and Ruth were carried along a rickety dock that made him remember the one mentioned by Barney. The wharf was high. They were lowered to the deck of the darkened vessel that was moored beside it.

The ship was the Escapade.

The prisoners were placed in a cramped forecandle, where a lighted lantern hung. The lantern's sway soon indicated that the Escapade was in motion; and Harry was conscious that the old craft was traveling with speed.

She had to be fast, with silent thrumming motors, to have participated in the rumrunning trade. That was years ago; but the Escapade had evidently been kept in sleek shape, or reconditioned for her present enterprises.

What concerned Harry most was the plight that would exist when the voyage ended. Neither he nor Ruth had been handled roughly by their tough captors, but that did not indicate that later treatment would be gentle.

Harry expected just the opposite. He knew that he was marked as an agent of The Shadow; that Ruth was classed as a person who knew too much about the affairs of Ferdinand Relf.

Perhaps they were being held as hostages. It might be that information would be demanded of them. At any rate, their probable destiny would be a trip overboard somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. Harry expected no mercy from his present captors.

AN hour passed. Propped in a front corner of the forecandle, Harry occasionally looked toward Ruth, gave her nods of encouragement that he did not feel. There was a sweated husky on watch, a stocky fellow whose sneery eyes frequently looked toward Harry. It took a while for Harry to get an idea across to him, but finally the fellow shuttled forward.

He lifted Harry's gag, to listen to what the prisoner had to say.

"Look here, Jake"—Harry had heard the rowdy's name—"where are we headed?"

"Around Cape Cod," jeered Jake. "Taking this moll"—he gestured toward Ruth—"back to where she belongs."

"We'll be close to shore before we get there -"

"Sure. But what's it to you?"

Harry half closed his eyes, lowered his whisper.

"It's a lot to you, Jake," he informed. "I'll pay you a grand and a half if you shove us ashore."

"Got the dough on you?"

"I'll have it before you've left us."

Harry did have the money. It was the cash that he had given Barney, only to have the fellow return it. Harry's captors hadn't bothered to frisk him on the way to the Escapade; but Jake didn't know that. He hadn't been with the gang.

Jake's eyes showed interest.

"Reach into my coat," Harry told him. "On the left—just inside the lining."

Jake complied. From a pocket that he didn't expect, he brought out a small wad of bills. He counted them—twenties and fifties—then growled:

"There's only a couple of centuries here."

"Sure," whispered Harry. "That's just a sample. Keep it for a deposit."

The rest of the cash was in other pockets, inner ones at the sides of Harry's vest. Harry kept that fact to himself, for he saw that Jake was convinced that cash would be had. The fellow had a rattish look; whether he intended to go through with the deal, Harry didn't know. It seemed worth the chance, though.

Jake shoved the gag between Harry's teeth, tightened it. Starting to put the few hundred in his pocket, he toned in Harry's car:

"I gotta get another guy in on it. We gotta grab a boat, to shove off when the time comes. But \_"

Jake swung about. A tall, stooped man was coming down the short companionway. He shoved himself into the light. His face was rough, with squinty eyes and ugly protruding lip. Canvas trousers and rubber slicker marked him as one of the few actual seamen aboard the Escapade.

"HELLO, Long Jack," gruffed Jake. "I was just making sure this guy was fixed tight."

"Long Jack" nodded; his lip-thrust was too wise to suit Jake. The tough suddenly decided to go through with the deal that Harry wanted. Long Jack was an obstacle to be handled at once.

"You think different, huh?" demanded Jake. "Well, you won't be figurin' that way much longer."

Jake whipped a revolver from his hip, shoved it for a space beneath the tall man's slicker. His purpose was to drill Long Jack through the heart, muffling the shot. A multitude of hopes flashed to Harry at that moment. They were near Cape Cod—if Jake finished Long Jack, he'd have to start the escape to save his own hide—it would work, with the shore close by!

In the midst of those quick thoughts, Long Jack ended Harry's last ray of opportunity.

Long Jack had a gun; he used it quicker than Jake. He sledged it with a jerky arm motion against Jake's skull before the confident thug knew the blow was on its way. Jake collapsed; dead, perhaps, for that blow had been hard driven.

Leaping back to the companionway, Long Jack bellowed to those above. A scurry of arriving men was immediate. Long Jack didn't have to tell his story. Sight of Jake gave the news.

The slugged thug's right hand held the revolver; his left fingers still clenched the bribe money that he had accepted from Harry. Without ado, Long Jack's companions lugged the traitor up the companionway.

From then on, orders from above kept Long Jack as sole guard of the forecastle. As hours passed, Harry and Ruth tried to sleep. There were intervals, though, when one or the other opened their eyes, only to see that constant sentinel watching them. There might be others aboard, like Jake, who would sell out if occasion offered; but Long Jack was not one of them. Nor could any of Jake's sort be reached while Long Jack had the prisoners in charge.

It must have been near dawn when Harry awakened from a doze to note that the lantern was hanging almost steady. He knew that the Escapade had reached the bay near Relf's former home. The old rumrunner was coming along shore.

Someone spoke to Long Jack from the companionway. Harry caught snatches of the conversation.

A batch of men were going ashore, but three were remaining to man a machine gun from a low cabin amidships. Long Jack was to watch the prisoners, with another crew member waiting at the top of the companionway. In case of trouble, word was to be passed to the machine-gun crew.

Engines had ceased their faint thrum. The Escapade was moored. The last episode of crime was to begin.

The hopeless look that Harry Vincent gave to Ruth Bryand was one that the girl had long feared would come.

Ruth sensed, at last, that no aid would be possible.

Not even from The Shadow.

## **CHAPTER XX. PROOF OF CRIME**

A CLUSTER of muffled men was creeping across the darkness of the shrubbed lawn beside Relf's mansion. From the east, the first faint tints of dawn shed no light upon that blackened stretch. These invaders were making their trip under perfect cover.

They listened to the low, sharp tones of the man who commanded them. Near the house, they deployed. The leader and three others remained close to the mansion wall; there, they dug rapidly with spades.

A muffled flashlight showed a slab uncovered from the turf. Two men hoisted it; there were steep stone steps beneath. The leader waited, a companion with him. He ordered the other two to descend.

Through a musty, stone-walled passage, the pair came to what seemed a solid wall. It was an old entrance used by smugglers. These thugs knew the trick to it; they found the catch, and the wall pressed aside.

They stepped into a square room that consisted of a rocky pool with footholds around the fringes. Straight above was a shaft; this was the bottom of the pit beneath the study formerly occupied by Ferdinand Relf.

There was another entrance to this rocky space from the other side of the pool. It came from the cellar of the old mansion, but its mouth was as well concealed as the passage that these crooks had used.

The two men let grappling hooks down into the pool. They hauled. Something caught the hooks and came up with them. A shapeless, water-soaked corpse was tugged to the rocks. The men stooped to examine it with flashlights. Before they could roll the corpse on its back, brilliance surrounded them.

The hollow chamber was lighted with spotlights from the opposite wall. Men were stepping into the glare, half a dozen of them. They held the snarling crooks covered. The blinking thugs recognized Vic Marquette as the leader of the squad. One of the flat-footed hoodlums gulped:

"The Feds!"

Marquette stepped forward to examine the water-logged body. He was puzzled as he eyed its clothing, but his real surprise came when he gingerly tipped the dead face-upward. The name that Vic uttered was spontaneous, as though he spoke it without real belief:

"Ferdinand Relf!"

OTHER Feds crowded close. They recognized the face that they had seen in many photographs. Incredible though they considered it, the dead man—whose condition showed that he had been drowned for days— was the very person that they sought on charges of murder!

Relf's face was gashed; his body badly broken. He had taken a fearful tumble from high above, to bash on rocks below the surface of the pool. Little able to move, he had drowned as a natural consequence.

While Marquette still stared, too amazed to speak, his next surprise arrived. A rasped voice, commanded from the outer passage, a tone that Marquette recognized.

"Stretch 'em!" ordered the voice. "We got you covered."

It was the voice of Nick Langion!

Vic Marquette showed brisk judgment in that pinch. He nudged two men beside him as he let his own revolver fall. They copied his example; all stood with upraised arms.

In the background were other Feds, shielded by the glaring lights. To bluff Nick was the only course; the longer such a game continued, the better would be the chances later. At this moment, Nick and his accompanying pal would use their triggers rapidly.

Nick Langion strolled into the light. As his first pair of thugs reclaimed their revolvers, Nick gave Relf's body a kick.

"There he is," sneered Nick. "Ferdinand Relf, the biggest of the big shots. The guy that handed James Danner a half million to start the Inter-Coastal Lines and slipped Henry Tilmot a whole million so's he could start passing out loans."

Marquette gaped despite himself.

"You didn't wise up to that, did you?" sneered Nick. "Those mugs were in it as deep as I was. Worse—because they were supposed to be honest, while Relf paid me outright to do his dirty work."

"When Relf had to bury himself in this dump"—Nick licked his lips as he continued—"we all had the same idea. Danner and Tilmot kept the dough he'd handed them, claiming it was theirs. So I helped 'em along, by squealing about Relf myself, never mentioning that I had plenty of his dough."

Nick enjoyed his recollections. He chuckled as he paused. Then:

"Why not? Relf had told me about Danner and Tilmot; but they didn't know it. So I saw a way to snag their dough—by making 'em think Relf was after them and me."

THE whole story was unfolded to Vic Marquette.

Nick Langion had been smart enough to go after Relf first. He had done it by buying out Shervel. If Marquette had been furnished with The Shadow's information, he would have seen exactly how that had been done.

The Escapade had come here, bringing Langion. Nick had popped in on Relf, thanks to Shervel. Caught off guard, Relf had been an easy victim. Under the threat of Nick's gun, he



had been forced to the alcove. Shervel had yanked the switch to drop him to doom.

It was Nick who had fled through the Walnut Room, muffled in Relf's attire. Shervel had kept calling him Relf, to keep the dumb servants ignorant of their master's death.

Once in Boston, Shervel had worked with Nick. He had even bought out some of the racketeer's henchmen in order to stage that attack outside the Caravan Club, a thrust for which Nick had been ready. That made it look as though Relf still lived, and was out to get Langion.

But there had been no sell-out by the crooks who had fitted the steel walls at Danner's apartment and Tilmot's house.

They had worked under Nick's own orders, leaving sliding panels through which Nick could come to murder Danner and Tilmot.

Nick had taken swag from both abodes. He had riveted the walls when he left, well enough to pass inspection. But he knew his game had slipped when Cranston and Marquette came to see him. That had forced Nick to play his final ace.

Marquette remembered how Nick had fumbled with the floor plugs. That was when he had started a time bomb set by himself! Probably one that ticked, but wouldn't go off until he pulled another switch.

While others had been forced to flee the premises, Nick had hastily gathered his swag—all from his own safe—and made a getaway through a wall exit in his own room. He had been clear of harm when the blast hit.

"It's drilling through your skull, ain't it?" jeered Nick as he watched Marquette's expression. "Well, your konk ain't so thick, Marquette. I always did figure you had more brains than the dumb bulls I run up against.

"It wasn't you, though, that counted. The guy I had to figure was The Shadow. I tried to shiv him here, after Shervel shoved him into the wrong room without Relf knowing it. But I missed. He nearly clipped me when I lammed. Maybe he wised up to some of the game, right then.

"That's why I shivved a guy named Faskin—and Shervel, too. They were lugs who knew too much. And I'll tell you something, Marquette. This friend Cranston of yours is close to The Shadow. Working with him, although"—Nick was thinking of Kent Allard—"although I don't think Cranston is The Shadow.

"He messed it, leaving the pay-off to you. Here you are, digging through this joint to find that Bryand girl's body, when I've already got her on a boat right outside here. Her and a guy named Vincent—one of The Shadow's stooges.

"I had to come here"—Nick's tone was vicious—"to get Relf's body. Because The Shadow was too wise. But what I can't take out on The Shadow, I'm taking out on them—and on you!"

Nick stepped back. He was ready for the signal that would start guns blasting toward the men who stood before him. In the background, the extra Feds were tense, ready to beat the crooks to the shots. It was a bad spot, though, for Vic Marquette. He was the main target. Something was needed to assure his safety.

It came, from the passage behind Nick Langion, a fierce, shuddering laugh that could not be mistaken. It was like the roll of doom, with echoes that were hollow, mirthless.

Nick Langion sprang about, dived through the passage, shouting for his comrades to finish Marquette and the Feds. But those crooks, like their leader, had turned, startled by The Shadow's challenge.

In those grim seconds, Marquette and the men beside him had a chance to pile upon the three who were waveringly anxious to follow Nick. Instead, Marquette grabbed the others, hauled them to the rocky floor. The reserves in the background fired.

Nick's three thugs were sprawled by bullets. Marquette came to his feet, sprang over the forms of the three crooks who had been eliminated from battle. Followed by his squad. Marquette took up the chase of Nick Langion.

The master crook had gained the outside air, only to hear the roar of battle. The Shadow was somewhere on the lawn, picking off the outspread crooks. He shifted, his position impossible to guess, as he stabbed bullets at the rooted gunners who revealed themselves by their own shots.

Nick bolted in the direction of the Escapade, hoping to reach its deck before The Shadow blocked him. He saw a gun flame from beside a bush. It was The Shadow's. Marquette and the Feds were out from the passage, taking over the fight. Nick realized suddenly that The Shadow's goal was also the Escapade.

Swinging a gun, Nick tried to find The Shadow in the darkness. He ran right into him. Nick's gun was wrenched away. He fought back, ripping furiously at The Shadow's throat. The cloak came half away and The Shadow's slouch hat was gone, when Nick managed a wild shout.

"The searchlight!" He was calling to the crew aboard the rumrunner. "Flash it! Start the typewriter!"

BRIGHT-SHAFTED light cleaved from the deck of the Escapade. It flooded the lawn, showed Marquette and the Feds caught in the glare. Under the fringe of the searchlight were the three machine-gunners, ready to start action.

But Nick saw other figures rising against the streaky dawn from the deck of the rumrunner. They were the prisoners. Harry and Ruth, aiming revolvers for the machine-gun crew. They fired squarely into the midst of the unsuspecting trio.

The machine gun never clicked. One of its handlers rolled from the deck, to splash into the bay. Another did a long stagger, toward the stern, and sprawled there. The third coiled beside the machine gun. His curled position was the same as that of the guard left on the deck beside the forecastle.

That watcher had been slugged long ago by The Shadow. For Nick Langion knew the truth as he tussled anew with the foe who gripped him. He could see The Shadow's uncovered face in the glare of the searchlight.

It was the face of Long Jack! Nick Langion never guessed about the room in Boston, where the real Long Jack lay. He never realized that The Shadow had looked the fellow up beforehand, profiting from a list of names supplied by Barney Faskin.

Nick had no time to realize anything, except that the muzzle of a .45 was planted between his eyes, its cold, round pressure as icy as actual death.

His arms relaxing, Nick fell away. He met the blaze of merciless eyes from the face that no longer cared about disguise. With a frantic yell, Nick dived away and fled in the very

direction that The Shadow wanted—straight toward the arms of the waiting Feds.

Marquette saw that Nick was unarmed; shouted for his men to hold their fire. It was too late. Guns sputtered. Nick Langion nose-dived to the turf. He was dead when Marquette reached him. As Vic announced the fact, the searchlight suddenly went black.

From the dawn-streaked darkness came the quiver of The Shadow's laugh. It sounded triumphant when it reached the deck of the Escapade. There was stirring aboard the rakish boat. Its motor throbbed.

Vic Marquette was the first to the shore. There lay others from the Escapade, wounded thugs whose urge for battle was finished. Stacked beside them were huge bundles—Nick's own cash that he had received from Relf, plus the swag that he had taken from Danner and Tilmot.

The Escapade was cleaving through the waters of the bay, a low, swift-moving ship manned by a new crew of three. It was heading toward that little isle where the lighthouse stood; there, it would pass from view as it had before.

From the stretch of water came the laugh that listeners had heard before; louder, unleashed to strident strength ending with a shuddering crescendo.

The trees, the walls of the old mansion, even the blackened spaces of the fading night, brought back their echoes of The Shadow's mirth!

THE END