



# Q

## Maxwell Grant

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### CHAPTER I

DETECTIVES BRAUN AND JEPSON formed a good team. They proved it when they left the subway shuttle train and went out through the subway turnstiles, toward the concourse of the Grand Central Terminal. The man they were tailing did not identify them as a pair of headquarters dicks.

He was a dapper man, with a tiny mustache that bobbed whenever he twitched his lips, which was often. Braun and Jepson knew who he was: Fence Cortho, peddler of stolen goods, back in Manhattan after a long absence.

Braun paused at a newsstand to buy some cigarettes. He scanned the headlines of the evening newspapers, accepting them rather grimly. They told of unsolved crimes, wherein crooks had blasted their way into vaults and warehouses through the use of high explosives.

Plenty of swag had been taken in these robberies. Somebody was certainly peddling the loot. It could be Fence Cortho; such work was his specialty. With a sidelong glance, Braun spotted Cortho turning into a passage that led to the terminal's lower level. Braun resumed the trail.

Jepson had gone past the ramp that Cortho used. The second detective had paused, however, to set his watch by a station clock, a very natural procedure. Reversing his route, he followed Braun down to the

lower concourse. Apparently strangers to each other, both detectives spied their man again.

Fence Cortho had stopped at the information kiosk in the center of the lower concourse. He was one of half a dozen persons who were asking for timetables. Receiving one, he thrust it in his pocket, did a face-about and went toward a stairway leading to the upper level.

There was always a crowd in Grand Central around eight in the evening. Losing themselves in the throng, the detectives kept close tabs on Fence. All were caught in an incoming tide of passengers from a Boston train. The swarm took them toward the taxicab driveway.

Suddenly realizing that Fence Cortho intended to take a cab, both detectives made valiant efforts to catch up with him. By then, they were trapped between moving barricades of bag-carrying porters; the jostled redcaps did not understand that they were hindering two detectives from overtaking a man wanted by the law.

Out through the door to the taxicabs, Fence coolly pushed himself into a cab and told the driver where to take him. The astonished redcap who had opened the cab door gradually found his wits, and put a pile of bags into the next cab.

Detective Braun managed to get the fourth cab in line; he flashed a badge and told the driver to follow the cabs ahead. It was a tall order, since the cabs scattered after they left the terminal exit. Within three minutes after he took up Cortho's trail, Braun had lost it.

Braun's running mate fared better. Instead of taking a cab, Jepson grabbed the porter whom Fence had pushed aside. He asked if the redcap had heard Cortho's order to the cab driver. The porter nodded.

"Yussuh. He said, 'Hotel Clarion.' That's what the gen'leman told the driver" - the redcap was eyeing Jepson's badge respectfully - "as sure as I'm standing here."

Detective Jepson started for a telephone booth. He hadn't gone a dozen steps before he made a quick grab for a long-legged, pasty-faced man who was dodging for an exit. In terrier fashion, Jepson wheeled the fellow around.

"So it's Dip Perkin," growled Jepson. "What're you doing round here, trying to give somebody the roust?"

"Honest, Jepson," whined the pickpocket, "I ain't ditched no leathers since I got off the Island."

Backing Perkin by a bulletin board, Jepson gave the dip a rapid frisk. Finding only some small change, which was evidently Dip's own cash, Jepson told him to be on his way and not to stop until he was outside the Grand Central area.

Over his shoulder, Dip muttered thanks as he shuffled away. Jepson didn't bother to listen. He was stepping into a telephone booth.

THE detective had scarcely started his call to headquarters before Dip Perkin appeared again, warily pushing his pasty face from the corner beyond the phone booths. Sliding into the nearest booth, he dropped a nickel in the slot and hastily dialed a number.

A gruff voice answered; it sounded forced. Dip had heard that voice often, at various numbers which he had called. He recognized it, though he didn't know its owner.

"There's two dicks tailing Fence," confided Dip. "They're wise to where he's stopping. He's headed for the Clarion; it looks like they'll be putting the arm on him after he gets there."

The gruff voice acknowledged the timely information. Hearing the clatter of a telephone receiver, Dip sidled from the booth and was off around the corner while Detective Jepson was still talking to headquarters.

Several minutes later police calls were on the air. They were heard by a solitary passenger in a large limousine that was just reaching Manhattan by way of the Holland Tunnel.

The passenger was a tall man, attired in evening clothes. His face, hawkish in its contour, had an immobile, masklike calm. His name was Lamont Cranston, and he had a habit of listening to short-wave calls when he rode in his expensive limousine.

Headquarters was calling a radio car that patrolled the neighborhood near the Hotel Clarion. Cranston heard the order:

"Stop at Hotel Clarion... Look for man answering the description of Fence Cortho... Arrest and hold him until arrival of Inspector Cardona -"

A soft laugh whispered from the lips of Cranston. The repressed tone produced a weird, shivery effect within the cramped confines of the limousine. It was a token of identity, that laugh.

It marked Lamont Cranston, gentleman of leisure, as a double personality. His whispery mirth belonged to another being; one who dealt in swift, uncanny action: The Shadow!

Long known as crime's superfoe, The Shadow, like the law, was seeking traces of persons responsible for the recent robberies. His clues, so far, were identical with those that the police had gained. Crooks had used powerful explosives in their crimes, obliterating all evidence except the actual blasts.

The Shadow hoped to move ahead of the law. The first step, therefore, was to keep up with it, which explained The Shadow's interest in current police calls.

Like Detectives Braun and Jepson, The Shadow recognized the possible link between the robbery mob and a swag peddler like Fence Cortho.

At the same time, the tie-up lacked wisdom. Fence Cortho was an expert in freezing hot goods, but his contacts were mostly in New York, where he was wanted. Crooks knew that Fence couldn't handle local sales; if they planned to dispose of their loot in other cities, they could find better peddlers in the towns themselves.

To The Shadow, the coming arrest of Fence Cortho looked like a routine matter; a case connected with the past, not the present. Thumbing the dial of his short-wave set, The Shadow tuned in on broadcasts from amateur senders.

He was listening for something that he did not expect to hear, for it had come at comparatively rare intervals. It was a wireless call that the law had so far overlooked, or ignored, yet which had a potential importance in The Shadow's estimate.

The call had come on nights when crime struck home; it had a possible connection with recent explosions. But the blasts had never come on successive nights; and since the last explosion was only one day old, this seemed an unlikely evening for a message.

Long, thin fingers suddenly went motionless.

It was coming again; that mystery call!

"Dash - dash - dot - dash -"

A pause; the call was repeated. It formed a letter in Morse; the initial, perhaps, of the sender. Again and again it came, as though to drill itself on some particular listener:

"Q... Q... Q... Q -"

It was slowing, but it still gave the letter "Q," and nothing more. The Shadow's eyes went shut; he tried to shake away the tone of that coded letter, which his brain was repeating in advance of each coming call. Out of a self-enforced blankness, The Shadow heard it again:

"Dash - dash - dot - dash -"

Imperceptible to an ordinary listener, something had crept into the "Q" call that gave The Shadow the very link he needed. In a trice he had the proof of his suspicions. The mysterious Q was the master hand behind the recent crimes!

It wasn't mere coincidence; it was fact. Keenly, The Shadow was trying to locate the direction of the call. His car, equipped with two-way radio, was a perfect direction finder. As it swung a corner, The Shadow gauged the exact angle at which the call came strongest.

If the slackening "Q... Q... Q... Q -" kept on, The Shadow could tell whether it lay in front or in back of his moving limousine, which had by this time gone many blocks uptown. He knew that it had moved to various places on various evenings, for he had checked it in the past from two locations.

Given time, The Shadow might find the present headquarters of the mysterious Q. But that was something that Q, himself, had probably foreseen. The slowed call cut off, as abruptly as it had begun. The Shadow heard no more of it.

To The Shadow, however, Q meant more than crime. It signified crime of a specific sort, or - in a sense - a deed that went along with crime. Contrasted to that fact was The Shadow's well-formed belief that no robbery was due tonight.

As his fingers turned the dial, The Shadow heard new police calls coming through. They were mere routine calls; the instructions to pick up Fence Cortho had evidently been acknowledged. But The Shadow's own decision was reversed.

The Shadow believed in coincidences, because he knew they often occurred; but this was a time when chance had struck too suddenly.

The law's guess regarding Cortho could still be wrong, while The Shadow's analysis was right. Yet, to practical purposes, the law might be right and The Shadow wrong!

There could be a link, a twisted one. Something that lay beneath the surface; a situation away from crime's apparent purpose. The Shadow's brain was probing those depths, finding various answers. Though all were incomplete, The Shadow could fathom one essential fact.

A whispered laugh stirred within the limousine. Drawing out a hidden shelf beneath the rear seat, The Shadow produced a slouch hat and a black cloak, along with a brace of automatics. As the car approached a lighted avenue, he reached for the speaking tube that connected with the chauffeur's seat.

In the slow, even tone of Cranston, The Shadow spoke:

"Turn here, Stanley. Take me to the Hotel Clarion."

## CHAPTER II. THE WRONG SHADOW

THE HOTEL CLARION boasted a glittering lobby that formed a midtown meeting spot. It was just the hotel that a man like Fence Cortho would want. Bold enough to appear in public, Fence preferred crowds to space. He figured that the chances of being spotted in a Manhattan crowd were about one in a million.

Such calculation had made Fence unwary. He had mingled with too many crowds, some in the wrong places. The Times Square shuttle was one; it was a crossroads often watched by detectives like Braun and Jepson. Though he hadn't noticed the trailing dicks, Fence had become uneasy after his subway trip.

He was glad that he'd thought to take a cab from Grand Central. He was also glad to be back at his hotel.

Waiting at the elevators, Fence didn't notice, from the elevator signal clocks, that one had stopped at his own floor, the fourth. Nor did he observe the darkish passenger who stepped from that car along with others when the car reached the lobby.

The man in question had a choppy face; was heavy-browed and big-lipped. He saw Fence turned the other way, and was careful to shift in the opposite direction.

Only Fence Cortho would have recognized the darkish man, and considered his action specially adapted to emergency. Once away, the fellow strolled indifferently to a telephone booth, from which he watched Fence enter the elevator. The darkish man saw that Fence was nervous, and it rather pleased him.

In his booth, the darkish man dialed a number, the same that Dip Perkin had called from Grand Central a quarter hour before. To the voice that answered, the darkish man said:

"This is Shoy. It's O.K., chief."

From his lookout post, Shoy watched a further scene unfold. A uniformed policeman had entered the hotel and stopped at the inquiry desk. A girl there was shaking her head, when one of the house detectives stepped over.

The cop spoke to the hotel dick, who gave a knowing nod. The two were starting toward the elevator, when a stocky man accosted them.

The arrival was swarthy; he wore a poker-faced expression. Shoy recognized Inspector Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan police force.

Like certain persons of questionable repute, Shoy didn't care to remain on any premises occupied by Cardona. Taking advantage of the conference that Cardona was holding, Shoy backed from the telephone booth.

Spying a side exit from the lobby, Shoy took it. As he went out, the darkish man tucked a flattish box farther beneath his overcoat. The box was encircled by a coil of wire; it looked like a new style of portable radio cabinet.

Concentrated upon the hotel dick's story, Cardona did not observe Shoy's departure. The house detective was telling Joe about a man who had registered, a few days before, under the name of Cortland, in Room 412. He was a wary sort, this Cortland, and the house dick classed him as a man traveling under an alias.

He'd watched the fellow go in and out, and this evening Cortland had looked very nervous while waiting

for an elevator. He had only entered the lobby a few minutes ago; that fact, plus the dick's description of the man in question, convinced Cardona that the fellow was Fence Cortho.

Telling the officer from the patrol car to wait in the lobby, Cardona started upstairs, accompanied by the house detective. They were the only two passengers on the elevator. Its door was closing when a tall man strolled into the lobby, carrying a coat over his arm.

He was wearing evening clothes, and seemed in no hurry to get anywhere. His stride, however, was rapid; it was his manner that made it appear slow.

The stranger's eyes were keen, though their glance gave a casual impression. He caught a flash of the two men as the elevator door was closing; before stepping into the next car, he watched the dial of the first elevator and saw where it stopped.

He was leaving the ground floor just as Cardona and the house dick alighted at the fourth.

As the pair moved past a corner on their way to Room 412, Cardona undertoned:

"Got a gun?"

The house detective produced one.

"We may need them," declared Cardona. "This fellow Cortho is supposed to be working with the dynamite mob. Give me that passkey of yours and I'll walk in on him. You cover the hallway."

There was a light shining through Cortho's transom; they could hear the man inside as he moved across the room. The house dick gave a whisper as Cardona started softly to unlock the door.

"There's a writing desk in the corner, inspector. Sounds like he's going over to -"

A GRATING chair brought interruption; the sound testified that the detective's guess was correct. Nudging his companion, reminding him to keep the hallway covered, Cardona turned the passkey, at the same time leveling his revolver.

At that instant, a gunshot ripped through the hallway, and a bullet whined between the heads of Cardona and the house detective. The shot came from the corner near the elevators. To Cardona, it meant the opening gun in an invasion by crooks who had come to prevent the arrest of Fence Cortho.

Two figures separated, as if the wind from the bullet had blown them. Cardona was responsible for the double dive. He gave the house dick a shove in one direction, and used his own push to recoil in the other. But Joe didn't lurch into Fence's room, for two reasons.

First, Cardona hadn't quite unlocked the door when the shot reverberated; again, Joe wasn't going to take any chances with Fence, now that the crook had been warned that persons were in the corridor.

Joe had sent the house dick forward, but across the hall, to a deep doorway on the other side. His own direction being opposite, the ace inspector did a backward dive into the doorway just beyond Fence's. It offered shallow shelter, and Cardona knew it; that was why the inspector took quick aim with his Police Positive as he went.

With the stab of his own revolver, Cardona heard a sound that bewildered him. It came from near the corner where Cardona aimed; the challenging mockery of an inimitable laugh that could mean one fighter only: The Shadow!

Hitherto, that strident tone had always signified aid in behalf of the law. Tonight, it seemingly could not mean rescue. The Shadow had not driven off arriving foemen. He was the marksman who had fired that shot at the two men outside of Room 412!

Only The Shadow could have fired it.

Except for Cardona and the house dick, The Shadow was the only person in the corridor. Cardona saw a cloaked form fading toward the opposite wall. Joe's shot had missed. Momentarily he was glad, until he was told in no uncertain terms that The Shadow was his foe.

Answering Joe's fire came tonguing shots that nicked the edge of the doorway just above the clutching fingers of Cardona's left hand. As Joe jerked away, another slug whizzed past his gun hand, so close that the inspector could feel its scorching heat.

Wheeling, The Shadow jabbed two shots at the house dick, who was blazing blindly with his revolver. Cardona heard the fellow howl as he sprawled.

Madly, Cardona pumped bullets at the black-cloaked attacker. He saw the figure zigzag, but kept on shooting, confident that he would clip his foe. Maybe such shots couldn't reach The Shadow; but Cardona felt that it didn't apply in this case.

Hat and cloak, even the laugh - they seemed genuine, but Joe would not believe it. This couldn't be the real Shadow. Some artful crook had disguised himself to fool Cardona, and thereby aid in Cortho's getaway.

Cardona was more than anxious to drop the foe in black; he felt that he had a double score to settle, having guessed that he was shooting at the wrong Shadow.

Cardona saw the masquerader spin into a shallow doorway. Forgetting caution, Joe leaped from his own shelter and spurted a quick shot. His next would have been point-blank if the cloaked foe hadn't sprawled.

Seeing the masquerader strike the floor and roll, Cardona started a forward lunge, intending to deliver bullets at close range.

Up from the carpet came fresh jabs of flame, accompanied by a laugh that had all the tone of a vengeful sneer. The rolling sprawl was faked; the cloaked foe had used it to get away from Cardona's pointblank aim.

Right now, he was giving Cardona two guns, not one. Joe wrenched himself half out of his shoulder sockets, turned to dive to the far end of the corridor.

As he went, with more slugs skimming past him, Cardona was doubly sure that this was the wrong Shadow. The right one, whether fighting a mistaken battle, or gone berserk, would never have missed a target such as Cardona made at present. Nor would the wrong Shadow miss, if Joe didn't do something about it.

WHAT Cardona did was almost ludicrous. He grabbed a fat fire extinguisher from the wall and clung to it like a shield as he turned to shoot back at his foe.

Again Joe heard a sinister laugh, then the cough of a .45 automatic. Cardona staggered, as a bullet punctured the metal case of the extinguisher.

He wasn't hit. It was the wallop of the bullet that jarred him. Tilted upward, the extinguisher spouted

liquid from its side. Recovering his balance, Cardona saw the black-clad marksman, well beyond Cortho's door, aiming his gun, as though awaiting Cardona's own move.

There had been a dozen shots in less than the same number of seconds. Trapped between doorways, his gun empty, the shielding extinguisher slipping from his grasp, Cardona stared, half hypnotized, at the pointed gun, expecting another blast - the last.

It came.

If all the noise of fired guns had been combined into one big roar, they would have been puny compared to the thing that happened. The muzzle that let off the titanic burst was nearly seven feet high and four feet wide. It was the doorway of Cortho's room.

The whole space opened, splintering the stout door into shreds the size of match sticks. With the roar came a mighty spasm of flame, like the opening of a blast furnace. The whole floor of the corridor quaked, rocking Cardona from his feet. The building seemed to shudder in response to the blast.

The shock made the recent fray seem trivial. A man numbed, Cardona reeled forward with the spouting fire extinguisher; he began to spray its hose on flaming chunks of furniture that strewn the wrecked room, Joe was wondering what had become of Cortho, when a man stumbled into him.

It wasn't Fence Cortho. The man was the house detective, even more bewildered than Cardona. His own senses returning, Cardona realized that the dick wasn't injured at all. His howl, his dive, had been inspired by bullets that sizzled too close for his comfort, not because of hits.

Shoving the fire extinguisher into the fellow's hands, Cardona sprang out into the hall. His foot kicked something; he stooped to pick it up. The thing was curved, and made of leather; the handle of a suitcase. Clutched in a fist, the suitcase handle had survived intact, but the hand that had gripped it was gone.

Cortho's hand! Blotted out with the man himself, reduced to atoms by a bomb planted in the suitcase!

Only a substance as powerful as TNT could have wrought such complete destruction. If Cardona had entered that room to apprehend Cortho, the ace inspector would have made a similar trip into complete oblivion.

But Cardona wasn't thinking of himself, or Cortho. He was wondering about the cloaked fighter who had risked his own life to drive Joe and the house detective away from the door of Room 412.

Arriving at the very moment when Cardona was about to enter the room, The Shadow had lacked time to give any warning except with bullets.

He had chosen that method as a sure one, and it had worked. The only hazard had been The Shadow's own, the chance that a return bullet might clip him. For The Shadow's shots, aimed by a master among marksmen, were as harmless as blanks. Their closeness was merely part of his effort to make his attack seem real.

Fearful that he had found The Shadow as a target, Cardona stared along the floor toward the corridor corner. He saw no figure stretched there. Instead, from beyond the corner, Cardona heard the whispered throb of a parting laugh; a tone that betokened satisfaction.

The wrong Shadow had turned out to be the right one. Correctly, The Shadow had interpreted Q's message to mean death for Fence Cortho. Too late to balk the scheduled crime, The Shadow had saved two other victims from a similar fate.



### CHAPTER III. FACTS FROM THE PAST

A FEW hours after the explosion at the Hotel Clarion, four men gathered in conference at the exclusive Cobalt Club. One of the four was Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, who spent much of his time at the club after office hours.

Broad-faced, with short-clipped mustache, Weston was brisk of manner. He formed a sharp contrast to the man who sat beside him, Bryce Dalvan. Long-featured, with wide forehead and sharp-pointed chin, Dalvan was hesitant in speech, troubled in tone whenever he spoke.

Dalvan had reason to be so. He was the near-victim of a previous explosion, the one that had occurred the day before. News of another tragedy had ruined what poise Dalvan had earlier been able to command.

The news-bringer was present. He was Joe Cardona. He had a full report on the death of Fence Cortho; that was, as full a report as the law had been able to compile.

Lamont Cranston was the fourth member of the party. Also a member of the Cobalt Club, Cranston had dropped in, to find his friend the police commissioner chatting with Bryce Dalvan. He had just begun to hear Dalvan's story of last night's crime, when Cardona had come in with his report on a fresh case.

"Resume your story, Mr. Dalvan," suggested Weston. "It sheds important light on the operations of the robbery ring."

Dalvan gave his testimony. The explosion of yesterday had occurred at eight in the evening, outside a jewelry store. It had blown an automobile to pieces and smashed the store window.

Some crooks had sprung through the gap and made off with a fair-sized haul, but the robbery had been trivial compared with previous crimes.

Behind the indifferent expression of Cranston, The Shadow was keenly interested in Dalvan's account. It furnished new angles to a case that had previously seemed ordinary. Early police reports had stated that the explosion occurred within the jewelry store, not outside it.

"You see, Cranston," said the commissioner to his friend, "the car that blew up happened to belong to Mr. Dalvan, whose office is next door to the jewelry store. He is in the real estate business."

"It wasn't my own car," corrected Dalvan. "It belonged to one of my collectors, Tillingham. He was killed in the explosion. But it was pure luck that I wasn't with Tillingham at the time. If he had stopped at the office a little earlier, he would have found me there and I would have gone with him on his trip."

"To make collections?" inquired Weston.

"Yes," replied Dalvan. "Our last stop was to be at the Gibraltar Trust Co., which is open until nine o'clock. I intended to draw twenty thousand dollars, as a fund for next month's cash transactions. Something which I do regularly."

Commissioner Weston proceeded to analyze the case in efficient fashion. It was obvious that crooks had planted the bomb in Tillingham's car. They were on hand in cars of their own, ready to trail the collector and his passenger, Dalvan.

The bomb had gone off ahead of time, which was a way with bombs occasionally. Dalvan had been lucky enough not to be with Tillingham when the collector was killed, and the crooks had been somewhat lucky, too. The chance smashing of a window in a second-rate jewelry store had enabled them to stage a

small robbery.

But they had lost their chance for the cash profit which would have been theirs, had the bomb blown after Dalvan and Tillingham left the bank with the twenty thousand dollars. Obviously, the crooks would have grabbed the cash box from the wreckage and made away with it.

TO a degree, Weston's theory fitted well with The Shadow's own findings. Last night, he had heard the Q signals just after nine o'clock, which was when Dalvan should have been on his return trip from the bank.

Very definitely, Q, whoever he was, had not learned of the ill-timed bomb that exploded nearly an hour before.

The case threw new light on Q, altering The Shadow's analysis of the signals. Evidently, the Q call did not always signify that a blast was to be planted or discharged; sometimes, that was attended to beforehand, in which case Q flashed his word as a signal for other crooks to be ready for their part.

Dalvan was talking again, explaining the reason for his worry. He put the matter very frankly. Though crooks had been after his cash, rather than himself, he feared that they would make him a future target.

His present testimony was putting him in jeopardy, because it gave the law some valuable clues. Criminals who could plant bombs unmolested might easily wreak their vengeance on Dalvan, as an object lesson to other persons who might also help the police.

Such talk made Weston chew his lips. He couldn't dispute Dalvan's logic. Tonight, Fence Cortho had been blasted into nothingness, without cash profit to the crooks. Since this case smacked of vengeance, the rule could apply to Dalvan, too.

"I see your point, Mr. Dalvan," conceded the commissioner. "Therefore, I assure you that nothing you have said shall pass beyond this group. Every effort will be made to protect you. Should you feel any precautions necessary, notify us at once."

The assurance relieved Dalvan. He settled back in his chair to listen to Cardona's account of Cortho's death.

Cardona related how Detectives Braun and Jepson had trailed the wanted man to the Grand Central Terminal, where they had seen him pick up the timetable from the information booth in the lower concourse.

Joe mentioned Jepson's encounter with Dip Perkin, but regarded it as unimportant. Dip was too small a fry to have figured in the tragedy that followed.

"We don't know why Fence was back in town," admitted Cardona, "but we do know that he intended to get out again. The fact that he picked up a timetable at Grand Central is proof that he was going to travel."

"To where?" inquired Weston.

"I wish I knew," returned Cardona. "Unfortunately, we couldn't find any trace of the timetable. It was blotted out along with Fence Cortho."

"Did you inquire at the information booth?"

"Yes. But we couldn't find anybody who remembered Cortho, let alone what timetable he asked for.

Those fellows hand out timetables just like a slot machine would. We know that Fence was going to lam; but how far he intended to travel nobody can tell us."

The slightest of smiles displayed itself on Cranston's lips. His tone was quiet, rather casual, as he remarked:

"Probably not more than forty miles from New York."

Cardona stared. If The Shadow had made such a statement, Joe might have believed it. Coming from Cranston, it didn't seem to carry weight.

Nevertheless, the commissioner's friend had occasionally surprised Cardona with some startling statements. Maybe Cranston had a hunch and Cardona always liked hunches.

"Tell us some more, Mr. Cranston," suggested Cardona, politely. Then, with a change of tone, Joe added: "I'd say that you've made a pretty wide statement."

"A rather narrow one," was Cranston's smiling correction. "Forty miles is a very small radius, inspector."

"The smaller the better. But how do you figure it?"

"Your men reported that Cortho went to the booth on the lower level," stated The Shadow. "Ordinarily, a person would have gone to the main booth, on the upper level."

"Agreed. But what has the lower level to do with it?"

"Simply that most local trains go out from the lower level. Therefore, we may assume that Cortho wanted a local timetable. Which, in turn, limits his interest to some place within about forty miles of New York."

CRANSTON'S analysis won Cardona's prompt acclaim. Even Commissioner Weston, who disliked hunches, voiced his approval of this one, because his friend had backed it with logic.

Bryce Dalvan, also, was impressed, though he stared blankly at the mention of Fence Cortho, as though wondering what the man's nickname meant.

"Get all the information you have on Cortho," Weston told Cardona. "Find out the names of any dealers who have handled stolen goods within the circle that Cranston mentions. You can concentrate solely on towns reached by trains from Grand Central."

Cardona wanted to go into further details regarding the explosion at the Hotel Clarion, but Weston didn't consider it important. In a way, Cardona was glad. He couldn't tell the full story without emphasizing The Shadow's part, and that might have annoyed the commissioner.

Actually, Weston recognized the part that The Shadow played in hunting down crime, but officially he had to ignore it. No one knew who The Shadow was except The Shadow himself; therefore, it was impossible to class him as a definite person.

Tonight, the doubt had been emphasized more than ever. Even Inspector Cardona, one of the few men who claimed ability at recognizing The Shadow, had been completely deceived.

As Weston had once put it, to recognize The Shadow would mean that anyone who masked himself in black could claim such an identity. Tonight, for once, Cardona was inclined to agree.

The conference ended. Bryce Dalvan made a careful exit from the Cobalt Club, and Cardona told Braun and Jepson, who were waiting outside, to follow the real-estate man to his penthouse and make sure that

no crooks were on his trail.

Lamont Cranston left in his limousine, presumably bound for his home in New Jersey. Instead, he ordered Stanley to take him to a neighborhood in Manhattan where the car had often gone before.

On the way, Cranston became The Shadow, cloaking himself in black. When Stanley parked on an obscure street, a vague figure drifted from the car like a puff of fading smoke.

Soon afterward, a bluish light appeared in a dark-walled room. The Shadow was in his sanctum, his hidden headquarters somewhere in the heart of Manhattan. His hands, long-fingered beneath the bluish glow, were plucking a stack of recent newspaper clippings.

As Cranston, The Shadow had decided not to mention an added fact to Weston and Cardona; one that had occurred to him after he established the forty-mile radius that applied to Fence Cortho.

The town of Ossining happened to be within forty miles of New York City. A pleasant town, on the main lines of the New York Central System, Ossining also happened to be the nearest town to Sing Sing Prison.

It wasn't likely that Fence Cortho had planned a trip to Ossining. Nor was it certain that he had intended to take a train at all. People could want timetables for two reasons: to take trains, and to meet them.

Perhaps Fence had planned to meet someone who was coming in from Ossining in the near future. If so, The Shadow's clippings might afford a clue. The tiny slips of printed paper flowed under the touch of deft fingers, until the stack was two thirds exhausted. There, the motion stopped.

Keen eyes read a clipping. A hand reached up and plucked the bluish light. Absolute darkness engulfed the room when the bluish light went off.

A whispered laugh stirred the gloom. With its finish, the sanctum was empty. The Shadow was gone; he had found his mission for the morrow.

## **CHAPTER IV. TWO MEN MEET**

LATE the next afternoon, a local train from Peekskill disgorged its usual quota of passengers at Grand Central. Among those who alighted were two who might have attracted attention had anyone bothered to notice them.

One was a middle-aged man who walked with a slight shuffle. His face, though rounded, had a noticeable pallor that wasn't due to the platform lights. He was an ex-con, just out of Sing Sing, who felt it rather curious to be at large in the world.

The other was a hawk-faced individual whose natural stroll left him well behind the other passengers. The last person to leave the train gate, he was unnoticed by the pale man who preceded him. From a vantage point, he watched the actions of the Sing Sing graduate.

In squinty fashion, the ex-con was looking for somebody that he couldn't find. Hesitatingly, he shuffled toward a stairway; stopped suddenly as a darkish man accosted him. Gaping at choppy, big-lipped features, the man from Sing Sing gave a gulp:

"Rigger Shoy!"

"Hello, Jute!" returned Shoy, extending his hand. "You didn't expect to see me, did you?"

Jute shook his head.

"I didn't expect to see anybody," he began. "They forget us, Rigger, after we go to the Big House. It's just as well they do. A trip up the river changes a man's outlook, Rigger."

"Quit kidding," laughed Shoy, slapping his hand on the pale man's shoulder. "Nobody could forget a pen man like Jute Bantry. They don't come in your class, Jute."

The term "pen man" made Jute wince. It meant a forger; but "pen" had another meaning. Jute thought of the penitentiary he had just left.

"I don't want to talk to you, Rigger," he said. "I've been in stir. It isn't healthy taking up old acquaintances. I don't want to talk to anybody that I used to know."

"Not even Fence Cortho?"

The question brought a flicker to Jute's pallid face. The forger tried to cover his change of countenance, but Shoy merely grinned. Hooking Jute by the elbow, Shoy led him to a newsstand and bought an evening newspaper. He pointed to a column; watched Jute while he read it.

Both were so busily engaged that neither noticed the tall stranger who stopped at the same stand to purchase half a dozen cigars.

Hoarse-whispered words dropped from the lips of Jute Bantry, repeating the thing that his eyes had read:

"Fence Cortho... is... dead!"

"Yeah, poor guy," sympathized Shoy. "He must've known what was coming, or he wouldn't have told me what he did."

"You talked to Fence?"

"Sure! The last thing he said was for me to meet you, in case he couldn't. Come on, Jute. I know a nice quiet place where we can talk this over."

Jute Bantry shook his head. He remarked that the places that Shoy frequented weren't the sort where a paroled convict should be seen. Shoy gave a guffaw.

"Speakeasies are out of date," he told Jute. "We go to fancy joints nowadays. Flossy hotels that the bulls don't bother. Say - you've got a treat coming to you! Let's go."

TWENTY minutes later, Rigger Shoy and Jute Bantry were seated in a cozy booth in the corner of an exclusive cocktail lounge. Jute was imbibing a drink in wonder, while his eyes roved the place in admiration. There was only one spot that Jute could not observe, the booth next to his own.

It contained one customer, the man who had followed Jute from the train; a languid gentleman who called himself Lamont Cranston. Though the words from the next booth were low, The Shadow could hear them over the leather-cushioned top.

Rigger Shoy was doing the talking.

"Before you have another drink, Jute," he undertoned, "I want to tell you something. I've got the whole lowdown."

Jute's response was cagey. He asked: "About what?"

"About you and the Hoxel mob," returned Shoy. "We know you were Hoxel's pen man. You rated big with him, Jute. Before he croaked, he told you where he buried the dough."

This time, Jute did not reply. He simply finished his drink and suggested another round. Shoy gave the order. Then:

"You belonged to the mob, Jute. That means the dough is all yours. That's why you wanted to meet up with Fence Cortho. You figured he could unload the stuff. Phony checks were your specialty; it took a guy like Fence to handle real bonds."

There was a long pause, during which Jute Bantry sampled his second drink. Meanwhile, The Shadow was reviewing the case that Rigger Shoy had mentioned. Reference to the Hoxel mob told much.

Ten years before, when high finance and big-time crime both flourished on a major scale, the Hoxel mob had staged a daring robbery that netted them half a million dollars.

Notorious as a band of killers, Zeke Hoxel and his crew had driven up to a pier to meet the liner Corinthian. They had kidnapped a French financier named Pierre Lebanne, together with a large bag that he carried. The next morning, Lebanne had been found floating in the Hudson River, without the satchel.

The absence of the bag had been no riddle. Its contents were negotiable bonds; the only known list had been in the bag itself. With Lebanne dead, the bonds were as good as cash to Hoxel and his crew, if they could escape the law. But the Hoxel mob had met with swift justice.

Rupert Thurgin, the New York financier who intended to purchase bonds from Pierre Lebanne, remembered a telephone call requesting information regarding the Frenchman's arrival in New York. Starting from that clue, the police had picked up more. They had trapped the Hoxel mob in the Bronx.

The ensuing gun fight had proved a bitter one. The barricaded mob would have slaughtered a score of attacking officers if a fray had not begun in the stronghold itself.

Witnesses spoke of a cloaked fighter who had dropped from a higher building to the house that served the mob as its stronghold. That battler, recognized as The Shadow, had fought single-handed against huge odds, until the police arrived.

Only one thing had marred the victory. The mob had been wiped out to the last man, with the exception of Jute Bantry, and the bonds were not in the stronghold. Hoxel had buried the loot in some unknown place, and even The Shadow had been unable to trace the missing wealth.

Despite the fluctuations of the market over a period of ten years, it was probable that Lebanne's bonds had maintained much of their value. In the pages of The Shadow's archives was one that still remained unfinished. It concerned the missing bonds that belonged to Pierre Lebanne.

Constantly, in the midst of many ventures, The Shadow had sought traces of the missing wealth. His confidence that someone could provide an answer to the riddle had at last been justified. Why the trail had vanished was at last explained.

Jute Bantry, the man who might have told, had gone to jail for forgery soon after the finish of the Hoxel mob. Others had eventually learned Jute's secret, but he had kept one fact entirely guarded. It was the most important fact of all, the location of the missing bonds.

FROM the next booth, Rigger's voice was repeating details that Jute Bantry already knew. He was a

persistent fellow, Shoy; he was promising Jute a fifty-fifty deal, the same terms that Jute had made with Fence Cortho.

The only answers that The Shadow heard were the gurgles that came when Jute took another swallow of his drink.

"I know your trouble, Jute," said Shoy, finally. "You don't know what's been going on. They ought to call the Big House the Bug House, the way it's changed you. Here" - there was a rustle as Shoy spread the newspaper - "take a gander at this bladder and read something else. What do you think of these guys who have been blasting up the town?"

Shoy was referring to the recent explosions and the crimes that occurred with them. There was a pause while Jute read the newspaper; finally he said:

"Smart guys."

"Plenty smart," declared Shoy. "Smarter than Hoxel was. Smarter than Fence Cortho, too. He didn't put the blast on anybody. He got blasted himself."

"You mean these guys croaked Fence?"

"It looks that way," replied Shoy, "don't it? They might blast anybody sky-high, Jute. Even me - or you."

Jute's voice hardened.

"Spill it, Rigger," he demanded. "Tell me who croaked Fence."

The Shadow listened intently for Shoy's reply. It came, in curious fashion. Instead of speaking, Shoy tapped the table. His knuckles gave two slow taps, a quick one, then another slow one.

"Ever hear that, Jute?"

"Hear it!" Jute's tone was hoarse. "That's what the guys were piping in the Big House! I heard it everywhere! Off radiators, from forks when we had grub. Even in the library, guys used to shuffle in tapping it off with their feet!"

"Know what it means?"

"Yeah. We all knew Morse up there. It was the only way we could talk, sometimes. It means 'Q,' and I figure that's the moniker that some guy uses -"

Jute paused. Shoy was tapping again. His knuckles kept repeating the symbol for Q until finally he undertoned:

"That's what they all think it means. Just Q. But it means something else, too. Listen, Jute, you never heard it this way up in the Big House."

Shoy was tapping Q again, slowly, with longer pauses. He placed one after the first dash, the other after the dot. He was imitating the slower Q call that The Shadow had heard the night before.

The Shadow had already sensed its hidden meaning; the probable reason why Q had been taken as a symbol. But Jute Bantry hadn't yet caught the answer to the riddle.

"No." Jute spoke slowly. "I never heard it slow like that -"

"Because those lugs didn't know what it meant," interposed Shoy. "I'm putting you wise. Listen again, Jute."

Listening, Jute spoke slowly: "Dash... dash... dot... dash." He paused, then: "Dash... dash - dot... dash! That isn't Q! It's TNT!"

"One and the same," chuckled Shoy. "When Q shoots the word, the TNT does the rest. Q means big-shot, and TNT means a big blast. This guy reaches everywhere, Jute. You ought to know; you've heard from him while you were in stir."

The Shadow caught a hollow gasp from Jute Bantry's lips. It told even more than words. Jute needed no more facts concerning the master crook who styled himself Q. Whatever his terms with Fence Cortho, Jute was willing to make the same again.

Not with Rigger Shoy. With Shoy's master. Jute Bantry was ready to talk to Cortho's murderer, to escape the same fate that had overtaken his friend!

## **CHAPTER V. HOUSE OF SILENCE**

HAVING thrown a chill into Jute Bantry's heart, Rigger Shoy was prompt to ease the fellow's worry. He began to soften the matter of Cortho's murder, in a manner which sounded most convincing.

"Yeah, we croaked Cortho," Shoy undertoned. "I was the guy that planted the bomb in his suitcase, after I got the Q flash. But it was done on your account, Jute."

"On my account?"

"Sure! The bulls were after Fence. They'd even tailed him to Grand Central. Suppose Fence had talked; what then? You'd be out of luck."

The statement impressed Jute. As Shoy suspected, it wasn't friendship that had caused the forger to seek Cortho's assistance. Paroled from prison under certain surveillance, and short of funds, Jute Bantry wasn't in a position to reclaim the missing bonds and dispose of them himself.

Learning that Fence Cortho had been "on the lam," Jute began to feel resentful toward the dead man. He growled that Fence should have found some way to notify him of the matter, to which Shoy agreed. All of which made Jute like the Q proposition, since he was dealing with someone who had the police baffled.

"It's a deal," declared Jute, suddenly. "Only, there's one job I've got to do first. I want to sneak into Thurgin's house and take a look around."

"For what?" demanded Shoy.

"To see if he's got a list of the bonds," returned Jute, "like the one the Frenchy had."

"Thurgin never handed any list to the G-guys."

"Because they weren't heavy on the job in those days," argued Jute, whose knowledge of the Feds was limited to reports that he had heard in prison. "I happen to know old Rupert Thurgin. He never trusts anybody but himself."

"Suppose he had a list of that stuff - would he have passed it over to the coppers? Not Thurgin. He'd let guys think the stuff was safe to peddle; then, as soon as they got started, he'd tip off the coppers and



start a roundup."

Recalling that Thurgin's clues had led to the trapping of the Hoxel mob, Shoy saw the merit of Jute's statement. Shoy asked how Jute had happened to know Thurgin. The forger explained that he had been the financier's secretary, under an assumed name.

"He fired me a month before the Lebanne robbery," explained Jute, "so he didn't figure I had anything to do with it. I got in with Hoxel right after that. Hoxel called me on the phone, while he and his mob were shooting it out with the bulls; that's when he told me where the bonds were.

"Like a sap, I let myself get picked up on a pen job before going after the bonds. But I'm going to take a look-see into Thurgin's dump, first. I know an easy way in there. What's more, Thurgin is down in Florida. Nobody bothered us up the river" - Jute grinned - "when we were reading society news."

Shoy told Jute to sit tight while he made a telephone call. Stepping from the table, Shoy thrust his darkish face around the corner of the next booth, to make sure that no one was there.

The booth was empty; Cranston had eased from it a few seconds before, and was placidly sipping from a glass at a more remote table.

Strolling from the lounge a few minutes later, The Shadow caught snatches of Shoy's telephone call.

"O.K.," Shoy was saying. "I'll hold Jute here awhile... Yeah. I'll tell him we need time to get the crew together... No, he ain't jittery, but he'll feel safer knowing that we'll be around when he busts into Thurgin's."

The scheduled delay pleased The Shadow. It was dusk when he strolled outdoors. Taking a cab instead of his limousine, the leisurely Mr. Cranston spoke an order to the driver. As he rode, he underwent another transformation.

This cab happened to be The Shadow's own, driven by Moe Shrevnitz, one of his secret agents. It had a special drawer beneath the rear seat, with cloak, hat, and guns concealed there. The Shadow needed those items for his coming venture. The address that he had given was the home of Rupert Thurgin.

STATELY, but old-fashioned, Thurgin's mansion occupied an almost-forgotten corner of a one-time residential district. Despite the fact that the house was tightly locked and heavily shuttered, a trickle of light was evident from a side angle.

The light was in a second-story room, where a girl was busily carrying large clothes bags from a closet. Though she didn't live in the old house, the girl had a right to be there. She was Thurgin's niece, Adele Marcy.

Adele was very attractive when she smiled. At present she wasn't smiling, but she was still attractive. In fact, the reproving frowns that she directed at the clothes bags added a winsome touch to her well-rounded face.

There was an electric heater in the room, and its deep glow somewhat resembled the coppery hue of Adele's hair. Added to her facial charms, the girl had a very trim and shapely figure, which showed to perfection in the dressing gown which was her chief attire.

A dark, knitted sports costume lay on the bed. Adele had discarded it for the dressing gown before starting her search through the clothes closet. She was going over some old dresses that she had stored here at her uncle's, hoping to find one that would do for evening wear.

The silence of the musty old house hadn't bothered the girl after she had reached this room. The electric heater had taken away the chill, and Adele felt quite at home until a muffled, jangling sound gave her a sudden start.

A moment later, she was gasping her relief. It must be the telephone bell, out in the hallway. Deciding that the call was for her, Adele set her lips firmly; then, starting toward the door, she murmured:

"Garry Cleeve."

It was Garry Cleeve. Adele recognized the voice across the wire - a drawly tone, with a touch of suavity. Her own response carried a touch of anger.

"Hello, Garry," snapped Adele. "What made you think I had come here?"

Words from the other end. Then:

"I see - " Adele's tone carried sarcasm. "You thought you ought to call Bentley. Well, Bentley happens to be my uncle's butler, but it's none of his business to tell people where I've gone -

"I asked Bentley for the key, yes. To see if I could find a dress I wanted... Yes, I know you don't like my coming to this empty house alone, but why?"

There was a pause, while Adele listened to Garry's protest. She finally cut him short with a laugh.

"Such silly notions!" the girl exclaimed. "People don't prowl around old houses nowadays. You belong in the tintage age, along with Uncle Rupert. Or maybe you believe in ghosts. Do you, Garry?"

Her own levity put Adele in good humor. She listened to Garry's serious tone again, and finally gave agreement.

"All right... Yes, I'll leave very soon... No, I couldn't find the dress I wanted, but the sports costume will do... Really, Garry, I would have given you the key and let you come here, like you did before. But that was when I wanted my suitcase, which was something you could find -

"You couldn't have picked a dress for me. Besides, I intended to change to it, here... Yes, and what's more" - Adele's tone was rueful - "there wasn't a thing that would do... All right, I'll be at the restaurant in about fifteen minutes."

Adele was smiling. Garry's talk of lurkers sounded as silly as her own suggestion of ghosts. But the moment that she turned Adele was swept by a chilling fear of both!

Chance light from the bedroom gave her a glimpse of a door across the hall. It led into a little room that her uncle used as an office when at home. The door was white; it should have shown in the light. Instead, its surface was blotted by a smokey shape that had risen to envelop it!

THE thing looked human, yet ghostly; a figure of blackness, shrouded by what seemed to be a cloak.

Shivering, Adele was tempted to dash downstairs and out through the front door; then, as her eyes blinked nervously, the strange shape faded.

It didn't exactly disappear. Instead, it blended with other darkness that actually engulfed it. As Adele stared, whiteness came from the gloom, like a vague, encroaching ghost. Expecting the new apparition to lunge in her direction, Adele opened her lips to scream. Then she recognized the whiteness.

It was the door.

It opened inward; and it had been opened, otherwise the doorway wouldn't have looked so black. The approach of the white shape meant that someone had closed the door. Someone who had come along the hallway while Adele was talking over the telephone to Garry!

The thing, whatever it was, had gone into the office - unless the whole occurrence had been a product of Adele's imagination.

Tremblingly, the girl hurried back to the bedroom. Still watching the door across the hallway, she slid off the dressing gown and reached for her sports costume.

She was determined to have a look into that other room after she had changed attire. There was an old hammer on the closet shelf that would serve her as a weapon should she meet with some intruder.

Within the little office a tiny flashlight was blinking guardedly, half-concealed in the folds of a black cloak. The Shadow was looking through a filing cabinet, checking on Thurgin's papers, of which there were very few, for the financier evidently kept more important documents at his office.

Nevertheless, The Shadow agreed with Jute's guess that if Thurgin did have a list of the long-stolen bonds, it would be here.

From all reports of Thurgin, the man was as canny, as tight-lipped, as Jute made him out to be. Having once regarded the list of bonds as a private matter, Thurgin wouldn't have left it at his downtown office.

Finished with the cabinet, The Shadow searched the desk. Papers were crinkling as he drew them from the top drawer; then, in a single action, the drawer went shut and the flashlight was extinguished. The door of the room was opening; a hand reached in to press the light switch.

By the time the lights came on, The Shadow had reached a deep corner. His figure seemed to elongate itself, to stretch into a narrow space beyond the end of a tall bookcase. Adele entered; she was wearing the dark, knitted dress; her blue eyes had a glint as apparent as the burnished gleam of her auburn hair.

A hammer poised in her hand, she looked around the room. Her eyes roved to every cranny; she probed some that were close. But the space past the bookcase did not interest her; it seemed too cramped to hold a living form.

After a few minutes, Adele gave a relieved smile. It was her imagination that had tricked her, she felt sure. She turned off the light and went from the room, closing the door after her. Immediately, The Shadow's flashlight glimmered.

Stopping at the desk, The Shadow drew a slip of yellow paper from beneath his cloak and slid it into the drawer. Then, moving from the room, he glided along the hall and reached a shuttered window.

Opening it carefully, he swung across the sill, clung to the shutter while wedging it tight again. Taking a long drop, The Shadow struck the ground on the dark side of the house.

He had recollections of Adele's footsteps descending the front stairway, which meant that there was little time to lose. It might prove disastrous for the girl should crooks see her coming from the house where Jute Bantry soon would enter.

Reaching the front street, The Shadow spied a car parked across the way. He wheeled along the sidewalk. Over his shoulder, The Shadow could see the front door moving, as Adele opened it from within. By then, The Shadow had reached a street lamp, located in the opposite direction.

As the glow revealed his cloaked shape, The Shadow delivered a whispery taunt - a burst of mockery

which, though repressed, carried across the street.

INSTANTLY, crooks sprang from their car, taking for shelter as they aimed their guns. They had glimpsed the black-cloaked figure, knew it as their superfoe, The Shadow. But they weren't wasting shots, until they could check his position.

With an evasive twist, The Shadow had already faded from the range of light.

Adele saw the evanishment of that smokelike shape. Tugging the front door shut, the girl hurried down the steps and scudded in the opposite direction. She had seen the ghost again - this time, outside the house! She had heard the shivery laugh as well, and its tone was the sort that evoked horror.

Around the corner, Adele saw a waiting cab. She didn't feel safe until she was in it and riding from the neighborhood. As she passed the front street, she saw men prowling around the spot where the cloaked figure had been. Mistakenly, she regarded those ghost hunters as friends.

Mere memory of the laugh gave Adele the creeps. Looking from the other window, she gave a startled gasp when she caught another glimpse of a thing in black, shifting off into darkness. Incredibly, the cloaked figure had slipped away from the searchers, to a remote spot.

Only a ghost could have vanished and reappeared so suddenly; at least, such was Adele's decision, for her imagination was badly strained. But there was something else that even her wild fancy did not grasp.

Adele Marcy would have been completely amazed had she known that the cab in which she rode belonged to that ghostly being in black, The Shadow!

## **CHAPTER VI. A MATTER OF CASH**

NEW sounds stirred within the old mansion; they were creeping footsteps that might well have been a ghost's. Different from the clatter of Adele's high heels, or the barely audible swish of The Shadow's cloak, the sounds continued with persistent approach.

They had a long way to come - from the cellar, where the newcomer had entered by a forgotten unbarred window beneath a low back porch. Their lag, however, had another quality than the draggy manner sometimes attributed to ghosts. The shuffle resembled a prisoner's march.

Jute Bantry was making his long-awaited invasion, in search of the bond list which he believed existed.

Sight of men outside had not bothered Jute. He knew that they were stationed there by Rigger Shoy. They hadn't flagged him when he approached the mansion; therefore, Jute was sure that all was well indoors.

Since Adele had turned out the bedroom light and disconnected the electric heater, there wasn't a thing to tell Jute that other persons had been in the house before him.

Reaching the office, Jute tested the windows, made sure that the shutter slats were tight. He pressed the light switch, gave a gloating grin as he recognized the surroundings. Like The Shadow, Jute made his first foray in the direction of the filing cabinet.

There weren't many folders in the cabinet, but Jute took time to study them closely. He didn't find a thing that resembled a bond list. Rubbing his blunt chin, he began to decide that his guess was wrong. Rupert Thurgin had never had such a list.

It would be wise, though, to search the desk, to make sure. Starting at the bottom drawer, which was

most likely to hold long-stored items, Jute worked upward. Nothing rewarded him until he reached the top drawer.

The paper that Jute promptly plucked didn't happen to be the list of bonds, but it was something else that interested him exceedingly. It was the yellow slip that The Shadow had dropped in the drawer just before departure.

The paper was a check, drawn on the Gibraltar Trust Co. It was made out to cash, for the sum of five thousand dollars. The check bore the signature of Rupert Thurgin!

This was a find, indeed! It brought a flood of recollections to Jute Bantry. He knew Thurgin's signature well, for Jute had practiced on it when he held his brief job as the financier's personal secretary.

Just for comparison, however, Jute went to the filing cabinet and dug out a letter that bore Thurgin's signature.

The two samples of ornate penmanship matched as closely as two such signatures should. They differed slightly, but not in their most important characteristics. The signature on the check was certainly Thurgin's, Jute decided, because he knew of only one other man who could have written it with such practiced flourish. The other man happened to be Jute himself.

It didn't surprise Jute that Thurgin had left the check in the drawer when he went South. To Rupert Thurgin, five thousand dollars was a piece of small change. Occasionally absent-minded, Thurgin had probably made out this check for traveling expenses, then forgotten it.

With the house closed, and strongly shuttered, Thurgin wouldn't have worried about the matter. Besides, ordinary sneak thieves would be shy of checks, particularly those of high amounts. Jute, himself, would have been hesitant, if he hadn't known Thurgin's ways.

The financier frequently made out checks for high amounts, payable to cash. His bank, which had always been the Gibraltar Trust, paid them without question. Moreover, Jute remembered the Gibraltar as a bank that kept open evenings, which was why Thurgin had preferred it.

Wondering whether the bank still maintained that policy, Jute recalled a newspaper report that Shoy had shown him. It had carried a picture of Bryce Dalvan, a real-estate man who had escaped death in an explosion.

Dalvan had intended to go to the Gibraltar Trust Co. to draw twenty thousand dollars, and the explosion had occurred at eight in the evening!

There would be ample time for Jute to go to the bank and cash Thurgin's check. He could indorse it with the name that he had used when in Thurgin's employ; a name that happened to be on the bank's records, because Jute had kept a small account of his own in the Gibraltar Trust.

TO Jute's crafty brain, the thought of this five thousand dollars, in cash, loomed larger than half a million in bonds. Jute had contacted Cortho, and later agreed to the Q proposition, for one reason only, his lack of present funds.

With five thousand dollars, Jute would be independent. He could give Shoy's men the slip and travel on his own. No need to bother about the Q outfit; they could go on robbing their places and blowing up the town.

Jute could hire men of his own, dumb clucks who wouldn't know what it was all about, to do certain things he needed. When he reclaimed the stolen bonds he could dispose of them at leisure, keeping all the

profits for himself.

Pocketing the check, Jute made a last look for a list of bonds; finding none, he left in high glee, satisfied that the stolen goods weren't listed at all.

Outside the house, Jute gazed warily across the side street. He saw a cigar store, with no one behind the counter. Evidently the proprietor of the one-man shop had stepped into the rear room. The place was rather dim, and Jute didn't like the way that a vague shape blurred the light.

It reminded him too much of The Shadow, the strange, invincible fighter who had practically wiped out the Hoxel mob. Jute watched a few minutes, then decided that he had seen nothing except a flickery light bulb.

He shuffled half a block, to get into a cab. A slinky figure trailed him; a street lamp showed the pasty face and long legs of Dip Perkin, the shifty trailer who worked for the mysterious Q.

Seeing Jute take a cab, Dip legged away to tell Shoy. Jute's cab had hardly started before a car wheeled around the corner to follow it.

The Shadow saw the whole scene from a phone booth near the front of the cigar store. He finished a call that he was making to his contact man, Burbank. The Shadow was giving Burbank instructions regarding further calls, some to certain agents who were always in readiness.

His own cab was due back any minute, and The Shadow saw no reason to trail Jute Bantry immediately, because he knew the man's destination.

Stepping from the cigar store, The Shadow passed the corner and neared the front street. He recognized the cab that swung in toward the curb; gave a red blink through a special slide in his tiny flashlight.

It was The Shadow's cab. Moe Shrevnitz, the driver, came to a prompt halt. Stepping into the cab, The Shadow gave the whispered order, "Wait!" just as Moe was about to start.

Another car had pulled up in front of the Thurgin mansion. It was an open-topped roadster; its driver was a rather handsome, shrewd-mannered young man, who wore a derby hat canted over the right side of his head.

The Shadow decided that the arrival was Garry Cleeve, the man who had phoned Adele Marcy at the house.

Studying various windows, Garry decided that they were all dark. He snapped the sleek car forward, gave it a sharp spin around the corner, passing The Shadow's cab, which by that time had its lights out.

Swinging into the rear street, Garry jerked his car to a sudden stop on the left side. Without bothering to open the door, he vaulted from the driver's seat and entered the cigar store.

The Shadow's cab was in motion; as it went by the roadster, The Shadow saw Garry stepping in the direction of the phone booth.

Meanwhile, Jute Bantry was staring from a cab window, drinking in the passing lights of a new Manhattan. He was surprised at the number of landmarks that had vanished in the past decade. He didn't recognize Sixth Avenue, because the elevated was gone.

But he knew when he approached the Gibraltar Trust Co. Its neighborhood had not changed. The fare was ninety cents; Jute gave the cabby one of the few dollar bills that he had in his pocket. Then, in his

most convincing style, the forger entered the bank and took his place in a line leading to a teller's window.

JUTE smiled when he saw the teller. The fellow was a veteran, one of the sort who would never forget a customer. He would probably remember Jute as a man who had once made deposits and cashed checks for Thurgin, which would bolster the cause. In addition, Jute had signed his former alias, Edgar Farney, on the back of the check.

The teller took the check, examined it, and nodded. He apparently remembered Jute and was approving him. His tone was matter-of-fact when he asked:

"How will you have it, Mr. Farney?"

"In fifties," decided Jute, "up to the last hundred. Make that all tens."

The teller counted out the fifties. He reached for the tens, below the window ledge. Jute didn't see him nudge a button with his elbow.

One hand came up with the ten-dollar bills, the other brought a revolver and thrust it through the barred window, straight between Jute's eyes!

Before the astonished forger could make a move, bells began to clang. Watchmen sprang to action, as other tellers produced revolvers. Patrons were scudding to cover amid the confusion. Everyone was doing something except Jute Bantry.

He was standing petrified, surrounded by a bristle of approaching guns, with a steady stream of fifty-dollar bills dripping from his numbed hands, to carpet the tiled floor about him. Jute Bantry had gotten the five thousand dollars that he wanted, all except a mere hundred of it, but he desired it no longer.

Jute's thirst for that cash had resulted in his recapture as a lawbreaker, through some baffling sequence that the forger couldn't understand. He wasn't going to keep the cash that had been handed him.

Worse, in Jute's estimate, was the fact that this disaster would mean another long-term postponement of his quest for the half million that he had waited so many years to claim!

## **CHAPTER VII. CRIME'S THRUST**

To his captors, Jute Bantry was merely a swindler who had tried to acquire five thousand dollars through smart tactics. He was the sort who might prove dangerous if given leeway, but when surrounded he would certainly wilt.

In fact, Jute gave immediate indications that he was behaving in expected form. The last of the money plopped from his shaky hands; he sagged, as a watchman clutched his collar. The vanish of his greater hopes, along with present cash, merely served to dishearten Jute all the more.

He might have slumped completely if he hadn't chanced to see beyond the cordon. His weak gaze turning toward the door, Jute spied new customers, who had joined people there. He recognized one man - and that was enough. The man was Rigger Shoy!

Quick hope shot home to Jute. He could alibi what he had done. Nobody like Rigger would blame him for having tried to pick up five grand in soft money. He'd tell Shoy that he intended to split the cash with the Q organization. But that would come later; for the present, the thing was to escape existing entanglements.

Jute realized that his capture was a jolt to Shoy, as well as to himself. By the terms of the Q deal, it was a fifty-fifty proposition. Those men with Shoy were part of Q's tribe; fighters, all of them. One call, and they'd go the limit to get Jute out of his dilemma.

Wrenching suddenly from the hand that clutched his collar, Jute began a frantic shout for help. There were yells from the door, as people were thrust aside by Shoy and four others. Hearing the commotion, watchmen and tellers turned, to see crooks drawing guns.

The previous chaos was mild compared with that which followed. Guns roared, bells broke loose with new clangor. Battle was on, with Rigger Shoy and his crew pushing the attack.

Watchmen dived for shelter, dragging Jute along. The forger received a hard blow on the head, which meant he wouldn't escape unless Shoy and the others hauled him away, which was what they intended to do. They weren't worried by the barricaded tellers nor by the fact that people in the cashier's office were grabbing tear-gas bombs to throw at the invaders.

Shoy's crowd had gas bombs, too, and used them first. A submachine gun, also. Throughout the banking room defenders reeled, dropping their guns and clawing at their faces, while a gaseous cloud rose about them.

On his way to where Jute lay, Shoy was yelling to his pals to start the slaughter. From their vantage point, which the gas hadn't reached, the crooks aimed to kill.

The thing that stopped them was a challenge from the doorway behind them. It was a strident laugh, far more forceful than the whispery mirth that the crooks had heard outside of Thurgin's. It was a challenge that every mobster accepted. A dozen helpless enemies could wait while they settled scores with one.

The Shadow!

He was sweeping in from blackness as crooks spun about. His big guns jabbed; the recoil seemed to spin him from the doorway toward which his foemen aimed. But the muzzles of the guns remained the pivot point throughout The Shadow's whirl. Four crooks were taking bullets that staggered them back toward the encroaching gas.

It was Rigger Shoy who evened matters. He didn't use a gun; he chucked an extra gas bomb for The Shadow's corner. It cracked the wall beside the cloaked fighter. Shoy saw The Shadow fling one arm upward to carry a flowing sleeve across his face.

Shoy didn't wait for bullets from the other gun that The Shadow still had handy. Shooting wildly as he went, he made for the door, yelling for the rest to bring Jute Bantry.

In his own excitement and desire to escape, Shoy didn't realize that all four of his gunners had been clipped during the few seconds of rapid fire.

Two wounded men followed Shoy to the street, but they didn't bring Jute along. As they reached their car they heard a pursuing laugh, saw The Shadow wheeling from the gas-filled banking room to overtake them.

Instead of starting the car, Shoy yelled for the others to duck. As he dropped below the wheel, he gave a wild fling of his arm.

It brought new action from an arriving car, which had Dip Perkin seated next to the driver.

THESE crooks were equipped for battle with anyone, The Shadow included. They had a machine gun



and were thrusting it from their window. But they didn't see the car that launched across the sidewalk from the avenue, not until it struck them squarely amidships.

The crook-manned automobile was hurtled on its side, the machine gun spouting a stream of bullets toward the moon. Out from the arriving car came The Shadow's agents, to pile upon the men in the wrecked car. Only one of the tribe managed to squirm free: Dip Perkin.

Always lucky, the long-legged sneak managed to jump on the running board of Shoy's car as Rigger drove desperately away. Looking back, Dip yelled and pointed at a taxicab that had taken up the trail. Dip spied the cloaked figure that leaped into the cab, and knew that The Shadow was in pursuit.

It was an important chase, one to The Shadow's liking. There were two men that he wanted as trophies, Rigger Shoy and Dip Perkin. In fact, either one would do, for they could talk separately, as well as in unison.

Rigger and Dip, the two among all the crooks who knew enough about a master crook called Q to give The Shadow real clues to the Monarch of Blast himself.

Though out of gun range, the men ahead were in a bad situation. Any change of luck would bring them under the fire of The Shadow's guns, and they weren't equipped to put up a fight in return.

Rigger Shoy was fully occupied at the wheel, Dip Perkin was no hand with a revolver. The two gunners that rode in the back seat were sagging from their wounds

Weaving in and out of many streets, the chase kept on. Moe was holding his ground; gaining, somewhat, at intervals. He heard The Shadow's calm, restraining tone, and understood. It was better to hold the spurt until it would count most. A blocked street, a traffic snarl, or a dead end, would put the crooks in the position that The Shadow wanted them.

It seemed that Rigger Shoy foresaw those factors. As he swung a corner into an avenue, he suddenly decided to make a run for it, though the thoroughfare ahead was less clear than others that he had crossed. The idea of outdistancing The Shadow's cab had often occurred to crooks in the past, usually to their own disaster.

The cab that Moe drove was geared for real speed. It could outrun anything, including patrol cars, as this occasion was to prove. Spinning along the avenue, zigzagging to avoid traffic, Shoy managed to look back and learn, to his sheer amazement, that the pesky cab was drawing up on him.

There were other cars in the chase; all settling far behind, except for new ones that started out from curbs, some with traffic officers commandeering them.

The cops didn't know who was in the chase, or why, but all concerned were defying traffic regulations by their speed; the thing to do was help overtake the lead car.

Gunfire began to spice the pursuit. The Shadow was leaning from the window of his whizzing cab, seeking the range. His bullets kicked up little puffs from the paving, almost under the tires of Shoy's car.

A few more shots and The Shadow could have delivered a crippling stroke. The thing that spoiled his chance was a patrol car that whined in from a side street.

It cut between the cab and the car ahead. The officers were shooting from a closer range than The Shadow's; their bullets were hammering the back of Shoy's car, but doing no severe damage. Meanwhile, the patrol car was blocking The Shadow's fire.

More drivers were in the chase. Sight of the green patrol car, with its white top, signified that the law had taken the lead. Evidently, orders had gone out over the air. Reaching in from the window, The Shadow tuned in his short-wave set to catch police calls, on the chance that they would tell what lay ahead.

At that moment he glimpsed Shoy's car, more than a block ahead, swinging out to the center of the avenue. The police car, just ahead of the cab, copied the move, supposing that a truck had blocked Shoy's way. But the street happened to be clear and, from Shoy's veer, The Shadow guessed the purpose.

Shoy was going to swing right at a corner where a partial barricade told that the street was under repair. The barricade was aside to allow outlet; it happened to be a one-way street, that Shoy intended to use in the wrong direction, thinking perhaps to outsmart his pursuers.

AGAIN, it was a question of what was in Shoy's mind. First, he had chosen this particular avenue; second, he was picking a certain street. The two facts gave The Shadow a prompt mental link; the answer was proved the very instant that The Shadow formed it.

The proof came from the cab's radio, in the form of a wireless call:

"Q... Q... Q -"

Shoy's car did a half skid as it whipped to the right, passing the barricade into the wrong-way street. The Shadow's .45 was talking, for this was the moment when bullets would count more than before, or after. But the barricade was between The Shadow and Shoy's car. It took the bullets that should have blown Shoy's tires.

The wireless seemed to taunt The Shadow's effort with its incessant "Q... Q... Q - " The call was slackening; to The Shadow, it meant something else. He hissed quick words to Moe, in the front seat. The game driver followed orders.

As the patrol car made its swing in the middle of the avenue, to follow after Shoy, The Shadow's cab leaped forward with every added ounce of power that Moe could give it. The cab wasn't going to turn; it was heading straight forward, close to the curb of the avenue.

Its lunge carried it toward the path of the veering patrol car, close enough to mean a crash if the other machine insisted upon its swing. There was a yell from the cop on the right; the man at the wheel yanked hard to the left. A wreck couldn't help the chase.

Patrol car and cab rocked as they tried to avoid the sidewalk and stay on the avenue. The cop who had yelled was aiming wildly in the general direction of the cab, thinking that its occupants must be friends of the crooks who had cut through the side street.

The officer didn't expect much to happen when he pulled the trigger of his gun, but a whole lot did.

The end of the side street lifted, barricade and all, with a blast that was horrendous. Patrol car and taxicab looked like frail seacraft picked up by a tidal wave.

Against a background of volcanic flame that split the street from curb to curb, the two cars were hurtled out into the avenue, bombarded with chunks of asphalt that came like fiery lava tossed from a Vesuvius.

Only through the cab's blocking tactics had the patrol car been saved from complete destruction, for the explosion had been timed for such disaster. Crooks had hoped to do more than cut off the pursuit of Shoy and his pals. They had wanted to wreck one chasing car, at least, and permanently dispose of its occupants.

Q's call had produced only half success. Pursuit was ended, for a fifteen-foot crater gaped deep at the outlet of the blasted street. But the patrol car was safe, perched on the sidewalk across the avenue, its two-man crew uninjured.

Safe, too, was The Shadow's cab, as it reeled and jolted down the middle of the avenue. Jarred by the explosion, Moe was having trouble regaining his grip, when a black-gloved hand came through from the rear seat and steadied the wheel for the cabby. Straightening, the cab was on its way again.

Back from the departing vehicle came a long, shivering laugh that carried a touch of triumph in its tone. It wasn't meant for Shoy and Dip; they had succeeded in what they sought: escape.

That laugh was for Q, the master plotter, whose scheduled death thrust had been stymied by The Shadow!

## **CHAPTER VIII. CRIME'S MYSTERIES**

SULLEN crooks, captured after the fray at the Gibraltar Trust Co., had very little to say, but they stuck to it. They'd worked on other jobs, they admitted, but this one had been different. There had been no explosion before the crime.

A bank job had been on the schedule; they knew that much. Some had expected it earlier, some later. None had thought that it would turn out as it had. The thugs felt resentful toward Rigger Shoy, the man they regarded as their leader. His name was wrung from them without much effort.

That linked Dip Perkin with the murder of Fence Cortho, because Dip was known to be one of Rigger's friends. He fitted the description of a "long-legged guy" whose name the captured thugs didn't happen to know.

Inspector Joe Cardona formed a reasonable theory covering much of what had happened. He was confident that a master hand was behind the crime wave, because Shoy didn't rate high enough to be the big-shot. Joe classed all motives as robbery, with the exception of two explosions which he considered side issues.

Cardona figured that Fence Cortho had been blasted because of some double cross. Fence could have belonged in the racket and might have tried to sell out his friends.

As for the other explosion, the one that wrecked the barricaded street, Cardona figured it correctly. He knew that it was meant to aid escaping crooks; he was sure that waiting lurkers had touched off the charge, and fled.

But Cardona didn't guess that the signals for those blasts had come over the air as mysterious "Q" calls, which also spelled the significant letters "TNT."

IT was late afternoon when Cardona was summoned to an important conference to discuss another person, Jute Bantry. The conference was at Rupert Thurgin's home; the financier had returned from Florida. Arriving at the mansion, Cardona was ushered into the upstairs office, where Commissioner Weston introduced him to Rupert Thurgin

Tall, bulky, dominating Thurgin had a heavy, deep-lined face, topped by a crop of bristly gray hair. His voice was as booming as his manner; he was talking about the forged check when Cardona arrived, and he paused impatiently while Cardona met others.

Joe needed no introduction to Lamont Cranston, who was present, nor to Bryce Dalvan, who had come

at Weston's request. The persons that he had never met before were Garry Cleeve and Adele Marcy. Joe soon learned that Adele was Thurgin's niece and Garry her fiance.

Seated behind his desk, Thurgin fingered the five-thousand dollar check, holding it to the light.

"A clever forgery," he announced. "Experts have declared it such. Yet Bantry won't admit that it was his work. He claims he found the check somewhere. Bah! I may be absentminded, but I don't write out checks and scatter them to the wind!"

"Since Bantry was once your secretary," suggested Weston, "it is likely that he learned your signature, as well as your banking methods."

Feeling that he had made an excellent deduction, Weston looked around for approval and received it, except from Cranston. However, Cranston was always noncommittal. He happened to be staring at the desk drawer when Weston gazed his way. The commissioner failed to guess what was in his friend's mind.

The Shadow knew that Jute Bantry had found the check, in Thurgin's own desk drawer. Naturally Jute couldn't state where he had found it, because burglary was a criminal offense, like forgery. But there were certain persons who would believe Jute if he told them - Rigger Shoy, for one.

Shoy's name came under discussion at that moment.

"This fellow Shoy," declared Weston. "What connection could he have had with Bantry, inspector?"

"None," returned Cardona tersely. "If anything, Bantry gummed the works on the bank job."

"Just how?"

"He started something," affirmed Cardona, "that had the bank staff alert, while Rigger and his crew were waiting for the blast. It hadn't been planted, but they didn't know it. So they barged in at the wrong time."

Superficially, the facts backed Cardona's analysis. Forgers like Jute wouldn't team up with a stick-up mob, particularly when on parole; at least, not ordinarily. But The Shadow happened to know that this was one case where such a connection had been actual.

"They've shipped Jute back to Sing Sing," informed Cardona. "So we can forget him for a few years more. There's just one thing that has me puzzled: who tipped off the bank that Jute was coming there, and why?"

THERE were quizzical looks from both Thurgin and Dalvan. Adele Marcy whispered something to Garry Cleeve, who pondered, then shook his head. Cardona resumed:

"They got a call about an hour before Jute showed up. Somebody told them that a crook was going to try to pass a phony check. One with your name on it, Mr. Thurgin."

Staring blankly, Thurgin finally centered his gaze on Adele. Noting his niece's expression, he queried:

"What is it, Adele?"

"I was here last night," declared the girl, "for a short while in the evening. I think - in fact, I'm almost certain - that someone was prowling through the house."

"But what has that to do with it?" demanded Thurgin. "Bantry would certainly not have come here."

Unless" - rising, he stepped to the filing cabinet - "unless he wanted to look over some of these."

The items that Thurgin produced were letters bearing his signature. Cardona decided to have them fingerprinted, on the chance that Jute was the intruder mentioned by Adele. Thurgin also supplied a check book bearing the name of the Gibraltar Trust Co.

"I am glad that I bank at the Gibraltar," declared Thurgin. "They handle many large accounts, and pay a great number of checks without question. But it seems that they are right on the job in an emergency."

"I agree with you," put in Dalvan. "I bank there, too. I understand that they make deliveries of large sums by armored truck. I intend to make use of that service in the future."

The fact that they were depositors in the same bank proved an opening wedge for conversation between Thurgin and Dalvan. Both knew the more important officers at the Gibraltar Trust; as they chatted, they learned that they had other mutual friends.

It developed, too, that Thurgin, as a financier, sometimes dealt in real-estate transactions. In his turn, Dalvan frequently accepted stocks and bonds as payment on property.

Cranston was an interested listener to the chat. It was difficult to tell if one man pressed the conversation. Both were big-money men, each the sort that many people would like to meet. Perhaps that was the real bond between them. Men of that type were usually glad to meet someone who talked on common terms.

They shook hands warmly when they parted. The conference was over and, though some facts remained unsettled, Commissioner Weston felt that enough had been accomplished.

Weston saw little importance to the mysterious tip-off that had reached the Gibraltar Trust Co. regarding Jute Bantry. It was a matter for the parole board to decide; it simply indicated that someone had guessed what Jute was up to and thought that the forger belonged back in prison.

Commissioner Weston didn't happen to know what Jute's return to prison meant. The Shadow did.

The profits from a most sensational crime - the unsolved mystery of the loot acquired by the Hoxel mob - would remain forgotten for a while to come, with Jute behind prison walls. The question was: just how long the situation would last. There were ways to reach persons in such places, particularly when the law was not expecting it.

Those "Q" taps that Jute remembered from his Sing Sing days and nights would mean more to the forger than before. Shoy had told Jute the real significance of the signal. The Q deal still existed, so far as those two were concerned.

At the door, Adele prolonged the conference.

"The person who was here last night," she said slowly, "was almost like a ghost. He was cloaked in black \_"

The girl paused. Garry was taking her arms, smiling as if he regarded the matter unimportant.

"Because you didn't see a ghost the night you were here," exclaimed Adele, "is no reason why I couldn't see one! Maybe it was my imagination, but I saw the same shape again, outside. I even heard it laugh!"

THURGIN was stepping forward, his expression worried. Dalvan gazed sympathetically at Adele, as though he considered her to be a mental case. Commissioner Weston tried to treat the matter brusquely;

he wasn't pleased when he heard Cardona whisper in his ear:

"The Shadow!"

"Call it my imagination," decided Adele, suddenly. "I'd rather not have you think I'm crazy."

There was veiled defiance in her tone. Her eyes, meeting Cranston's, went wide. From the gaze that she received, Adele realized that one person did believe her story.

"Take care of her, Garry," spoke Thurgin, soberly addressing Cleeve. "Adele needs more outdoor life. Why not get her interested in some wholesome sport, like golf?"

"I haven't played much lately." returned Garry. "I get out to Meadowfield often, but I'm usually so late that I only have time to do some driving from the practice tee."

"The practice tee?"

"Yes. The old first tee, in back of the clubhouse. They changed the course around some while you were in Florida."

Taking advantage of the turn in conversation, Garry left promptly with Adele. The others followed, among them Cranston, whose eyes had a calm but meditative gaze.

The Shadow was thinking of Jute Bantry, of ways whereby he might learn the facts that the convicted forger knew. The smile on Cranston's lips told that The Shadow had an answer.

Curiously, at this very conference The Shadow had heard of something more important than Jute Bantry, but had let it pass by. He had almost grasped the key to crime, though it was not recognizable. What that key was, The Shadow could still learn.

## **CHAPTER IX. DAY VERSUS NIGHT**

ONE night back in the Big House was almost enough for Jute Bantry. His brief sojourn in the outside world had broken his routine of years. To him, the cell block was as bad as any haunted house; in a way, far worse.

You would expect creepy things to happen in old houses, but not in a place inhabited by a hundred other men. Nevertheless, Jute had gone through a harrowing experience; a real one, not something that he dreamed. He was confident that he hadn't dozed for more than brief intervals.

The creeping sounds had bothered Jute badly. They were uncanny, like something crawling up the bars outside his cell; some spidery creature, that was gone whenever Jute made a fearful grab for it.

Jute didn't realize that he was too hesitant when he grabbed, that he telegraphed his intent to someone outside the bars.

The thing that Jute took for a spider was actually a thin-gloved hand that performed a clever finger crawl. Its owner was around the outer edge of the cell door whenever he applied the creeping process.

Its purpose was to hold Jute's attention, which it did. Whenever Jute became tense, he heard the voice - a thing more ghostly than the crawling hand. The voice was a whisper that reached Jute even when he retired to the depths of his cell.

Jute couldn't understand why others did not hear it; that was the fact that maddened him. He was too

nervous to reason out that his cell made a perfect sound box. The person outside the bars was speaking directly through, confining his whispers to Jute's cell alone.

"This is Hoxel." The eerie tone brought shudders from Jute. "Remember?"

"Remember what?" Jute would query.

"Our bargain," was the invariable response. "Remember?"

There had been a bargain; one that Jute hadn't mentioned to Rigger Shoy. Hoxel had told Jute to use funds to help out certain pals, at that time prisoners in different penitentiaries. Jute had given his promise that night when Hoxel had informed him where the missing bonds were.

But no one knew of it except Hoxel and Jute. No one, not even The Shadow, for Hoxel had been alone at the phone that night when his mob was trying to fight off the cloaked invader.

Jute was therefore convinced that the voice outside his cell belonged to Hoxel's ghost. It didn't occur to him that The Shadow was playing a strong hunch; namely, that Hoxel wouldn't have told Jute where the bonds were, unless there had been some sort of bargain to it.

Crooks of Hoxel's breed often found great relish in leaving their deeds undiscovered. They died more easily, knowing that secrets would be buried with them.

As the night wore on, Jute decided to talk to Hoxel's ghost. The phantasm had departed at intervals, particularly when guards came through the cell block. To Jute's strained imagination, however, it seemed that guards had glanced into his cell while the ghost was still there, but that they had gone on without seeing it.

Hearing the ghost's whisper once again, Jute responded to the word: "Remember?" He crawled toward the door and spoke:

"I remember. You told me about those pals of yours, Hoxel. I'd have helped them if I could. Only, I was shipped here too soon. I should've dug up the swag right away, like you wanted, but I had to wait."

The ghostly whisper became mocking.

"You have forgotten," it accused. "Even the important thing has slipped your memory."

"You mean I don't know where the swag is?" hoarsed Jute. "Listen, Hoxel! I'll repeat just what you told me. Every word of it."

Jute's voice had risen. There were snarls from adjacent cells. Jute was awakening other prisoners. But he didn't care about them. He wanted to talk to Hoxel's ghost, to insure himself against its vengeance for imaginary wrongs. He clutched the cell bars; beyond them, he saw only blotting blackness.

Jute had almost grasped the folds of a cloak, instead of a ghostly wraith. The thing that frightened him deeper into the cell was a glitter from a roundish, ruddy orb that shone like a Cyclopean eye.

Catching the dim light from the corridor, the unblinking object varied in hue, from red to purple. It had changed to green when darkness obliterated it.

The Shadow had drawn away his left glove, to display a fire opal that was on his third finger. That gem, a rare girasol, had served The Shadow often. Its very glow pronounced it as a mystic jewel; it caught eyes and held them fascinated.

To Jute, the gleam of the girasol was final proof that he had met a ghostly presence.

A CLOAKED figure glided rapidly from the cell block as clumping footsteps approached. Jute, arm across his eyes, heard the paces pass his cell.

Opening his eyes, he blinked at the dim light; approaching the barred door, he whispered warily to the man in the next cell.

"What... who was it?"

"A screw," growled Jute's awakened neighbor, referring to the guard who had come and gone. "Just another screw. And listen, lug, you're something worse! You're a screwball, that's what, the way you've been mumbling to yourself!"

Jute wasn't in a mood to argue. Had the "ghost" returned soon afterward, Jute would have resumed his incompleting chat with it. But the cell block had become restless; too many faces were peering from their doors. Of necessity, The Shadow was forced to postpone a further visit, for dawn had nearly arrived.

Daylight steadied Jute's shaky nerves. The familiar prison grounds looked rather pleasant when he went outdoors. He was glad to learn that he had been assigned to his old job in the library, where he had been cataloguing books at the time of his release.

But daytime brought other reminders of the past. At lunch, in the big dining room, Jute could hear the click-click of a fork from somewhere near him. Two long clicks, a short one, another long one. They were at it again, ticking off that mysterious symbol, Q.

Returning to the library, Jute passed a file of prisoners who were moving furniture from one building to another. From behind him he heard a shuffling foot as it beat a recognizable tap, the long and short of the same letter, Q.

All afternoon, the symbol throbbed through Jute's brain. There was a chugging for a while outside the library window; the putt-putt of its idling beat slowed, and in that slackened sound Jute sensed the other meaning of Q, the letters TNT.

The motor's throb might have been accidental, but other sounds weren't. Prisoners were building a loading platform not far away, and Jute heard the pounds of a hammer - two hard strokes, a quick one, and a final banging blow.

"Q... Q... Q -"

It was everywhere, talking to Jute Bantry. He knew that the men who supplied the incessant message were mere stooges, hoping to curry favor with someone who might cut them in on worth-while crime after they left prison. They couldn't know what Q meant.

But it carried a special message for Jute, more potent than ever before. It meant that Q was reminding him of the unfinished deal, pressing him for the needed information that would mean the recovery of the long-buried Hoxel swag. Crime's master did not want to wait a few years longer, until Jute's prison sentence was completed.

It was a double ordeal for Jute Bantry. By night, he could expect visits from The Shadow, in the guise of Hoxel's ghost. By day, there would be repeated messages from the master criminal, Q, through prisoners who served him as a proxy.

Of the two, Jute feared the ghost the more. It had come at night, it threatened vengeance unless Jute



squared himself for his past neglect. Jute couldn't talk to Q until after he had settled the other matter. Not unless Q promised the impossible, immediate release from Sing Sing walls.

Such an offer, nothing less, would give Jute nerve enough to stand off the ghost.

DUSK was settling above the Hudson. Q's period was almost ended, The Shadow's reign would soon begin. Jute was giving worried glances from the window, studying the darkening sky, when a stolid-faced convict entered the library bringing a stack of new books that had just been delivered.

The stolid man rapped the counter to attract Jute's attention. Long and short, the pound of his knuckles signaled the letter Q.

Taking the books, Jute stared at them after the other man left. The books were covered with printed jackets; Jute noted the thickness of one cover midway in the stack.

He pulled a folded paper into sight. Back in his corner, he read the message. It told Jute things that amazed him, that he couldn't believe unless Q furnished proof.

The deal was still on, its terms fifty-fifty, but Q was ready to handle everything. Not only would he dig up the stolen bonds and fence them, he would give Jute freedom!

The proof? The message promised it, if Jute would look in the right place.

Sneaking to another corner of the library, Jute picked a large volume from a bound set of prison records. He opened the book; it was hollow. Inside was a tiny radio transmitter; a wire ran from the book to the wall.

Jute knew that the transmitter was connected with a directional antenna that someone had concealed on these premises. It was pointed for direct communication with Q. Hesitating at first, Jute decided that if the master crook could plant a device like this, he would be able to do the rest he promised.

Huddled above the boxed transmitter, Jute began to send the information regarding the buried bonds. He knew that directional transmission could be kept almost completely secret; that only a receiver in the exact path of the beam could pick it up.

No persons, other than the master crook, would know what the message meant, so Jute figured. He calculated, too, that if Q failed in his immediate promise, Jute himself could queer the game for both of them by telling the warden about the buried swag. In fact, the note had hinted that Jute could do so.

The message was sent. Jute folded the fake book and put it back in place. He returned to the catalogue corner, unnoticed by the librarian, who had been busy at a typewriter all the while. Three minutes passed, tense ones for Jute Bantry. Then the telephone bell rang. The librarian answered.

"The wrong books?" he queried. "Certainly, I'll send a man over for them right away... Yes, we'll correct the mistake and deliver the others later -"

There was only one man that the librarian could send, Jute Bantry. The forger repressed a pasty-lipped grin as the librarian summoned him and told him to go to the guard captain's office to pick up a package of books. Not bothering to pick up his cap, Jute was gone at once.

Soon after Jute's clattering footsteps had faded from the long, outside corridor, a vague figure appeared from a darkened stairway near the library door. Some of the library lamps were lighted, but much of the big room was thick with gloom.

Picking a route where his silent, gliding shape could scarcely be noticed, The Shadow moved toward the catalogue corner. He saw that the space was vacant, except for Jute's cap, which hung above a table strewn with unsorted index cards.

With a glance, The Shadow summed up the situation; he knew that Jute had left for some destination in a hurry. With a quick motion, The Shadow reached a window; from it, he saw a figure hurrying through the dusk toward the administration building.

There was no recognizing the prison-garbed form at that distance, but The Shadow took the chance that the man was Jute Bantry. With another glide, the cloaked investigator was gone from the darkening library, to take up the prisoner's trail.

By night, The Shadow had sought Jute's secret; mere chance had prevented him from gaining it. By day, Q had made the same endeavor, and luck had favored the master crook.

Day was ended; it was night again. This was the time when The Shadow's power ruled. There was still a chance that the cloaked investigator could offset the schemes of Q, crime's hidden master!

## **CHAPTER X. CRIME'S REWARD**

OTHER convicts were following Jute Bantry toward the administration building; though, in his hurry, the forger did not notice them. If he had, Jute wouldn't have realized their connection with his present purpose, for they had kept themselves well covered so far.

They were the men who had drummed the Q signal so often and in so many ways. Like Jute, they expected a reward for services. The same reward that Jute wanted as much as wealth: escape from the confines of Sing Sing prison.

It wasn't unusual for prisoners to approach the building that formed part of the outer wall, particularly when they rated as well as these men did. Q had been careful in picking the men who handled his messages.

All were in for long terms, which made them anxious for escape; but they were also convicts with good behavior records, entitling them to special privileges.

They had cooked up individual excuses for being in this vicinity of the prison grounds. But their real reason was the expected payoff. Jute's trip to the administration building was proof that it was due.

None of the other cons followed Jute into the captain's office; he was the only one who had business there. Two lounging guards gave Jute a suspicious glance, until he announced that he was from the library. One gestured toward a stack of books on a table in the corner. The books were tied with a stout cord.

"The captain called up," announced the guard. "Said he hadn't taken the books to town with him, because they were the wrong ones. Told us to have it made right, so we called the library."

Jute began to untie the books, stating that he would have to check the card numbers. The guard shrugged, and told him to go ahead.

Removing the first two books, Jute found that the next one was fastened to the book beneath it. A wise smile came to his pasty lips as he turned the stack of books around and lifted the next cover toward himself.

The move was hardly necessary. One guard had stepped to a window that opened toward the prison

grounds. He was beckoning to his companion and gesturing out into the dusk. The guards saw hazy figures near the building. One asked:

"What're those guys doing around here?"

Big floodlights were appearing, brightening the scene. A few of the convicts clustered near the building wall, but others were smart enough to stroll toward the lights. That policy deceived the guards, particularly when they saw faces of men who were classed as model prisoners.

During those same moments, Jute had found why the stacked books stuck together. The cover that he lifted was a lid; like the bound volume in the library, these books were hollow, but it took three of them to hold a certain object.

That object was a deep-set oblong box, black and shiny. Except for its shape, it resembled a bomb.

The thing had an inset dial, numbered, and bearing the word "Minutes." Directly below the dial was a switch marked "Starter." Promptly, Jute turned the arrow of the dial to the number 5. He closed the lid, turned to one of the guards.

"All right if I call the library?"

The guard indicated the telephone. Jute called the library, held brief conversation with the librarian. The guards only heard half that call, the words that Jute spoke. Coolly, Jute faked the rest of it.

"The other books are ready," said Jute to the guard. "They want me to come back and get them. They say I'd better leave these here until the return trip."

There was a nod from the guard. His companion was beckoning him to the window again.

"Funny thing, Jim," said the man who was looking out. "That light there, by the door. It looked like it blinked off. Only, there was still some light left. It was kind of like something black came in between and started to blot it, then quit."

THERE was another window in the office, a heavily barred one that faced outside the prison. The barred window had a deep ledge and Jute was starting to place the stacked books on it, so that they would be out of the way. His thumb was underneath the fake cover, prepared to press the starter switch.

Muffled mechanism would tick for five minutes, then go off. By then, Jute would be on his way to the library, but he wouldn't be gone far. He would remember something - the library cards - and turn back for them. A good excuse, if any of the screws outside asked him why he had faced about.

Good enough, too, for the two guards who were at present lounging in the captain's office. But they wouldn't ask any questions when Jute arrived. In fact, they wouldn't be around; they would be gone, along with the barred window and most of the office furniture.

But at present the guards were still talking, and their mention of a flitting blackness outdoors made Jute restrain his pressing thumb.

Hoxel's ghost!

The thought chilled Jute; then another impression struck him. Last night a patrolling guard had failed to see the spectral shape that roved outside of Jute's cell. But in this instance a guard had spied it. The black shape couldn't be a ghost.

It was The Shadow!

As if in answer to Jute's mental exclamation, a whispered laugh came from the office door. It was meant for Jute alone, and the tone was well directed. The arguing guards didn't hear it in their recess by the courtyard window.

Jute was the person who gave the laugh away.

Petrified by sight of a black-cloaked figure in the doorway, Jute couldn't budge a muscle. He saw burning eyes; beneath them the muzzle of an automatic that seemed big enough to swallow him. His hands still gripped the stack of books and couldn't let go. His fingers, fortunately, were frozen like the rest of him.

However, Jute's vocal cords could function, and did. The wild gasp that he gave turned into a shriek that resembled the cry of a stricken beast. The guards didn't think the screech was human, judging from the way they spun around. Their hands went to their holstered revolvers.

Jute's riveted eyes told more than words. They were straight toward the door, pointing out the menace. The guards didn't stop their spins. Thinking that they were to meet a surge of desperate convicts, they sprang toward a door, bringing up their guns. They saw The Shadow; he wheeled away as they arrived.

The guards fired; a taunt told that their bullets had found space. They were past The Shadow, looking for him, when he swung in behind them sledging with his gun. The guards dived through a passage toward the inner yard, where they intended to wheel and take aim at their foe. But The Shadow was no longer after them.

He had revolved completely and was driving in upon Jute Bantry, to halt the crook's intended action. But Jute didn't see The Shadow.

His muscles acting again, Jute was planting the books on the sill by the barred window, thinking that he, too, could reach the inner yard and cower somewhere during the next five minutes.

There wasn't time to change the minute dial. All that Jute could manage was pressure of the starter switch. He forced his thumb against it. The Shadow saw the motion, made a reverse dive in the doorway, headlong to the floor of the passage.

THE blast went off before The Shadow landed. Jute Bantry took the brunt of it. In a flash, the forger was obliterated, wiped from the world like his old pal, Fence Cortho, had been. Otherwise, the explosion came up to specifications.

It did more than take the window bars from their heavy frame. It blew the wall open, ripping a gap from floor to ceiling as wide as it was high. It cracked the opposite wall and hurled an avalanche of ruined furniture in every direction.

A veritable hurricane flattened The Shadow as the air from the concussion found outlet through the doorway. A volley of debris roared through, chunks of it overtaking the two guards, who were still short of the yard. They were pitched headlong through a door that gave when they struck it.

A wave of ruddy flame swept The Shadow like a spreading sheet, but he escaped the fury of that passing lick. His face was buried deep in the folds of his cloak sleeves when he struck the passage floor.

The sprawling guards lost their revolvers as they rolled into the yard. Two other guards, stationed near, were too stupefied to aid them. Convicts, expecting the blast and therefore ready for it, snatched the lost guns and grabbed others from the holsters of the dazed guards standing by.

Another avalanche was coming through the passage. A human avalanche led by four desperate men who were ready to blast a path for a dozen who followed them. They wanted to get through the gap and make for cars parked beyond the walls before marksmen in the high watchtowers could begin a rifle fire.

Not a single member of that maddened mob expected opposition as early as it came. They scarcely saw the blackened shape that rose from the threshold of the office, until they were upon it. The strident laugh that greeted them was like a thing of fancy.

But the fighter himself was real. Too real for their comfort. His sledging fists held big automatics that bashed down warding arms and found the skulls beneath them. Revolvers spurted, without avail. They were dropping from the hands that used them.

The Shadow had met the four gunners with a surprise attack, at such close range that every swing was sure to score a hit. But his weight couldn't stop the surge of a dozen more.

Hands grabbed the cloaked fighter, while others scooped the lost guns from the floor. The human tide surged through the wrecked office toward the yawning wall. There, it crashed like a breaking wave.

The Shadow's hands were swinging; they were shooting. Enemies were sagging as they gripped him; others were stumbling across the forms ahead. New gunners were busy, shooting at blackness, but the blackness wasn't The Shadow. Everything was black outside the gap. The Shadow was somewhere in the dark, but guns couldn't find him.

Jabs from automatics answered the revolver fire. The gunners saw the spurts coming from ground level. They aimed well, but their shots were answered by a shivery laugh. Their bullets were battering concrete.

The Shadow had rolled to a sunken driveway that was bounded by a three-foot wall. He was shooting over the edge of his entrenchment, crouched so low that he wasn't sufficient target for the opposition shots.

Still, The Shadow was taking a great risk, a deliberate one. He wasn't trying to drop his foemen; he was merely holding them at bay, forcing them back into their hole in the wall by the closeness of his shots. He wanted them to grasp the idea that, while they remained in Sing Sing, where they belonged, he had no quarrel with them.

The escape-mad convicts finally understood, when a flood of guards came through the shattered office and piled upon them. Deprived of their nearly empty guns, the captives were dragged back to their cells, except for those who were sent to the hospital. As they went, they heard a parting tone from their vanishing foe.

It was a trailing laugh, the sort that listeners could not forget. The mirth proclaimed the triumph of The Shadow.

The cloaked fighter was silent, however, as he rode away in a car driven by one of his agents, Harry Vincent.

Crime had failed, so far as the convicts were concerned, but it meant success for their hidden master, the unknown Q. Crime's overlord had tricked Jute Bantry into telling where the Hoxel mob had left its swag, then had blasted Jute into permanent silence.

Jute had marked himself as a double-crosser by trying to cash the check from Thurgin's desk. His reward from Q was death. The minute dial on the bomb box was a dummy. The device contained no clockwork,

as Jute had supposed. It was set to go off the instant the victim pressed the switch.

Such facts were plain to The Shadow, as were other elements in Q's success. The Shadow had lost his own chance to make Jute Bantry talk. His only remaining course was a seemingly hopeless quest, a hunt for the buried wealth which a master crook already counted as his own!

## CHAPTER XI. DEATH'S NEW SETTING

EARLY the next afternoon, Rigger Shoy entered the Grand Central Terminal and went to the lower level. His big lips showed a smirky grin, indicating that he was quite pleased by his own strategy.

The lower level at Grand Central was where two smart detectives had followed Fence Cortho. It was, therefore, the last place where they would expect to find Rigger Shoy.

Rigger had been smart enough not to use the subway shuttle train coming over from Times Square, for he knew that dicks like Braun and Jepson watched it as part of their routine. But Grand Central itself was safe, particularly the lower level, for no one was apt to lam town on a local train.

For that matter, Rigger wasn't clearing out of town, in the true sense of the word. He was simply on his way to handle a very important job which had been assigned to him by his mysterious chief.

After buying a train ticket, Rigger purchased a newspaper, then paused to make a telephone call. He wasn't taking orders on this occasion, he was giving them.

Rigger grinned when he heard a cautious voice whine from the telephone receiver.

"What's the matter, Dip?" queried Rigger. "Jitters? I haven't got 'em. Why should they worry you?"

Dip explained that he didn't like his hide-out. There were too many guys around the place, he said. He should have been given a joint of his own, like Rigger had, instead of being quartered with a crew.

"They're goin' some place," added Dip. "Where's that leaving me? I'll tell you. Right behind the eight ball! Anybody's liable to take a look in here, after the outfit leaves. If they do, they'll find me."

"Not a chance," assured Rigger, "because you're going, too. You used the noodle the other night, Dip. I'm counting on you doing it again. Listen now, and get it straight, what you're supposed to do -"

Rigger's voice lowered to an undertone, his statements punctuated by understanding grunts that Dip inserted. Finishing the call, Rigger hurried from the phone booth, joined a group that was hurrying through a train gate and caught the local with half a minute to spare.

When the train stopped at a station in Westchester, Rigger alighted, found a cab, and told the driver to take him to the Meadowfield Country Club. Ten minutes later, the cab rolled into a driveway in front of a clubhouse that was large enough to be a small hotel.

Meadowfield was more than a golf course. It had a few dozen tennis courts, a cricket field, and a swimming pool. The clubhouse boasted broad verandas, a cocktail lounge, a restaurant, and a locker room that filled the entire basement.

Attendants were numerous, but they didn't stop people to ask if they belonged to the club. That question was put to persons who made use of the club's privileges; otherwise, non-members were allowed free use of the premises.

Rigger Shoy made good use of the opportunity. He strolled around the grounds, watching the tennis

players. He joined a group of spectators who were watching golfers at the first tee. He walked around the clubhouse, and saw the golf pro giving driving lessons to a club on the practice tee.

A road crossed the grounds, not far beyond the practice tee. It was an old road that came out of a woods and shied away, as if avoiding the golf course. Rigger studied the road and gave an approving nod. He liked it, particularly the trees.

The door of the locker room was open. Rigger entered, unchallenged, and stopped to watch a group of shirt-sleeved men who were playing bridge. From there, he made an extended trip and had a look at the swimming pool. All the while, he was making other observations.

RIGGER noted that the attendants all wore white jackets and that they were very busy. Some were carrying golf bags to and from lockers; others were hurrying upstairs and coming down again with trays loaded with drinks.

The attendants had a room of their own in the corner. Rigger saw one man come on duty; the fellow went into the room and came out wearing a white coat.

Watching members enter, Rigger soon learned the process. Many of them did not know each other; those who did, frequently introduced friends who happened to be guests. The attendants, trained to courtesy, treated everyone like a member.

Anyone could walk into the locker room of the Meadowfield Country Club as though he owned the place, but playing golf was a different matter.

Golfers had to register at the caddy master's office. Their cards were checked, and they were identified by a sharp-eyed caddy master who seemed to have a memory for names and faces. He gave them score cards, and slips of paper that had to be handed over to the starter on the first tee.

Such details didn't bother Rigger. He wasn't interested in playing golf. Going up a stairway, he went through the main floor of the club. Outside, he took one of the waiting taxicabs and rode back to the railroad station.

There, he stopped at the express office and presented a receipt for a shipment addressed to Mr. Ronald Exton.

The shipment proved to be a set of golf clubs, carefully crated. Rigger borrowed a hammer and undid the crate. His particular care over the golf clubs did not impress the express agent. Many such shipments came to this station, though usually they were called for by club attendants.

Riding back to the country club, Rigger stalked into the locker room, with the golf bag across his shoulder. He handed the bag to an attendant, who asked the number of his locker. Rigger simply gestured toward a corner, as he had seen others do.

"Leave it there," he said. "I'm not a member. I'm waiting for a friend who is."

It was getting late. The pro had finished giving lessons at the driving tee, and some of the other golfers were using it. Most of them were finishing for the day; very few new players were arriving.

Most of the attendants had gone upstairs, because business was increasing in the lounge and restaurant. It was time for Rigger's next stroke in a game quite different from golf, though it had much to do with that pastime.

Finding his opportunity, Rigger entered the room where the attendants went, hung his coat on a hook in a

corner and put on a white jacket. When he came out, he went to an obscure corner of the locker room and began collecting towels, something that he had seen one of the real attendants do.

Stalling on the job, Rigger kept his face turned from the light and picked up what snatches of conversation he could hear. Two latecomers entered; they stopped near Rigger, and promptly interested him with their conversation.

One of the arrivals was Garry Cleeve, the other was an elderly man, with a long face and a gray mustache trimmed in walrus style. The mustached man was muttering angrily.

"Don't take it so hard, Gunthrew," said Cleeve. "We couldn't help it because the Parkway was jammed with traffic."

"But look at the trouble I went to," snorted Gunthrew. "I've brought along a new set of clubs that I've never even tried. I won't have a chance to use them, because we won't even have time to play nine holes."

"We will if we start right away."

"But I have to change to my golf togs. We might as well call it a lost cause. Let's go up and have a drink."

MENTION of the new clubs brought a pleased expression to Rigger's face. A trace of worry wiped itself from the crook's lips. The game that Rigger was planning looked like a sure one. Never having used his clubs before, Gunthrew would not recognize one driver from another.

Garry Cleeve looked out from the doorway, saw that the driving tee was deserted. He suggested getting two caddies and trying some practice drives. The idea suited Gunthrew. It pleased Rigger, too. As soon as Garry left, the darkish man stepped up to Gunthrew and asked:

"What locker number, sir?"

Gunthrew gave the number and handed his golf bag to Rigger. The crook didn't go to the locker right away. He placed the bag beside his own, and pretended that he had another errand. When he came back, Gunthrew had gone ahead to the locker.

Tipping Gunthrew's bag with his knee, Rigger sent it to the floor. The clubs slid halfway out; in straightening them, Rigger slid the driver farther. It was lying on the floor when he set the bag upright. Picking up the club, Rigger replaced it, not in Gunthrew's bag but in the one he had brought from the station.

His hand moved to his own driver. Giving a shifty look over his shoulder, Rigger saw that no one was watching. He removed his own driver carefully and placed it in Gunthrew's bag, which he promptly carried to the locker, where the mustached man was changing clothes.

Garry returned, saying that he had hired the caddies. He didn't even glance at Rigger, who was standing near the wall.

Gunthrew started to pick up his bag; decided he wouldn't need it. Filling his pockets with golf balls, he pulled the driver from the bag and started out to the tee with Garry.

Rigger read the full name on a card set in the front of the locker. It said: "Homer Gunthrew." Grinning, Rigger decided that the name would look good under the man's picture when it appeared in the next day's newspapers.



From the doorway, Rigger watched the two men approach the practice tee. He reached to a pay telephone that was set against the wall and removed the receiver from the hook. He saw Cleeve tee up a line of golf balls, then wait while a sauntering caddy reached his position, a few hundred yards away.

Garry stroked the golf balls one by one. His drives were good, though some had a slice. The caddy started to gather them up, and Garry stooped to help Gunthrew arrange his tees. By then, Rigger was outside the doorway and starting toward the practice tee.

"Telephone call for Mr. Cleeve!"

Hearing Rigger, Garry turned, saw the fake attendant beckon. Gunthrew finished setting up his golf balls; stood holding the driver, waiting for his companion to return. Garry, meanwhile, was working at the telephone hook, trying to get the operator. Gunthrew did exactly what Rigger expected.

Seeing that his caddy was in position, the mustached man decided to get in all the drives he could while daylight remained. He poised his club, hitched his shoulders as if he intended to make a long drive. Some caddies near the clubhouse laughed. One said:

"Watch Old Walrus dig the dirt!"

Gunthrew swung. He dug the dirt, but in a record-breaking fashion. He didn't merely chop a divot from the turf. His stroke took the whole tee. He wanted to drive the golf ball out of sight in the gathering dusk. He did just that, and a great deal more.

Gunthrew vanished with it!

He went in a burst of volcanic flame that seemed to spout from underground. The earth from the practice tee spurted high and wide, like mud from a mighty geyser. Echoes reverberated from surrounding hills, which seemed to shake from the explosion.

When blinded witnesses found that they could use their eyes again, they saw a deep cavity, as large as a shell hole, at the spot where Homer Gunthrew had made his last drive.

## **CHAPTER XII. MEN IN THE DARK**

OF those who witnessed the sudden tragedy, Rigger Shoy alone observed the immediate sequel. Rigger had turned away and shut his eyes when Gunthrew began the fatal swing; the rest hadn't fully recovered from the dazzle.

Rigger saw a car nose in from the trees along the old road. From its speed, he realized that it had just arrived. In one breath, Rigger cursed Dip Perkin for having made too long a detour, and ended his oath with a chuckle because luck had worked out well.

Luck had done more than Rigger realized at that moment. He was soon to learn how, and why.

Instead of keeping to the road, the car cut across the old fairway and sped up beside the ruined tee. Other people saw it by that time, but they didn't consider its maneuver unusual. The riders in the car could have seen the explosion and believed that someone needed aid. Their action seemed commendable.

Four men jumped from the car the moment that it stopped. They sprang into the hole and began to paw around, which was somewhat understandable. Maybe they thought that Gunthrew had been swallowed by the ground, instead of being blasted to atoms. Some of the people who came running from the clubhouse thought the same.

They started toward the tee to see if the men were finding anything, which was exactly what Rigger did not want. Dip's crew weren't looking for Gunthrew; they were seeking something else. The less that others knew about it, the better.

Waving his white-clad arms, Rigger yelled: "Look out! There's another blast coming!"

Rigger was right, though he didn't know it. He had turned about to flag people; they were stopping at his wave. While Rigger's arms still made their sweeps his prediction was fulfilled.

The second blast came. It wasn't a huge explosion, like the first, but it was sharp, and carried a death threat of its own. The sound was the report of a gun. Hearing it, Rigger turned in alarm.

None of Dip's squad had fired, but they were starting to shoot when Rigger saw them. Out of the hole they blazed with revolvers as they made a massed scramble for their car. They were shooting at a tall marksman who was looking for them, a black-cloaked figure scarcely discernible in the dusk.

The Shadow!

He had fired the opening shot. He was delivering more, and the tongued flames from his automatics were the only targets that crooks could see. Their fire was always late; when they aimed for one jab, another appeared elsewhere.

The car was in motion, carrying the crooks with it. But The Shadow wasn't restricted to a chase on foot. Another car was swinging into sight, the same speedy roadster that had met The Shadow outside the walls of Sing Sing. It had circled around the trees while The Shadow was taking a shortcut through.

The roadster picked up the cloaked fighter. The spurts from an automatic marked the progress of the chase, as it went back to the road and swung into the woods.

Rigger Shoy shoved his way through a crowd that was starting toward the ruined tee. He saw Garry Cleeve hurrying with them. Again, Garry ignored the fake attendant.

No one was in the locker room when Rigger reached it. He disposed of his white jacket and regained his own coat, then doubled up through the clubhouse, out to the veranda.

People were climbing into cars, shouting something about chasing somebody. Uninvited, Rigger joined a group in the first car.

They knew the direction in which the crooks had fled, and believed that they could cut them off; but they hadn't an idea regarding what had happened. These folk had been on the veranda when they heard the explosion. Rigger took advantage of their ignorance.

"The bombers are in a roadster," he told them. "They blew up the old tee out in back of the clubhouse."

"How?" queried someone.

"They touched off a fuse," returned Rigger. "There must have been some dynamite buried in the tee."

Other cars were following the one in which Rigger rode. As the procession swung a curve, Rigger caught a flash of dim lights crossing the road ahead. He knew that it must be Dip's crew; The Shadow could not be far behind. Rigger pointed excitedly to the side road from which the fleeing car had come.

"There they are!"

RIGGER'S shout was well timed. Boring headlights appeared, signifying The Shadow's roadster. Cars

sped forward to block it. Approaching at terrific speed, the roadster was sure to be driven off the highway. An ordinary driver would have applied the brakes, but not The Shadow.

He had taken the wheel from Harry in order to speed the chase. Confronted by the blocking cars, he pressed the accelerator, gave the car a sharp swing. It was a masterpiece of skillful driving, that sharp veer to the right. Though headed half across a ditch at the crossing, The Shadow kept two wheels on the highway.

They were the wheels on the left, the ones that took the whole strain. With its whole weight thrown in that direction, the car actually rode on two wheels as it swerved.

Astonished witnesses swore later that the wheels on the right side of the car lifted five feet from the ground. They were mistaken. They included the depth of the ditch in their calculation.

In reality, the roadster's right wheels rose no more than half a foot, but the lift was sufficient. Two wheels clung to the road, where there was a road. The pair that found no surface did not need it.

By the time the car was settling, the high side was clear across the gully. With a jounce, the fleet roadster gained its proper level and rolled off into the thickened darkness.

There was no overtaking it. Built wider than most automobiles, The Shadow's car was speedy as well as roadworthy. Past the next curve it reached a steep hill, and its lights shot over the brow with a spurt that resembled a skyrocket.

Pursuing cars gave up the chase and went back to the Meadowfield Club along a road that led by the station.

There, one passenger asked to be dropped off. His request was granted. The man was Rigger Shoy, and five minutes later he was on a train bound for Manhattan.

Despite his amazing feat of shaking off a tribe of misguided pursuers, The Shadow had met with disappointment. He had lost the trail he wanted and the next hour brought no traces of it, though The Shadow roved a maze of county roads at remarkably high speeds.

Westchester County was an overlarge haystack in which to seek a needle, such as the darting car in which Dip and the thugs had escaped. The Shadow had managed to trace them from Manhattan, but their roundabout course had been irregular, and therefore elusive, until they neared the Meadowfield Club.

There, The Shadow had nearly overtaken them, when he heard the explosion. He was certain, however, that the men in the car had not set off the blast.

Someone else was responsible for the disaster; Dip's crew had been ordered to pick up something afterward. It could only be one thing - the loot that the Hoxel mob had buried.

Ending his search for the missing car, The Shadow drove in the direction of Meadowfield. He was considering two things. The first seemed a remarkable coincidence. It was odd that the Hoxel mob had stowed the bonds under the old first tee at the Meadowfield Country Club. Still, it might not be entirely coincidence.

The Meadowfield course was new ten years ago, probably still under construction. If only hidden temporarily, the loot could have easily been removed without detection.

If Hoxel had intended to bury it for a long while, he could have chosen no better cache than a golf tee.

Once finished, tees were expected to remain for many years.

The second point that struck The Shadow was the fact that the tee itself had been mentioned that day when the conference was held at Thurgin's. Garry Cleeve had casually mentioned the practice tee. He had specified, too, that it had been the old first tee.

Such was the key that The Shadow had failed to use. He had actually heard of the place where the swag was buried, but had given it no attention!

It couldn't be regarded as a mental lapse on The Shadow's part. Golf tees had seemingly had no connection with the Q explosions. Garry's remark had been so artless, that The Shadow felt it useless to chide himself.

THERE were many cars at the Meadowfield Club when The Shadow piloted the roadster into the driveway and turned the wheel over to Harry. The car's arrival excited no comment. No one supposed that it was the roadster that had made the amazing escape at the crossroads.

When he alighted, The Shadow was in the guise of Cranston. He saw lights in back of the clubhouse and went around there.

Commissioner Weston was present. As would be expected, Inspector Cardona was with him. Surprised at first to see Cranston, the commissioner remembered that he had left word at the Cobalt Club to let his friend know where he had gone.

The commissioner's other car had brought two passengers: Rupert Thurgin and Bryce Dalvan. Having heard of the new explosion, the commissioner had called Thurgin, remembering that the financier was a member of the Meadowfield Club.

It turned out that Thurgin was more than a member. He was one of the directors, hence he had felt it his duty to make the trip.

The other passenger was Bryce Dalvan. To convince Dalvan that the police were giving him full protection, Weston had made it a point to inform the real-estate man of every new development. So Dalvan had come along to humor the commissioner but, from his expression, he was becoming fed up with explosions.

While Thurgin stalked about booming questions at everyone, Dalvan stood in the background surveying the whole scene glumly.

The case belonged to the Westchester authorities. They were glad to have Weston and Cardona present, but Thurgin annoyed them. They finally quieted him and began to discuss the evidence. Oddly, it fitted with the rumor that Rigger Shoy had tried to spread, though his false report had not spread far.

Less than a week ago, some workmen had started to level off the old first tee, after widening it for practice use. They had done some digging to remove clogged drainage pipes. It was quite obvious that they could have planted a dynamite charge beneath the soil; their purpose was the only question.

A greens keeper testified that the workmen had been disgruntled. They had been hired only for a few weeks, and some had quit almost immediately on the claim that they expected longer employment. It was possible that radicals among their group had decided to sabotage the golf links. In that case, Gunthrew had been a chance victim.

At the bottom of the blown pit was a squarish cavity, of sufficient size to hold a large bomb. After agreeing that the blast had come from that source, the investigators decided to question persons who had

seen the actual tragedy. Garry Cleeve was one of the witnesses.

Garry told how he had come to the club with Gunthrew. He stated that he had finished his drives from the practice tee and was ready to watch Gunthrew, when he had been called to the locker room to answer a telephone call.

One of the Westchester detectives promptly snapped the question:

"Who called you?"

"From the tee?" queried Garry. "Why, one of the attendants."

"Which one?"

Garry shook his head.

"I don't know many of them by sight," he replied, "and none of them by name. Besides, it was getting dark. I couldn't see the fellow plainly, except for his white jacket."

"Funny that you walked off the tee just before Gunthrew was blasted."

Garry shrugged when he heard the comment. He remarked that it had simply been his good fortune. The county detective didn't like Garry's manner, it showed too little concern over Gunthrew's death. The dick persisted with his quiz.

"Who was on the telephone?"

GARRY hesitated. His eyes narrowed as he glanced about. He was looking for witnesses who had seen him, but nobody offered to speak up. The detective's suspicion increased.

"I suppose it was the wrong number," he gruffed. "Or just two other people. Kind of funny, that call."

"Not at all," returned Garry smoothly, his usual poise regained. "It was from my fiancée, Miss Adele Marcy, who happens to be Mr. Thurgin's niece. She often calls me here at the club. Today, she wanted to talk about taking up golf" - Garry was glancing toward Thurgin - "because her uncle had suggested it."

In his rumbly fashion, Thurgin supported Garry's statement, and Dalvan added a nod. When Weston and Cardona remembered the matter, too, the detective was stumped. The only person who gave no testimony was Cranston; his seemed unnecessary.

The Shadow's eyes were fixed steadily on Garry Cleeve as the young man strolled triumphantly away. Garry's satisfied smile was a bit too suave, like his tone. It told The Shadow that Garry had bluffed the matter of the phone call.

Something else attracted The Shadow's notice - the square hole at the bottom of the pit. Everyone had taken too much for granted in assuming that the charge was planted there. Had such been the case, the square hole would have been obliterated, along with the entire tee.

The Shadow knew exactly what the square hole had contained; namely, a strong box stuffed with half a million dollars worth of negotiable bonds, the spoils of an unsolved robbery of ten years ago. If workmen had dug deep into the tee in order to plant a bomb, they could just as easily have taken the box at that time.

In addition, there had been no digging since yesterday, when Jute Bantry had delivered the information that Q wanted. The repair work on the tee did not fit with the explosion at all.

Studying the soft soil, comparing the great width of the hole, with its considerably lesser depth, The Shadow concluded that a high-powered surface explosion had produced the damage.

Others were going around the clubhouse to reach the front driveway. Alone, Lamont Cranston strolled into the deserted locker room. A soft laugh issued from his smileless lips.

The laugh of The Shadow!

### **CHAPTER XIII. THE SHADOW'S QUESTION**

LAMONT CRANSTON had taken a sudden interest in golf. Late in the evening, when the grillroom of the Cobalt Club was almost deserted, he used the place as his practice ground, much to the annoyance of his friend, Commissioner Weston.

Fortunately, Cranston wasn't battering golf balls around the room. He had merely cleared a space in the center of the floor and was practicing swings with the clubs.

When Weston raised a protest, Cranston reminded him that since the grillroom was used as an office, it could be employed for recreation, too.

It was a neat job at Weston's expense, particularly because the membership committee had objected to Weston's practice of holding conferences in the grillroom. Only through Cranston's intervention had they allowed Weston to continue.

"Sit down, Cranston," suggested the commissioner, more politely, "and have a cup of coffee. I'm not using this place as an office at present. I'm having a late supper."

"Coffee it is," agreed Cranston. "It will give me a chance to show you my new golf clubs. They were a bargain."

Weston raised his eyebrows. He didn't suppose that a millionaire like Cranston ever bothered to look for bargains.

"I should say a gift," corrected Cranston. "I picked these clubs up at Meadowfield."

"Who gave them to you?"

"No one. Which makes them a bargain, instead of a gift. I found them. Since no one claimed them, I was entitled to take them."

Cranston was drawing clubs from the bag, poking them in the commissioner's direction. Weston gabbed his coffee cup and ducked.

"Curious about these clubs," remarked Cranston. "None of them has ever been used. And the driver wasn't sold with the set."

"How do you know?"

"Because I found out where they were bought," replied Cranston. "They were sold to a man named Ronald Exton, and no one knows who he is. He simply mailed a money order for a set of golf clubs, and had them shipped to the Meadowfield station."

The commissioner was examining the golf clubs; Cranston's story aroused his interest. Cranston, meanwhile, drew a golf ball from the pocket of the bag and bounced it on the floor. The eyes that he

fixed on Weston were keen and piercing, unlike Cranston's mild gaze. They were the eyes of The Shadow.

His own investigations having fitted with his theory, The Shadow was prepared to pass the facts to the law. He began it casually, as suited Cranston's style.

"Suppose this golf ball to be loaded with TNT," he said to Weston. "Do you think it could blow a golf tee all to pieces?"

Weston's eyes betrayed a sudden gleam. For a moment, he thought that Cranston had struck on something. Then, with a smile, the commissioner shook his head.

"I doubt that the charge would be sufficient, Cranston."

"I wanted your opinion," nodded The Shadow. "Now compare the size of the golf ball with the head of this driver. You will agree that the club head has a far greater cubic capacity."

This time, Weston nodded.

"Moreover," continued The Shadow, "the face of the club could easily be fitted with a device that would blow the charge. I think the missing driver explains the Meadowfield explosion."

It was all very casual, but the calmness of Cranston's tone added emphasis. Somewhat astonished to find that his friend had taken an interest in crime solution, as well as golf, Weston found that the theory impressed him.

He was almost ready to commit himself when he changed his mind. Cranston's theory was good enough, but no better than the former one. Lacking all knowledge of the motive behind the explosion, the commissioner began to balk.

"It's too fantastic," he began. "It would mean that someone wanted to murder Homer Gunthrew. No, Cranston, I fail to see -"

AN interruption came. Not from The Shadow but from a man who hurriedly entered the grillroom. The newcomer was Inspector Cardona; his breathless condition told that he had something important to say. He finally managed to blurt it out.

"I've traced them, commissioner! The workmen who planted that dynamite. They weren't workmen, they were crooks! A crowd that's right here in town. Nick Logus and his outfit!"

Cardona was rather surprised when Weston tilted back his head and laughed. He didn't realize that the commissioner was chuckling at Cranston's expense. In Weston's opinion, this new information made mincemeat of his friend's theory.

The usually impassive features of Cranston showed actual dejection, which merely increased Weston's chuckles. The expression was a false one. Behind its mask, The Shadow's keen brain was working quickly.

Cardona's statement, if correct, did not injure the exploding golf-club theory. It merely introduced a new angle; one that The Shadow had considered likely all along.

He had intended to put the law on one track at a time; since the game had jumped too rapidly, it would be better to play a lone hand. The Shadow decided to listen, and learn what Cardona had to offer.

Joe detailed the past career of Nick Logus. The fellow was a strong-arm artist, leader of a hoodlum band that had worked for racketeers in the old days. They were sluggers rather than killers, Nick and his pals, and they had clung together during slack times.

"What Nick's gone in for, I don't know," admitted Cardona. "Maybe he's working for some blackmailers. Blowing up a golf tee at a place like Meadowfield would scare a lot of club members. They might listen if somebody turned the heat on them later."

"How did you learn about Logus?" inquired Weston.

"I identified one of the workmen," explained Cardona. "Some of the club attendants remembered him. One led to another, and another. I showed them photos of the guys that run around with Nick and, first thing I knew, I had the whole dope."

"You've located Logus?"

"Sure! I know the garage where he and the crew hang out. It is being watched. Even that fits in with the workmen stuff. Nick and the boys weren't in their joint over the garage the days those workmen were out at Meadowfield."

Cardona's new link was so perfect that Weston gave another smiling look at Cranston.

"I've just seen Thurgin," continued Cardona. "He called some of the Meadowfield directors to find out why they hired guys like Nick. It seems that Nick and his bunch mooched in by giving phony references.

"Cleeve was over at Thurgin's, too. I asked him if he remembered what the workmen looked like. He didn't particularly recall them. Funny, too, because he used that practice tee a lot. I guess his mind was on Miss Marcy. He'd just come in with her when I got to Thurgin's. She's staying there since her uncle returned."

Talk of Garry and Adele didn't interest Weston; but The Shadow filed it mentally for future reference. Cardona, meanwhile, was producing photographs illustrating the "mugs" that belonged to the Logus crew.

"I sent a set up to Dalvan," added Joe, "on the chance that this bunch might be the fellows staging these robberies. Dalvan doesn't remember seeing any of them around his office. They couldn't be the bunch that blasted Tillingham's car and cracked the jewelry store.

"We've linked all that with Rigger Shoy. It's a cinch that Rigger wouldn't travel with a dopey guy like Nick Logus. Neither would Dip Perkin, for that matter. I'll bet that if Rigger found out that Nick was copying the blast stuff on a pint-sized scale, he'd take a crack at him.

"All I wish" - Cardona finished, growling - "is that I could find Rigger as easy as I can Nick."

THE SHADOW, too, would have liked to find Rigger Shoy. He was quite sure that Rigger had somehow handed Gunthrew the wrong golf club. The Shadow did not regard the Meadowfield explosion as a "pint-sized" blast, as Cardona termed it.

It fitted perfectly with the entire scheme of the Q organization. Crimes coupled with explosions, right through to the finish. Disposal of men like Cortho and Bantry by the same method, a final blast, in the effort to acquire the treasure that the Hoxel mob had buried.

The case of Nick Logus was something else, more of an undercover job. But it smacked of a brain behind it. Nick Logus could tell a lot if questioned, and he was the sort who would talk under the right



persuasion. In thinking of persuasive measures, The Shadow considered the superiority of his own methods compared to Cardona's average third degree.

"I'm moving in on Nick Logus," declared Cardona. "I've got a squad due here any minute, commissioner. All I need is for you to give the nod."

Weston gave the nod. As he finished he added a chuckle for Cranston's benefit. Cranston was getting up from the table, gathering his golf clubs, preparing to take those playthings home. Weston reached over and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Sorry you're going, Cranston," said the commissioner. "I hope you keep up your golf practice. It's a better game than detective work. You can't go wrong in golf."

Cardona stared blankly as Cranston departed. Joe looked to Weston for an explanation, but the commissioner's fun-making mood had ended.

Briskly, Weston asked Cardona to outline his plan for trapping Nick Logus. Joe drew diagrams on the tablecloth, showing the garage, the living quarters over it, and the location of a tiny courtyard in the rear.

Outside the Cobalt Club, Cranston was driving away in his limousine. The big car hadn't gone a block before Stanley, the chauffeur, heard a quiet voice through the speaking tube, directing him to a destination quite different than Cranston's New Jersey residence.

The limousine swung eastward, heading toward a very disreputable district. The passenger in the rear seat began a transformation. From Lamont Cranston, he became a being cloaked in black, the proper attire for the coming occasion.

The Shadow planned to drop in on some crooks who lived above an old garage, before the police paid a similar visit. The Shadow had a question that he wanted to ask Nick Logus.

## **CHAPTER XIV. THE MISSING SHADOW**

NEAR his destination, The Shadow glided from the limousine and went the rest of the way on foot. The procedure was necessary, for a car like his limousine would have attracted too much attention from the plainclothes men stationed by Cardona.

The Shadow passed several of these worthies as he approached the old garage, which was midway in a dingy block. The garage was used mostly for repair work; it was too far from hotel and apartment districts to attract car owners who wanted storage.

There was a light in the garage; it glimmered through little windows in the closed door. Apparently, men were at work. Whether they were legitimate mechanics, or lookouts working for Nick Logus, was a debatable question which The Shadow did not attempt to answer at the moment.

He saw a better mode of entry to the upstairs quarters than the route which the garage offered. Next door was an old house, empty and ramshackle. Even the boardings over its windows had been partly removed; probably torn away to serve as kindling wood for some of the neighborhood tenements.

The house had three floors, while the garage, with its upstairs quarters, had only two. The trouble was that the house showed a blank, windowless wall on the side toward the garage. Such problems appealed to The Shadow. He liked routes that other persons would reject.

Moving in beside the old house, The Shadow squeezed through a broken window. Using his tiny flashlight, he found a rickety stairway and made a rapid trip to the top floor.

He saw the usual trapdoor in the roof, a common thing in these old houses. Rust had eaten the bolts that held it; a mere shove would open the contraption.

The door to a third-floor room was leaning from broken hinges. Yanking the door loose, The Shadow carried it along the hall, propped it against the wall and used it as an improvised ladder.

His hand clutched the top of the door, his foot stepped to the knob. Another hoist, and he was shouldering through the broken trap to the roof. Reaching the side wall, he studied the flat top of the two-story garage building.

It had no outlet through its level roof; nevertheless, it suited The Shadow. He took an easy drop to the level below and moved toward the rear edge. He looked down into the little courtyard that Cardona had mentioned to Weston.

A rear light from the garage provided trickly illumination to the courtyard, the very sort that would serve observers watching from the second floor. The ground was dark directly below the rear wall, but it would be impossible to approach that spot without being seen.

Cardona's visit wasn't going to be as easy as the ace inspector supposed. Listening from the roof edge, The Shadow could hear guarded voices from open windows on the second floor. He knew that Nick's lookouts were on duty.

Sidling along the roof edge, The Shadow reached a spot where no voices could be heard, though there was a window just below. Swinging over the brink, he dangled by his hands, not directly outside the window but a trifle to the left of it.

His right foot found the corner of the outer sill. His right hand descended, clamped the edge of the window frame.

No voices. In fact, a nudge of The Shadow's soft-tipped shoe told that this particular window was closed. Releasing his hold above, he clung to the sill and peered through the panes. It was dark inside, but not enough so to hide watchers had there been any. This window was unguarded.

The Shadow had expected as much, since there was no need for lookouts at every window. All they had to do was watch the courtyard. At least, they so supposed. Nick Logus and his followers had not considered the prospect of a silent invader from above.

WORKING the window open, The Shadow entered. He closed the outlet, rather than run the chance of having some crook notice it while he was elsewhere. The Shadow found himself in a short hall. At the end was a right-angled stairway that led down into the garage.

Returning, The Shadow stopped and listened to voices beyond a closed door. He listened to a raspy tone belonging to Nick Logus. To hear better, The Shadow tested the door, found that it yielded.

He opened the door a crack, saw tiny glows in the darkness, indicating the tips of lighted cigarettes.

Then Nick's rasping voice.

"Sit tight, guys," it said. "Maybe the bulls are on their way - so what? All we got to do is wait for some wheelers to show up."

"Why wait?" interjected a snarling tone. "There's buggies down in the garage, ain't they?"

"Sure there are, Hunk," agreed Nick. "But most of them heaps are half apart. The guys downstairs had to

fake the mechanic stuff in case some of Cardona's flatfeet took a look-see."

Buzzes approved Nick's statement. Even Hunk gave an accepting growl. Nick continued:

"If the bulls show up, they'll be out back. We'll let 'em move in a way. Just when they think they got us where they want us, we'll lam out through the front -"

There was an interruption, from a man who came blundering in from another room. The arrival had news.

"The wheelers are here," he told Nick. "They just rolled up to the front, and the guys downstairs let 'em in."

Sounds of motors were audible from below. Nick chuckled, remarking that the cars had shown up in short time. He ordered his men to move downstairs through the darkness.

Letting the door ease shut, The Shadow turned toward the stairway. There was a space beyond it, which would make an excellent niche in which to hide.

From Nick's orders, it seemed that he intended to bring up the rear, which offered The Shadow an excellent opportunity. He intended to let the others go by, then single out Nick in the darkness.

Expert in quick-throttling methods, The Shadow believed that he could pluck the leader from the rest and carry Nick away before the puzzled hoodlums would realize what had happened.

Men were already in the hall when The Shadow heard Hank's hoarse whisper from the room the others had left:

"Look, Nick! The coppers!"

Evidently, Nick looked from the window of the room. His voice was doubtful.

"Maybe," said Nick. "Maybe not. Go ahead, Hank. I'll watch for the glims. If you hear any shooting, just sit tight. It'll be me, giving some poison to boobs that need it. I'll be with you, right after."

With Nick staying in the room, the sooner The Shadow reached there, the better. He started from his niche, intending to slip past the hoodlums who were moving into the hall. Just past the stairs, The Shadow made an abrupt halt.

Creeping men were coming up the stairs, evidently to learn why the others had not started down. Because the steps made a right angle, The Shadow had not heard their approach.

One climber was stumbling across the top step, making a half lunge to catch himself. The Shadow, straight in the fellow's path, tried to whisk away.

There wasn't time. The stumbler's extended hands caught The Shadow's cloak. The thug recognized the garb despite the darkness, and lifted a wild shout.

Before he could articulate crime's battle cry, "The Shadow!" the crook was silenced by a fisted bludgeon that met his wide-open mouth, driving the words right down his throat.

Carried over the stair top by The Shadow's punch, the thug sprawled into the midst of others. Wheeling away, The Shadow headed for the window at the far end of the hall. With chance for stealthy tactics ended, the window was the only spot from which The Shadow could put up a creditable battle against doubled odds.

A flashlight bored from the stairway as shouting men lunged up with drawn guns. The Shadow's swirl had carried him beyond the glow, but he couldn't avoid those who were coming from the lookout room.

Meeting a pair head on, he drove them toward the window, slugging with an automatic that he had whipped from his cloak.

By then, another flashlight was blazing, supplied by a member of the upper mob. The Shadow was past it; as he twisted from the men who gripped him, he saw the paths of the flashlights meet. The odds had truly doubled. The crew from below was as tough, perhaps more so, as the tribe that backed Nick Logus.

IN the glare, The Shadow saw the face of their leader. The man was Rigger Shoy. He was backed by the same sort of gunners that he had headed when he invaded the Gibraltar Trust Co.

Matching Rigger's triumphant yell came a high, vengeful rasp from Nick Logus. Guns were blazing as The Shadow reached the window. He had slugged down the two men who had tackled him in the dark, but he hadn't time to get his gun in action against jabs that were sure to come his way.

There was something else, however, that The Shadow heard along with the blasts of revolvers. The other sounds were shouts from the courtyard in back of the old garage. Cardona and his squad had actually arrived; the roar of gunfire was speeding their approach.

More lights were agleam; they threw a sweeping brilliance through the hall and the adjoining room, rendering the whole scene visible to those outside.

To Joe Cardona, at the head of his squad, the sight was a blur of faces and spurting guns. But all that formed a background past the silhouetted figure that partly blotted the hallway window.

Hoarsely and anxiously, Cardona voiced:

"The Shadow!"

Alone in that mass of murderous gunners, trapped at such close range that a surge could surely overwhelm him, The Shadow seemed beyond the law's aid. Cardona's squad could not open fire without dropping The Shadow first. He had to clear the way, and he did it in most startling fashion.

Twisting from the glare of the lights, The Shadow slashed his gun ahead of him as he lunged straight for the window. He sledged the sash from its frame and came plunging headlong through the space that he had opened, along with a crash of woodwork and the shatter of glass!

He cleared the sill with that terrific dive. His hands were gripping the demolished framework of the window as he pitched into the darkness. His arms, with their spread cloak sleeves, seemed the wings of some mammoth night bird as he parachuted to the ground.

Blackness swallowed The Shadow's dive. The crash of his landing was drowned by the rattle of guns above. Some of the upstairs fighters were shoving from the windows with their revolvers. But there was nothing to restrain Cardona's marksmen now.

At the inspector's command, detectives began a blazing fire that sent thuggish figures staggering. Spreading through the courtyard, the headquarters squad kept up its stinging fire. They were finding the range and making the most they could of it.

Battle was on in full fury, although The Shadow, the fighter who had started it, was missing from the fray!

## CHAPTER XV. THE DEATH CALL

FLASHLIGHTS had vanished from the floor above the old garage, but the scene there wasn't black. It gave the impression of a fireworks display, the way guns jabbed. Most of the mobsters had withdrawn from the windows, which made them difficult to reach; but bullets were taking effect none the less.

Shooting from improvised shelters, the police had not suffered a single casualty, yet the firing upstairs began to slacken. Once it lessened, it dwindled rapidly. Yelling to his men to keep up their barrage, Cardona dashed forward to look for The Shadow.

Beneath the window, Joe's flashlight showed the wreckage of the fallen woodwork and splotches of blood upon the courtyard paving. The Shadow had suffered from his fall, but he couldn't be too badly injured.

From the condition of the broken window frame, it must have struck first. By carrying it ahead of him, The Shadow had used it as a buffer.

Besides, The Shadow wasn't on the ground. He had crawled somewhere to shelter, another good sign. There was a doorway at the back of the garage. Cardona decided that the black-cloaked fighter might have gone toward it. Joe was about to turn his flashlight in that direction, when he heard shouts from his detectives.

Springing back across the court, Cardona looked toward the second-story windows. He heard a last few shots; they were fired from deep down the hall. There was a clatter, too, of feet on a stairway. The sound was muffled.

"They're heading down through the garage!" shouted Cardona. "Come on!"

Dashing for the rear door of the garage, Cardona used his flashlight to make sure he wouldn't stumble over The Shadow. But he saw no sign of the cloaked fighter.

Smashing hard, the inspector and a pair of detectives drove the door inward. There were shots as they arrived, from the direction of the stairway, and the headquarters men delivered a full-fledged volley in return.

They heard howls from the opposition. Reaching the stairway, they came upon three sagging crooks who had already dropped their guns. Telling two of his men to attend to them, Cardona led the rest of his squad upstairs.

The upper hall was strewn with dead and dying, about twice as many crooks as Cardona expected to find. Never had the ace inspector viewed such carnage, considering the shortness of the fight and the distant range. Cardona's men were amazed at their own marksmanship.

Outnumbered by more than two guns to one, the headquarters squad had literally wiped out a horde of entrenched gunmen, at a rate which meant that nearly every bullet must have scored a hit. Cardona decided that the windows must have been just the right type of targets; a good point to remember on future occasions.

Near the hallway window, Cardona came across Nick Logus, found the man in a dying state. He pounded Nick with questions about the blast at the Meadowfield Country Club. Nick's one answer was a raspy sneer. He died with its echoes on his lips.

Detectives were identifying some of the dead thugs. They had news for Cardona when he rejoined them.

The dead men were not just Nick's followers, some of them were crooks identified with Rigger Shoy.

"So that's it!" grunted Joe, as he started down the stairs. "Both Rigger and Nick were working for the same big guy, after all. One brain behind the blasts. Well, that makes sense. When things got tough for Nick tonight he sent for help, and it was Rigger who brought it."

DOWNSTAIRS, two waiting detectives had started to look around the garage. One saw something near the open door at the back. It wasn't a human form, it was a blackish blotch that crawled jerkily along the floor. It disappeared while the dick stared.

The detective called his companion. The two went to have a closer look. But there wasn't anything to see. The blotch, whatever it was, had moved off among some old cars that were undergoing repairs.

Looking farther, the detectives came across a man who was wearing mechanic's overalls. The fellow was lying motionless. He had taken a hard blow on the skull.

They found a second stunned mechanic a little later. It puzzled them, because they had heard no scuffles while they searched. Nor was there any sign of the blotch. It must have traveled farther toward the front.

Hearing Cardona coming down the stairs, the detectives went to meet him. Their talk of creeping blackness was understandable; it could mean The Shadow. Cardona decided to take a look himself, starting from the front and working back.

Joe hadn't gone a dozen feet before he heard a rattling sound at the front of the garage. The big sliding door went rolling wide, two men sprang for a car that was parked with its nose toward the door. Cardona recognized both men at sight.

Rigger Shoy and Dip Perkin!

It was Rigger who leaped to the driver's seat; by the time Cardona arrived, Dip was jumping in beside him. Cardona didn't waste a bullet on Dip; he took a hard swipe at the pasty man's head.

Dip dodged the blow and took a somersault across the garage floor, his long legs kicking crazily as he tumbled.

Meanwhile, Rigger had kicked the starter. The car was snapping forward as Cardona leaped into the front seat to settle the crooked driver. Joe tripped, sprawled half beneath the dashboard, his gun shooting into the floor board as he fell.

Rigger plucked a handy monkey wrench from the seat beside him and tapped the back of Cardona's head. The inspector coiled, the car's front door hit the edge of the doorway as it passed, and slammed shut.

Detectives were blazing after the fleeing sedan, but their guns no longer had the magic charm. Maybe the range was too short for such experts at distant fire.

Whatever the case, they didn't stop the sedan, nor did they clip the man who had managed to jump on the running board. Dip Perkin was making a getaway, too, just as he had at the Gibraltar Trust Co.

Rigger might have made a perfect escape, if it hadn't been for Dip. Word had already gone to detectives in the neighborhood that the headquarters squad had exterminated crooks and captured the garage. The fleeing car could logically have gone unchallenged except for the scrawny figure hanging outside it.

Finding himself running the gantlet of a spasmodic fire, Rigger zigzagged the car to make it difficult for the

marksmen. The system worked perfectly, except where Dip was concerned. Every sharp jerk of the car nearly threw the clinging man to the street.

Dip was clutching a rear doorknob with one hand, the car fender with the other. He was crouched low, his face beside a rear window. He was trying to figure some way of getting inside; therefore, his goggly eyes were fixed in that direction.

As the car whipped beneath a bright street lamp, Dip gave a sudden yell to Rigger.

The yell wasn't heard. Rigger was veering for a corner. Remembering The Shadow's gyrations with the roadster, Rigger cut in close and gave the car full speed. Tires shrieked, drowning Dip's yell, as the outer wheels took the strain.

Rigger hadn't learned The Shadow's style. The inner wheels didn't lift as he expected. They bounced the curb and nearly overturned the sedan. Rigger managed to right the car and get it under control. But the jolt had ended Dip's hold.

Lurched by the car's veer, the scrawny crook took a dive when the wheels bounced. He was somersaulting again, like a giant tumblebug, this time in the middle of the street.

Fortunately for Dip, he was a rubbery sort of creature. He found his feet, took to his long legs automatically. Half a block away, he dived into a darkened doorway and crouched there.

SIRENS began to whine. From their direction, Dip decided that the patrol cars had lost Rigger's trail. They were coming along this street, and Dip feared that they would start searching doorways.

He tried a window beside his own doorway. It gave. Dip tumbled into a little laundry shop.

Crawling behind a counter, he encountered the extension cord of a telephone. The thing gave him an idea. By the light of a match Dip placed the telephone on the floor and used the dial.

An answer came, in the same forced voice that he had heard the time he called from Grand Central.

"Listen, chief!" hoarsed Dip. "It was pretty near a wipe-out! Curtains for Nick Logus and all his crew. Our bunch got theirs, except for me and Rigger. We made a getaway, after the bulls took over.

"Cardona tried to put the slug on me, only Rigger gave it to him instead. We made a getaway in our car - you know, the special - but I was throwed off. Rigger is in the clear, only there's something he don't know. Listen, chief -"

Abruptly, Dip halted. A police car had stopped near the front of the laundry shop. Patrolmen were looking into doorways. They were missing the partly opened window, but there was a chance that Dip's voice would be heard.

The speaker at the other end wanted Dip to continue. Dip did so, in a whisper, asking if it could be heard. It could. Dip finished his conversation and eased the receiver on its hook. Looking out, he saw the patrol car moving away.

Meanwhile, more than a mile from the old garage, Rigger Shoy had slackened his sedan to a cruising speed. He had shaken the trail; there was no reason to excite suspicion from traffic officers.

Reaching toward the floor, Rigger grabbed Cardona's collar and hauled the inspector's head and shoulders up to the front seat.

Joe's eyes opened groggily. Rigger gave a glance and chuckled. He figured that Cardona could hear what was told him.

"Listen, lug!" sneered Rigger. "You went after Nick Logus, figuring he planted the blast out there at Meadowfield. Well, Nick didn't have a thing to do with it. He was just out there looking over the lay.

"I was the guy that finished off Homer Gunthrew. I gave him a driver loaded with TNT! I'm telling you this, because the big guy that I work for thinks you ought to know. He says he's getting tired of the racket. No fun in it, the way you bulls are muffing everything. Even The Shadow has been a washout.

"I'm letting you off pretty soon, so you can go and talk to that dope who calls himself a police commissioner. Tell Weston he might as well resign. We'd be making a monkey out of him if he wasn't one -"

A sharp sound was coming from the dashboard. Rigger stared while he listened. Cardona heard it, too, just as he had grasped most of the things that Rigger told him. There was a radio dial on the dash. The sound that came was a short-wave call.

"Dash - dash - dot - dash -"

The signal was repeated; it kept drilling through Cardona's brain. Smirking, Rigger turned to look at his captive. Cardona let his eyes go half shut, faking that he was worse off than he was. Joe felt alive enough, but limp. He wasn't ready yet to tackle Rigger.

"That's Q," chuckled Rigger. "Get it? Q. It's the big-shot's call; that's what we call him - Q. I could tell you why he uses it, but there isn't time. When Q calls, it means business. Right now, there's something he wants me to do. Just why, I'll find out later. Too bad you won't be around to learn."

Rigger was stopping the car at a darkened curb on a slight downward slope. He kept his foot on the brake pedal, while he reached beneath the front seat to press a switch. A ticking sound was immediately audible.

Cardona's slumped hand was feeling along the floor for the lost revolver. Joe clutched it, started to lift his arm, while his weak forefinger hunted for the trigger.

His effort was too slow. Rigger had lifted his shoulders, and was picking up the monkey wrench.

"Just a couple of minutes left for you," he told Cardona. "I'm leaving, but I'm not taking any chances on you coming, too."

RIGGER'S hand gave an upward flip. He started the wrench on a downward drive for Cardona's skull, intending a blow far harder than the one that he had given Joe before.

Cardona's left arm sought to ward the stroke; his right tried to swing the gun toward Rigger. Joe's actions were painful, too belated to save him.

Rescue came from another source. Like a thing from nowhere, a black-gloved fist came to life above Cardona's head and plucked Rigger's descending wrist in a grip as strong as any vise!

The fist drove the stroke wide. The turned wrench grazed the windshield, slipped from Rigger's clutch as his wrist received a torturing twist that carried to his fingertips. With a snarl, Rigger was swung about, clawing for another hand that thrust an automatic toward his face.

He saw The Shadow; so did Cardona. The black cloaked fighter was in the rear seat, where he had



crawled after coming from the garage courtyard. This was a time when The Shadow's face was visible, for his slouch hat was tilted far back on his head.

But the face wasn't recognizable as Cranston's. It was a pale blur, streaked with zigzagged lines of crimson, blood from gashes above The Shadow's forehead. The cloaked fighter had been groggy, too, even more so than Joe Cardona. Senseless, in fact, at the time when Dip Perkin had seen him in the rear seat and yelled to Rigger.

The Shadow was the reason for the Q call!

Rigger hadn't understood it. He thought that the master mind had simply decided to dispose of Joe Cardona. There had been no message flashed through, because Q didn't want The Shadow to hear it. The one thing needed had been quick response from Rigger, and the crook had delayed too long.

He was trying to make up for it. Rigger was warding away The Shadow's gun; coming over the back of the seat, he was grabbing for the cloaked fighter's throat. The Shadow's clutch was gone from Rigger's wrist. He'd put all his reserve strength into it, to save Cardona's life.

The Shadow was hoping that Cardona would return the favor, and the inspector did. His gun hand was up by this time, and Joe didn't hesitate. Shoving the revolver muzzle against Rigger's ribs, Cardona fired. The crook slumped behind the wheel.

The car was starting down the slope. There was no sound from the motor, for Rigger had turned it off. Rigger's foot, off the brake pedal, had released the sedan into a glide. But the roll was not noiseless. There was still the muffled ticking. The Shadow knew exactly what it meant.

Gathering strength for another lunge, the cloaked fighter came over the front seat, shoving Cardona ahead of him and to the right. Wonderingly, Cardona made a half-hearted grapple; during it, The Shadow's hand yanked the door handle. The door gave; he and Cardona went tumbling through.

They struck the curb and rolled apart. The Shadow was coming to his feet, while Cardona was still on hands and knees. Both were watching the taillights of the car, which was gathering speed down the slant of the deserted street, a dying driver vainly clutching its steering wheel. The trip ended at approximately fifty yards.

It ended in a big way. The car exploded like a giant firecracker, gushing a great spread of flame that ripped from curb to curb. Windows rattled in silent houses, the paving crackled like thawing ice. Showers of metal sprayed in all directions. Along with the parts of the car went pieces of Rigger Shoy.

It seemed a long while before Cardona could see things plainly, or hear in normal fashion, for the flame had blinded his eyes, the roar had deafened his ears. In fact, it did take Joe a full minute to recuperate from the explosion, as he calculated later.

For when he looked for The Shadow, Cardona found that his cloaked rescuer was gone; and the laugh that Cardona heard seemed distant in its trailing, shivery tone.

There was triumph in that mirth. It was The Shadow's answer, and a very satisfactory one, to the latest call from Q.

## **CHAPTER XVI. CRIME TO COME**

COMMISSIONER WESTON was really jolted when he heard Cardona's report on Rigger Shoy. The thing that flabbergasted Weston was Rigger's admission of murdering Homer Gunthrew in the exact

fashion that Lamont Cranston had pictured.

Weston argued for a while. He claimed that Rigger's word could not be trusted. Cardona flattened those arguments. He declared that Rigger was already wanted for murder, hence would brag about his crimes. Not having heard Cranston's theory, Cardona didn't know why the commissioner was so obstinate.

To prove his point, Cardona made a trip to Westchester County and spent the day there. He arrived back in New York, at the Cobalt Club, just as Weston and Cranston were finishing dinner. The evidence that Cardona spread upon the table left no doubt as to Rigger's guilt.

The caddy master mentioned a mysterious golf bag that had later disappeared. The express agent at the station told about a man named Ronald Exton, who had picked up a similar bag. His description of Exton matched Rigger Shoy, and quizzing around the clubhouse caused certain people to remember an attendant who also looked like Rigger.

"Your theory is proven, Cranston," declared Weston, suddenly. "We shall put it to the final test, shortly. We are going over to Thurgin's for a conference, and I think that Garry Cleeve will be there."

During the ride, Cardona heard all about Cranston's theory. Remembering the golf bag that Cranston had brought to the Cobalt Club, Joe kicked himself for not having inquired more about it. He felt, however, that the brunt of the blame belonged on Weston, which gave the inspector considerable satisfaction.

They found Bryce Dalvan chatting with Rupert Thurgin. Weston had invited Dalvan to the conference, but it turned out that he and Thurgin already had business to discuss.

Thurgin was interested in the purchase of some Midwestern real estate, and had learned that Dalvan was well acquainted with such property. They were going over details when the visitors arrived, but they postponed their own business to learn the latest developments in crime.

When Weston asked if Garry Cleeve was coming, Thurgin summoned Adele. The girl said that she expected Garry, and would bring him to the office as soon as he arrived.

Meanwhile, Cardona read the portion of his report which concerned the Q calls.

"These calls have been picked up before," explained Weston, "and they coincide with certain explosions. No one, however, had guessed their significance, until last night."

"I didn't even guess it," inserted Cardona, "until Rigger told me. I heard the call, and didn't get the idea. The only reason Rigger spilled the facts was because he figured that I was going to be blown up, instead of him."

"The calls are important," declared Weston. "We shall make every effort to trace them, along with Q himself."

Both Thurgin and Dalvan looked puzzled. Cardona explained that Rigger had termed the master crook as Q, and that the law had adopted the initial for convenience.

"There's two guys who were close to Q," declared Cardona. "One of them is dead: Rigger Shoy. But the other guy, Dip Perkin, is still around. I'm going to find him."

"What about Nick Logus?" inquired Weston. "Of course, he is dead, too -"

"Which doesn't matter," interposed Cardona. "Nick was only working for Rigger. That's what Rigger said."

The faintest of smiles showed upon the lips of Lamont Cranston. The Shadow had his own idea regarding the relationship between Rigger Shoy and Nick Logus. He felt it best to keep his theory to himself, though he could produce definite facts to back it.

While The Shadow was mentally reviewing details of last night's fray at the old garage, Garry Cleeve appeared with Adele Marcy.

"There's something I want to ask you, Cleeve," said Cardona. "It's about that telephone call out at Meadowfield."

ADELE'S lips tightened suddenly, to repress a gasp. Cardona did not observe it, nor did Weston. They were looking at Garry, not Adele. But Cranston's eyes, which so often roved idly, took in the girl's consternation.

There wasn't the slightest change in Garry's suave expression. Perhaps he had expected the question. All he said was:

"Shoot!"

"Tell me about the attendant who summoned you," suggested Cardona. "Did he look like this?"

Cardona tossed a picture of Rigger Shoy on the desk. Garry examined it solemnly, then gave a slow nod.

"I think I saw this fellow in the locker room," he said. "He was probably the same one who called me."

"Listen to this, then."

Cardona read the last half of his report, covering Rigger's actions at Meadowfield. He waited for questions. One came - from Bryce Dalvan:

"But why did they want to kill Homer Gunthrew?"

"We don't know," admitted Cardona. "Rigger didn't say. Maybe he got the wrong man."

Rupert Thurgin came bolt upright behind his desk.

"It might have been my life!" he exclaimed. "I have been intending to play golf with Garry. It looks to me" - he swung to Bryce Dalvan - "as though we are in something of the same boat. You were almost a victim of these same murderers, Dalvan."

The point impressed Commissioner Weston. He declared that he could offer full protection to both. So far, he reminded, Dalvan had met no further danger after the first thrust from Q, and the law's vigilance was largely responsible. Thurgin was entitled to the same privilege.

Thurgin promised to notify the commissioner if anything occurred to give him alarm. With that, the conference ended; but, as the visitors were going out, Thurgin asked Garry and Adele to remain and witness some papers. Dalvan was staying, too, because of his business with Thurgin.

Pausing in the doorway, The Shadow heard Garry tell Adele that they could go out later, together. The Shadow decided that he would have a chance to learn of anything important that might happen meanwhile, so he went along with Weston and Cardona.

By the time the commissioner's car had left the mansion, Thurgin and Dalvan were getting back to business, with Garry and Adele as interested listeners.

"You think the proposition is a good one?" queried Thurgin. "Are mint fields really profitable?"

"At the price you are paying," returned Dalvan. "I would like to have the same opportunity."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money, Dalvan, in a cash transaction."

"But you're getting a lot of land in return. The thing is an absolute bargain!"

Thurgin drew some letters from his desk drawer, read them carefully. Stroking his bristly hair, he tightened his deep-lined face, gazed steadily at his new friend, Dalvan, and declared, as if to test him:

"I could buy twice as much, if I wanted it. Would you like the other half, Dalvan?"

An eager expression spread over Dalvan's long-featured face. He nodded. Thurgin brought out his check book.

"The Gibraltar Trust is your bank, too," he reminded. "Write out a check for twenty-five thousand dollars. I can add it to my share."

Casually, Thurgin tossed a stack of big bills on the desk. Seeing the money, Dalvan glanced at his watch, noted that it was only half past eight.

"I don't have that much in my account," he said, "but I have plenty of cash in my safe-deposit vault at the bank. I am sure I can make up the total. But I shall have to go to the bank."

"Send the cash here," decided Thurgin. "The bank will deliver it by armored truck. I can put it all in this metal suitcase" - he pointed to a large bag beside the desk - "and turn it over to Claude Lyden when he arrives."

ADELE had heard of Lyden. He had served her uncle often in important transactions. Thurgin had mentioned once that Lyden was bonded for a hundred thousand dollars.

"Lyden is stopping at the Hotel Andorra," added Thurgin. "The cash will be entirely secure with him. He leaves for the Midwest by the early plane tomorrow morning. He can put the bag in the hotel safe over night."

Dalvan reminded Thurgin that time was getting short. With a nod, Thurgin wrote out a receipt for Dalvan's money, and had both Garry and Adele witness it. Dalvan looked surprised.

"A receipt?" he queried. "Before you have the cash?"

"I'm giving it to Adele," smiled Thurgin, "and she is going with you to the bank. She will turn over the receipt as soon as you ship the cash."

"We can go in my car," said Garry. "Then Adele and I can go on somewhere else. I'll have the car here in a few minutes. It's parked on the rear street."

Adele and Dalvan were waiting out front when Garry arrived with the car. As they rode away, a taxicab wheeled in from a corner and took up their trail. It followed to the Gibraltar Trust Co. After Garry and Adele came from the bank, the cab trailed Garry's car again.

At the night club where they finally landed, neither Garry nor Adele recognized a tall man who sat at a table near them. The Shadow had changed his features as completely as if they were a costume. His face was broader than Cranston's; it had lost all hawkish traces.

"I think I'll call your uncle," Garry told Adele, suddenly. "He ought to have arranged for police protection while the cash is in the house."

He went out, and returned in about five minutes. As he sat down, Garry smiled and shook his head.

"What a smart chap I am," he said. "The cash was already there and gone by the time I called. What's more, Lyden called your uncle from the Hotel Andorra, to say that he had arrived safely."

An attendant entered and stopped at Garry's table, to tell him he was wanted on the telephone. Garry went out. When he returned, he still wore his smile, but it had a fixed look.

"It was the garage," he said. "They wanted to know how soon we will need the car. They get rushed around this time, and like to find out well ahead."

"Speaking of telephone calls," remarked Adele, "why did you say that I called you at Meadowfield, that time?"

Garry gave a slight laugh.

"I knew you'd ask that eventually," he said. "You were a good sport, to say you'd back me up on the matter. I'm sorry you weren't out there, because you would have understood. A county detective started to get smart, so I stumped him."

"But you could have told the truth -"

"That I didn't know who called?" demanded Garry. "Why, they'd have been quizzing me all night, the fools! It wasn't the bother to myself that counted. I wanted them to stick to their job of trying to solve poor Gunthrew's murder."

Adele didn't appear to be entirely convinced, though she expressed some sympathy with Garry's problem. Eyeing the girl steadily, Garry brought up a matter more recent than Meadowfield.

"Take what happened tonight," he said. "I'm worried about the cash that your uncle placed with Lyden."

"Why should you be?" queried Adele. "No one knows about it except ourselves. That is, no one except Uncle Rupert and Mr. Dalvan, and the cash belongs to them."

"If Q hopes to rob either your uncle or Dalvan," returned Garry, "they will probably hear from him very soon."

"Q couldn't know about the cash," protested the girl. "He couldn't have seen Mr. Dalvan get the money at the bank, nor watch my uncle turn it over to Lyden."

"What he could have seen," said Garry, "was an armored truck that stopped at your house. If he stayed around, he would have seen something else - Lyden leaving with a tin suitcase very soon afterward."

Adele's eyes flashed alarm, then narrowed. She started to say something, but bit her lips to hold it back. The Shadow could conjecture the girl's thought. Adele was wondering about the telephone call that Garry said was from the garage.

Maybe Garry suspected it. Suavely, he glanced at his watch, then at the glasses on the table.

"Let's finish our drinks," he suggested. "The car will be over here in five minutes. You said you are tired and would like to get home early."

Soon after Garry and Adele had gone, The Shadow left the night club and stepped into his cab, which he was using in place of the limousine that he could only employ when disguised as Cranston. He told Moe Shrevnitz to take him to the Hotel Andorra.

During the ride, The Shadow opened a flattish box, to disclose a mirror in the lid, a make-up kit beneath. A tiny light enabled him to make the facial changes necessary to a new disguise. But the lips that changed shape in the mirror still phrased the whispered laugh that only The Shadow could produce.

## **CHAPTER XVII. CRIME FROM WITHIN**

THINGS had begun to happen at the Hotel Andorra before The Shadow reached there, but they weren't the sort of occurrences to excite alarm. Claude Lyden began the sequence by stopping at the hotel desk and turning a suitcase over to the clerk.

The clerk noted that the suitcase was large and heavy, therefore he supposed that its contents were bulky. It wasn't until he put the bag in the hotel safe that he found it was made of metal, painted to look like leather.

Lyden didn't place any special value on the shipment. He trusted hotel safes, particularly the one at the Andorra, for he had stopped there before. The clerk, in fact, knew Lyden; and after he had written out a receipt for the suitcase, the clerk gave Lyden a message.

"Phone call from Mr. Thurgin," he said. "He wants you to go over and see Mr. Dalvan."

No surprise registered on Lyden's drab-looking face. Thurgin had mentioned Dalvan when Lyden called at the house. It was still early, and evidently Thurgin thought that Dalvan would feel more confident about his money's safety if he met Lyden personally.

Lyden looked up Dalvan's address in a phone book, and left the hotel.

Within five minutes after Lyden's departure, a messenger entered carrying a package. He gave it to the hotel clerk and said:

"Mr. Lyden sent it. He says that you can put it with his bag. I'll want a receipt to take back to the jeweler."

The clerk wrote out the receipt, then put the package in the safe, noting that Lyden's name was already on it.

Arrived at Dalvan's penthouse, Lyden received a cordial welcome. Dalvan was attired in a dressing gown. Apparently he hadn't gone to bed because he expected Lyden. The two talked about mint fields but, as the chat wore on, Lyden began to gain the impression that his visit was a surprise to Dalvan.

Lyden asked if Dalvan had heard from Thurgin, and the real-estate man replied: "Why, no -"

Therewith, Lyden mentioned the message at the hotel. At first, Dalvan smiled. He supposed that Thurgin had forgotten to call him, and resumed the former conversation. As he talked, Dalvan's broad forehead showed increasing furrows. Glancing at a clock on the wall, he suddenly decided:

"I'd better call Thurgin. He should have informed me that you were coming. It may be more important than we suppose."

It was Adele who answered the telephone. She had been home a full hour, but she was too awake to go to bed. Fully dressed, the girl was in the library with a book. After answering the downstairs telephone,

she called up to her uncle:

"It's Mr. Dalvan."

Thurgin came sleepily from his room, wearing pajamas. Adele heard his voice boom, as he used the extension telephone on the second floor. She noted that her uncle was becoming excited.

"I sent no message to Lyden!" exclaimed Thurgin. "Yes, Dalvan, I agree. It must be a hoax... Send Lyden to the hotel, at once, to check on the matter. I'll be there myself, in about half an hour... You can get there later, too?... Good! Only, send Lyden right away -"

As soon as Thurgin hurried back to his room, Adele put on hat and coat and went out by the front door. Hurrying along the street, she found a cab and told the driver to take her to the Hotel Andorra.

Adele's intuition was at work. She felt sure that she would find someone else at the Andorra; namely, Garry Cleeve.

TO a degree, Adele was right. Garry had gone to the Hotel Andorra. But he hadn't shown himself inside the place; he was outside, seated in his roadster.

Occasionally, he pulled away and cruised around the block; at other times, he alighted from the car and strolled past the entrance of the hotel, glancing into the lobby.

A man seated in a corner of the lobby noted Garry outside. But Garry didn't recognize the seated man. He didn't look like Cranston, nor did he resemble the gentleman who had listened to Garry's chat with Adele at the night club.

He saw Garry's car pull away on another trip. It hadn't been gone long, before furtive figures showed themselves on the opposite sidewalk. They looked like shambling bums, or panhandlers, the sort who infested hotel districts late at night.

The Shadow strolled across the lobby and entered a telephone booth. Using a disguised tone, he called the Cobalt Club and asked for Commissioner Weston. When a brusque voice came over the wire, The Shadow spoke in a weird whisper:

"This is The Shadow, commissioner." He could hear Weston give an exclamation at hearing the sibilant tone. "If you are still seeking Q, send Inspector Cardona to the Hotel Andorra, at once!"

The Shadow ended his statement with a whispery laugh, that trailed to nothingness. As he delivered the mirth, he could hear Weston shout to Cardona, who was at the club, as The Shadow supposed. They were probably going over the lengthy details of the Q crimes, at the very time when another stroke was due.

It wasn't far from the Cobalt Club to the Hotel Andorra. The Shadow knew that he could expect Cardona within several minutes.

Reaching beneath the shelf in the telephone booth, The Shadow pulled out a cloak and hat that he had stored there when he entered. As he put on the garments, he opened the door of the booth a trifling space.

There was a radio in the lobby; it was tuned to a musical program. Suddenly the music ended, broken by some crackly interference. Then, from the barrage of static, came the zing-zing of a wireless call, loud enough to be heard on the street.

"Dash - dash - dot - dash -"

It was spelling "Q."

With a sweep, The Shadow flung the booth door wide. He was a whirling mass of blackness, speeding for an angle of the lobby where he could cover two street entrances. He was equipped for such a task, for each of his gloved fists held a gun.

With his whirl, The Shadow laughed. His mockery was a strident peal, a sardonic challenge to invaders who were springing in from the streets. They were the panhandlers - no longer bums, but gunners. Half a dozen in number, they expected opposition, but not from The Shadow!

Sight of the dread foe made them scatter. They were caught where blasts from The Shadow's guns could wither them. They could only depend upon Q to provide a mightier answer. Their hidden chief did not fail them.

A great steel throat coughed in an explosive burst that shook the lobby. Its roar was as huge as a howitzer's. An immense muzzle flung a tremendous load of metal, wrecking everything that lay in its path.

The thing that behaved in cannon fashion was the hotel safe! It exploded in titanic fashion, and the projectile that it hurled was the door of the safe itself!

Ripped from the safe's buckling walls, the flying door smashed the clerk's desk like kindling. Chunks of imitation marble flew through the lobby, making a terrific barrage. Flung farther, the door splintered a heavy settee and bashed a tall clock that stood against the far wall.

The package that bore Lyden's name had been sent by Q. It contained a time bomb scheduled to go off exactly on the hour. The lobby clock had been chiming just as the concussion came. As for Q's call, he had timed that, too, bringing in his raiders at the proper moment.

FORTUNATELY, no one was in the direct path of the hurtling metal. The clerk was at the switchboard, in a corner behind the ruined desk.

The Shadow, too, was away from the massive missile, but he couldn't escape the scattering hail that came with it. Showered by fragments from the desk, The Shadow sprawled.

Crooks almost had their chance to finish him. Only his instinctive ability saved him. Instead of trying to stop his sprawl, he prolonged it. He was diving, headforemost, into an open elevator, as a piece of debris glanced sharply from his head.

The astonished operator stared at the black shape that coiled beside his feet. Then, as the crooks shouted and turned to open fire, the elevator man had sense enough to slam the door and start upward. He didn't stop until he had reached the top floor.

By then, The Shadow stirred. Hearing the command of a whispered voice, seeing a gesture from a lifted gun, the operator took the elevator down again.

Following the invaders into the lobby came a scrawny man: Dip Perkin. With Rigger dead, Dip had become Q's chief lieutenant, but he preferred to follow his men instead of heading them.

Dip yelled for them to forget The Shadow. He pointed to the thing that they were after - a battered metal suitcase that had been blown from the safe.

The thing was half apart when a thug grabbed it. Dip snatched it from the fellow, turned to dash away.



Outside the door toward which he headed, he heard the whine of an arriving patrol car, saw officers spring to the sidewalk.

Dip reversed his course; four of his men swung to shoot at the police. With two others, Dip dashed for the door to the other street. A chunky man sprang in to block them, greeting them with a spitting revolver. The blocker was Inspector Cardona.

Just then, the elevator door slashed open. New guns began to talk, accompanied by a fierce laugh of challenge that made crooks turn about. The Shadow's quick fire sagged the sharpshooters who were holding off the officers. Wheeling around the angle of the lobby, The Shadow went after Dip and the remaining two.

Cardona had already flattened the two gunners by his point-blank fire. The suitcase had stopped a bullet intended for Dip.

Hearing The Shadow's laugh, Dip went desperate; he broke from Cardona's eager grapple and swung the suitcase at his opponent. Dodging the swing Cardona grabbed again; he got the suitcase instead of Dip.

The crook darted for the sidewalk. The suitcase, spilling open, delivered a flood of fifty thousand dollars in bills, that broke from their bands and rugged the floor with green. Cardona hesitated; then, seeing that no crooks were able to grab the money, he followed Dip.

Cardona's decision was untimely. It forced The Shadow to give his gun a quick jerk as he pulled the trigger. Otherwise, The Shadow would have dropped Joe instead of Dip, for the inspector came between the black-cloaked marksman's gun and its intended target.

It didn't seem that Dip could get away. Cardona was close behind him, and a young man was leaping from a roadster to prevent the crook's escape. Recognizing Garry Cleeve, Cardona bawled an order, telling him to take Dip alive. Garry tried, but couldn't manage it; worse, his blunder let Dip get away.

Waving a gun that he yanked from his hip pocket, Dip made Garry duck from the car step. Tripping over the curb, Garry came up to make a very futile grab, for Dip had already jumped into the car, which had the motor running. The most that Garry did was get in Cardona's way; by the time that Joe could side-step him, the roadster was whining away in gear.

Cardona kept blazing shots at it, until a patrol car pulled up to learn the trouble. By then, pursuit of Dip was useless. The lucky fugitive was blocks out of sight.

THE SHADOW was gone when Cardona reached the lobby, and policemen were gathering in the wounded crooks. The money was safe. A serious-faced man was stacking the bundles, aided by the hotel clerk.

The man introduced himself as Claude Lyden and explained that he had just reached the hotel. Garry Cleeve told Cardona who Lyden was and why he had the money.

Adele Marcy arrived a few moments later. From her cab, halted at the corner during the excitement, she had seen Dip's escape. She gave Garry a very significant stare, which he didn't seem to notice.

It wasn't long before others appeared. First, Rupert Thurgin, then Bryce Dalvan. They were congratulating each other on their reclaimed cash when Commissioner Weston arrived accompanied by his friend Lamont Cranston, who had chanced to meet him outside the Cobalt Club.

Weston was in a mood to congratulate everyone after he tallied all the stories. He felt that all had played

a fitting part. This was one time when the cards had been against the master crook, Q. He had taken too long a chance.

In fact, as Weston warmed up to the theme, it seemed rather puzzling why Q had gone through with the game, considering its hazards. It was a question, to the commissioner, whether the game had been worth the risk.

Not to The Shadow. He could have spoken the answer to that riddle had he chosen.

The Shadow knew much concerning the master plotter, Q.

## **CHAPTER XVIII. A MATTER OF ORCHIDS**

THE swift minutes that had balked Q's thrust in the Hotel Andorra were followed by slow days, during which the police tried to unravel the full mystery of the master bomber. But finding Q did not prove as simple as stopping him.

Whoever Q was, he was keeping low, apparently satiated as far as crime was concerned. None of the loot from Q's earlier robberies made its appearance on the market, in New York or elsewhere. The theory that Q needed ready cash, as his attempted robbery at the Andorra indicated, was rapidly disproven.

Still, the police were watching for fenced goods. So was The Shadow, but his interest did not lie in jewelry or other merchandise of the sort that Q had gained through his preliminary crimes.

The Shadow was on the watch for gilt-edged bonds more than ten years old. The fact that there was no influx of such securities convinced The Shadow that his surmise was correct.

Q was not yet in a position to dispose of the Hoxel swag. Furthermore, it might be a very long while before he would be capable of doing so.

Other things had happened as a result of the Andorra fray. Garry Cleeve had made himself quite a hero. When he rode around town in his conspicuous roadster, he was pointed out as the man who had tried to stop the flight of Dip Perkin.

It was quite a distinction, because the newspapers, in search of some sensation, had rated Dip as a public enemy.

Joe Cardona knew that the claim was exaggerated, that Dip was nothing more than a yellow rat. Like any rodent, Dip had crawled into some hole, and Cardona was waiting for him to come out.

If Dip was using his rep to gather a new mob for Q, so much the better. If the mobbies proved of Dip's caliber, Joe would be willing to tackle the whole tribe, alone.

But Cardona did nothing to lessen Garry's standing as a hero. If he did so, people would remember that Joe, too, had failed to hang onto a slippery gent named Dip Perkin. Cardona decided that Garry had shown up at the Andorra because he was really worried about the money that Lyden carried.

Some people thought it odd that Dip had abandoned Garry's car, intact, only a dozen blocks from the hotel. But Cardona decided that Dip had figured the roadster to be too conspicuous.

Adele Marcy was totally unimpressed by Garry's fame. She wondered a lot about Garry's telephone calls. She didn't like it because Garry had taken her home early, then made a trip to the Hotel Andorra alone. She felt that he should have stated his intention. As a result, Adele began to treat Garry rather

coolly.

In contrast, Rupert Thurgin and Bryce Dalvan had cemented a growing friendship. Finding the mint field purchase profitable, they dealt in other business. Thurgin became Dalvan's adviser in Wall Street matters. In return, Thurgin let Dalvan handle all his real estate. Both showed regard for Garry Cleeve; he began to drop into see them, often.

During such visits, Garry sometimes met Lamont Cranston. A millionaire, Cranston had many problems concerning finance and real estate. He found Thurgin competent in one line, Dalvan capable in the other. But all the while, The Shadow had another thought in mind.

He was watching for a break, that came one afternoon in Dalvan's office. Garry was present. The young man heard Dalvan boast that he was handling all of Thurgin's real-estate transactions. A shrewd gleam showed in Garry's eyes as he remarked:

"Not quite all."

Dalvan reached for a stack of ledgers to prove his claim. Garry promptly amended his statement.

"I don't mean Thurgin's own real estate," he said. "I'm talking about the property that Adele Marcy owns. Of course, it's Adele's; her father left it to her. But Thurgin manages it for her."

"Miss Marcy owns property?" queried Dalvan. "Where?"

"Here in town," replied Garry. "Some old houses, I believe, that the same tenants have rented for years. I'd ask her about them, only she's been peeved at me lately. Maybe I could square it with some orchids."

"If you can," said Dalvan, in his best business manner, "I shall be quite glad to pay the flower bill."

"I'll ship the orchids this afternoon," declared Garry. Then, with a chuckle: "I'll ask Thurgin to make sure that she opens them. She'd be apt to chuck the package in the wastebasket, otherwise. When Adele gets peeved, she means it!"

HAVING reasons of his own for seeing Thurgin, The Shadow stopped at the financier's office later. Thurgin was out, and called by telephone to say that he might not be back.

Learning that Cranston was there, Thurgin offered apologies over the telephone and said that he would try to return by five o'clock. After telling Thurgin that it wasn't important, The Shadow left.

Garry hadn't arrived while The Shadow was in the Wall Street office. He had probably gone to the florist's first, and been delayed. Which proved, later, to be the case. But there was an angle that The Shadow did not know about; he was to learn it, later.

At four o'clock, Garry sauntered into Thurgin's office and sat around a few minutes. He finally wrote a brief note, went into Thurgin's private office and left it on the desk, tucked under the base of a lamp.

At half past four Dalvan arrived with copies of some property deeds, which he left for Thurgin. He couldn't wait until five o'clock, the time when Thurgin was expected if he managed to get to the office at all.

Thurgin arrived soon after five. He sat down at his desk and opened Garry's note. Before reading it, he noticed the property deeds. Garry's note wasn't important, but the deeds were.

Thurgin took them out to his secretary and arranged to have them filed. While waiting, he read the note. It referred to orchids. With a chuckle, Thurgin put the note in his pocket.

His chuckle had ended, and he was stroking his chin when he went back into his private office. At his desk, he wondered why Garry was sending orchids to Adele. As Thurgin recalled it, Garry usually sent less expensive flowers.

A few minutes later, the secretary saw Thurgin come from his office, his eyes fixed straight ahead. Thurgin was almost in the hallway, when he heard the secretary's repeated call:

"About those titles, Mr. Thurgin -"

"What titles?" asked Thurgin, abruptly.

"The ones for Mr. Dalvan," replied the secretary. "He wanted them, but I needed your approval. Shall I mail them, or hold them until he calls tomorrow?"

"Let me have them," decided Thurgin. "I want to see Dalvan, anyway. I'll drop them off at his office."

Glancing at his watch as he stepped into a cab, Thurgin noticed the time and decided to go to Dalvan's residence instead of his office. Reaching a large apartment building, Dalvan rode up to the penthouse. A servant ushered him into a living room, stating that Dalvan was not at home.

"Telephone his office," suggested Thurgin. "I suppose I should have stopped there."

"Very well, sir."

The servant went out into the hallway and called Dalvan's office. After a few minutes he returned, shaking his head.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but Mr. Dalvan did not go back to the office."

"Go back?" echoed Thurgin. "Has he been here?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Cleeve was here, waiting for him. That is why he came home earlier than usual. They went out together."

Seated in an easy-chair, Thurgin picked up a newspaper and reached to turn on a reading lamp. Stopping both actions halfway, he shook his head and arose.

"I was going to make myself comfortable," he said with a smile, "and stay awhile. But it's probable that Dalvan has gone to dinner with young Cleeve. If so, they won't be back."

THURGIN did not go directly home. He had planned to stay out for dinner, himself. Nor was Adele Marcy at her uncle's house. She was standing in the lobby of a swanky hotel, watching anxiously for someone.

It had darkened outdoors, and Adele gave a sudden smile when a certain car stopped. She could tell by the great distance between the headlamps and the taillight that the car must be a limousine.

Lamont Cranston entered the lobby. Looking about, he saw Adele. The girl met his inquiring gaze with a nod.

"I'm the lady who called the Cobalt Club," she said. "There's something very important" - her tone became anxious - "something that I ought to tell you, Mr. Cranston."

They sat down in a corner of the lobby, and Adele gave her story rapidly. It concerned Garry Cleeve, and it might be something for the police, but Adele wasn't quite sure. That was why she had called Cranston.

Somehow, she felt that she could rely on his advice. Adele was remembering Cranston's belief of her ghost story the night when other listeners had doubted her.

"I met Garry accidentally this afternoon," said the girl. "He was in a florist's shop buying orchids to send to my uncle."

"To your uncle?"

"Yes." Adele couldn't help but smile. "They were really for me, though. Garry just wanted Uncle Rupert to make sure that I accepted the orchids. Anyway, it was so funny that I couldn't stay mad at Garry. We went to a cocktail lounge, to chat.

"Then he began asking me odd things. He wanted to know about some old houses that my father owned. I told him about them; how one, in particular, has been empty, although the tenant keeps on paying rent."

The Shadow's eyes showed keen interest. He asked Adele about the house in question and learned its address. Then the girl continued:

"After that, Garry said he wanted to call Mr. Dalvan. He thought he ought to get the houses appraised. He said that if Mr. Dalvan handled real estate for Uncle Rupert, he could handle it for me, too. But I'm not sure that Garry made the call he said.

"He lied about a call once, that time at Meadowfield. He said that I was on the telephone, but I wasn't. Garry had a good excuse, but it didn't quite suit me. He made telephone calls another time - the night when Lyden nearly lost the money."

The Shadow spoke in Cranston's quiet tone. His question concerned Garry Cleeve.

"About this evening," he questioned. "Does Garry intend to see you?"

Adele nodded.

"He wants me to have dinner with him," she said, "and after that, he is to drop me at the concert." The girl was drawing tickets from her bag. "Garry doesn't like concerts. He said he'd rather go with Mr. Dalvan to look at the houses I mentioned.

"Particularly the empty one. That's where he's to meet Mr. Dalvan, at nine o'clock. I'm supposed to meet Garry, myself, for dinner" - the girl was glancing at her wrist watch - "but it's too late. I don't trust Garry. I told him I didn't want the orchids, but they had already been sent -"

"To your uncle?" queried The Shadow.

"Yes," replied Adele. "When I called the house, Bentley told me that he had put the package on my uncle's desk -"

The Shadow had gone. With amazing speed for the leisurely Cranston, he had started for a telephone booth across the lobby. He had already dialed Thurgin's number when Adele reached the booth.

The only response was a busy signal. Dropping the receiver, The Shadow told Adele:

"Call Inspector Cardona. Tell him to order a patrol car to your uncle's house. To let no one touch the

package!"

Dazedly, from the booth, the girl saw Cranston speed across the lobby and out through the door. The taillight of the limousine was diminishing as Adele began to make her call.

Rather than waste futile time attempting a call over a busy line, The Shadow was speeding toward Thurgin's mansion, not more than a five-minute trip from the hotel. He was producing black garments as he rode, for there was no telling what sequel this trip might bring.

To The Shadow, a matter of orchids had become a question of life or death!

## CHAPTER XIX. LIGHTS OUT

THURGIN'S mansion loomed dark and solemn as the limousine neared it. The big car hadn't made the trip as fast as Moe's cab could have, but The Shadow preferred it because it had been available. At least, Stanley had covered the ground in the five minutes that The Shadow estimated.

The limousine didn't stop at the house. It merely slackened as it swung toward the curb, and Stanley heard Cranston's voice telling him to keep on going. The chauffeur thought that Cranston had changed his mind about calling on Rupert Thurgin; but Stanley was wrong.

A black figure leaped from the rear door as Stanley pressed the accelerator. The door came flinging shut again in the same motion.

Hearing the jolt, wondering what it was, Stanley stared in the mirror as he passed the corner. He didn't see the slightest trickle of fleeting blackness beneath the street lamp where The Shadow dropped off.

Choosing the near side of the mansion because it was closer, The Shadow crossed the sidewalk at whippet speed. He took the steps to a side door in one leap and began pounding at the door with the handle of an automatic.

The Shadow was counting on those smashes to bring someone in a hurry, particularly Thurgin, if the financier had already gone upstairs. If no one came to open the door, there would be no door left, considering the fury of The Shadow's strokes.

The door was yanked inward just as the gun butt cracked a stout panel. Bentley, the elderly butler, was the surprised man who opened it. Bentley was even more surprised when a mass of incoming darkness bowled him to the corner of the hall. He'd never have supposed that the human tornado was the placid Mr. Cranston.

Nor did The Shadow want it known. He was out to prevent tragedy, and at the same time settle a score for justice. His cloaked garb was a fitting passport in such an enterprise. His voice, however, was not The Shadow's. It was more like Cranston's as he shouted:

"Thurgin! Thurgin!"

It was the excitement in the tone that marked it as a stranger's, rather than the voice of Cranston. The excitement was intended; The Shadow calculated that it would bring results.

It seemed an appeal for help, the sort that an endangered man would give. But it wasn't help for himself that The Shadow wanted, it was help for Thurgin. The financier could save himself, if he would only respond.

Dashing up the stairway, The Shadow passed a table where a telephone was standing. with a hanging

receiver. There were paper and pencil on the table, too. Bentley had been taking down some long-winded message, which explained why the line had been constantly busy. But The Shadow wasn't wasting time over such details.

Ahead, he saw the light from Thurgin's office. The door was open, the financier was standing in front of his desk. In one hand Thurgin was waving a revolver which he had gotten from a drawer; his other hand was resting upon a box of flowers.

Thurgin was startled at sight of the black-cloaked arrival, which was just what The Shadow had expected. His trip had brought him here within the time limit, just when Thurgin was about to unwrap the box of orchids.

Forgetting the flowers, uncertain with his gun, Thurgin made a move to dive away as The Shadow surged across the hall.

Such a dive should have been perfect, taking Thurgin clear from harm. Why Thurgin chose to take the flower box, too, was explainable only on the theory that the man didn't know what he was about. It was sheer chance, again, that Thurgin grabbed the package by the string as he took it with him.

He might as well have pulled a cord to yank a noose encircling his own neck, except that his process was more thorough.

In a flash, there wasn't any flower box. There wasn't any Thurgin. There wasn't even any office!

The room exploded like a tank of hydrogen. Flame splashed from a core of fire as blinding as the midday sun. Walls shivered, the ceilings tumbled. The whole house quivered and roared from reverberations that would have drowned a cannonade!

WITH Thurgin's plucking of the fatal string, The Shadow had taken a twisty dive beyond the door, keeping in the hallway. Too late to save Thurgin, The Shadow had preserved himself for work that was to come.

His diving form was tossed by the concussion, his cloak lashed by a scorch of mighty flame. But when the house seemed to find its foundations and squat on them, The Shadow discovered that he was resting against an unbroken wall.

Rupert Thurgin was gone, into the same obliteration that had taken others. He belonged to the dead; The Shadow still had plans that concerned the living, among whom he had hoped to number Thurgin. Finding his feet, the cloaked fighter staggered past the demolished office and shakily descended the stairs.

Rigid in the corner where The Shadow's rush had left him, Bentley stared at the cloaked being with eyes that scarcely saw. Vaguely, the butler could remember The Shadow's entry, the calls that were warnings, not threats, to Thurgin. The Shadow couldn't have found a better witness in his behalf than Bentley.

In trying to place The Shadow's location at the moment of the blast, the slow-thinking butler decided that the cloaked invader had gone but halfway up the stairs. Then, as Bentley still stared, he heard a whispered tone tell him:

"The box of flowers."

Bentley shook himself from his lethargy.

"That's it!" he gasped. "I remember when I laid the box on Mr. Thurgin's desk. It was heavy; I wondered \_"

"And this -"

The Shadow held the paper that bore Bentley's scrawl. The butler explained that he had been taking down a telegram. A man had been delivering it over the wire, and every few moments the connection had given trouble.

There was no one on the telephone now. Hanging up, The Shadow dialed Dalvan's number. The voice that answered wasn't Dalvan's. It was his servant who spoke.

Quietly, so that his tone would not reach Bentley across the hall, The Shadow spoke in Cranston's tone. He learned that the servant was taking the evening off, but that Mr. Dalvan would probably be home within an hour.

Sirens were shrieking from a nearby street; The Shadow could hear the clang of distant fire engines. He made a swift glide to the side door, was gone, while Bentley was hobbling over to answer a hammering at the front.

The patrol car had arrived; the officers began to quiz Bentley about the explosion. The servant stammered that Thurgin had been killed in the blast, and was sure that the cause had been a bomb in a box of flowers. Bentley hadn't gotten to The Shadow when Cardona arrived in a headquarters car, with the fire engines in its wake.

By then, Bentley decided not to mention The Shadow at all. He wasn't sure that anyone would believe his tale of the black avalanche who had so nearly supplied a rescue.

A few blocks from Thurgin's, The Shadow found a parked cab; its driver was leaning from the window, talking to other men about the explosion that all had heard. Entering from the street side, The Shadow gave a destination to the driver.

The quiet tone was the first indication that the cab had a passenger. Preferring business to a sidewalk conversation, the cabby pulled away. It was a ten-minute trip to the apartment house where Dalvan lived. During the ride The Shadow removed his cloak and hat, to become Cranston.

He didn't go clear up to the penthouse. Stepping off a few floors below, The Shadow put on the cloak that he was carrying like an overcoat across his arm. Adding the hat that came from the cloak folds, he used a fire tower to ascend the last few floors.

The Shadow wanted to be in the penthouse before Dalvan arrived; but as he reached the final stairway he heard the clang of an elevator door above.

Dalvan was home earlier than the servant had expected. He didn't intend to stay long, however, for at the top of the stairs The Shadow saw that the elevator was waiting, its door open and a lounging operator inside.

DALVAN was in the living room; he was wearing his hat and coat as he rummaged rapidly through a table drawer.

Finding a batch of keys, Dalvan thrust them in his overcoat pocket and pulled out a little book. He glanced up, while he was thumbing through the pages, but he didn't see The Shadow against the blackness of the stairs. Like a figure of doom, The Shadow was awaiting Dalvan, to question him regarding Thurgin's death.

Of the living, someone could tell about the dead. Dalvan was The Shadow's first choice. The Shadow waited, while Dalvan found the book page that he wanted. The man started to read an address. There



were half a dozen electric lights glowing in the living room, but all were near the walls.

Needing closer illumination, Dalvan reached for the cord of a reading lamp and tugged it.

No light came on. Instead, all the lights in the penthouse went out. Not as lights should go out normally, with a silent flicker. These lights disappeared in a tremendous roar. They simply went with the living room.

It was exactly like Thurgin's office. A tremendous burst of fire that seemed bigger than all the firecrackers in the world rolled into one. Bryce Dalvan vanished with the same huge blast that blew all the penthouse windows from their steel frames.

A roar of air, furnace hot, billowed upon The Shadow, staggering him back toward the stairs. There was a howl from the elevator operator, then the clang of a metal door.

Again, death had struck in The Shadow's very presence. Thurgin and Dalvan were both victims of the murderous bomb devices that were the creation of the master among killers, Q!

There had been no calls to announce these deadly deeds. No need of them, for Q had depended upon mechanical means to accomplish his fell work.

Two men had been blotted from the world - both were persons that the law had sought to protect from harm. The same two, Thurgin and Dalvan, who had saved their combined cash from Q's last thrust.

This was crime that had every mark of vengeance. But beyond it, The Shadow could see a further purpose. He was hurrying down the fire tower, anxious to be on his way. At Dalvan's, as at Thurgin's, The Shadow had no reason to remain.

He had gained the answer to the Q crimes; but with it, he had garnered something else. Soon, the law would be seeking its own trail to the master crook, Q, but crime's whole truth could not be told until a different master spoke.

That other master was crime's superfoe.

The Shadow!

## **CHAPTER XX. THE FINAL RIDDLE**

DOUBLE death had struck within a quarter hour, during a period between half past seven and eight o'clock. It was nearly nine when Joe Cardona returned to the wrecked Thurgin mansion, after a trip to view the devastation at Dalvan's penthouse.

Cardona found Commissioner Weston in the library. No longer brusque, Weston was doing his best to comfort a sobbing girl: Adele Marcy. If ever Weston felt himself at fault, it was on this occasion. He had promised protection to Thurgin and Dalvan, yet both had died.

Though the law regarded both crimes as equal tragedies, Weston personally considered Thurgin's death as the more unfortunate, because of Adele. She was sobbing something when Cardona entered. Catching the words, Weston spoke to Cardona.

"Call the Cobalt Club," ordered Weston. "If Cranston isn't there, try his home in New Jersey. Miss Marcy wants to talk with him."

It didn't make sense to Cardona. Nevertheless, he made the calls. The club said that Cranston had gone

home; the servants in New Jersey thought he was still at the club. Cardona began to wonder if something had happened to Cranston, too. He said so to Weston, who showed immediate alarm.

Then Adele was choking back her sobs, trying to explain. She told of her meeting with Cranston; that he had ordered her to call the police. Cranston had tried to warn her uncle, she was sure. There simply had not been time.

Once started, Adele gave all the details. She explained her suspicions of Garry Cleeve. Her version of the telephone call at Meadowfield was illuminating. When she argued that only Garry knew of funds which Thurgin and Dalvan had combined to buy the mint fields, her points struck home.

Garry Cleeve was Q!

There were matters from Cardona, who felt that he should have realized it all along. Joe was remembering how easily Dip had gotten away from Garry. Such fakery wasn't really evidence, but there were later things that really counted.

Things that had happened today. It was Garry who had sent the box of orchids. He'd probably expected them to blow up Adele, along with her uncle. But the trick was known. Bentley, through some surprising flash that had come to his clockwork brain, had noted that the flower box was heavy.

As for Dalvan's death, the elevator operator testified that a lamp had exploded. Cardona, checking the scene, had decided that it wasn't the light, but a bulb that someone had inserted in the socket. The thing led straight to Garry Cleeve.

For Garry had called at the penthouse that afternoon. He had been there awhile, Cardona learned, and had gone out with Dalvan later. Before leaving, Garry had fixed a surprise for Dalvan's return.

The question was to find Garry. To know who Q was meant a good start, but it wasn't the part that counted. Garry had been going to dine with Adele, so the girl said, but she hadn't kept the date. Then, glancing at the clock, Adele exclaimed suddenly:

"Why, I know where Garry is going to be! At the old Rexwell house!"

She had to explain what the Rexwell house was. It had belonged to her father, and was Adele's property at present. No one lived in it; the place was always locked. Yet the rent was paid regularly, a mystery in itself. Adele had almost forgotten about the place until she had talked about houses with Garry.

"What a spot for the stolen goods!" exclaimed Cardona. "I'll bet that's the place Cleeve used to stow the stuff! You must have told him about the house sometime before, Miss Marcy."

"I probably did," decided Adele. "But what is more important, Garry was going to meet Dalvan there at nine."

Cardona's thumb and fingers gave an automatic snap.

"There's the story!" he declared. "Dalvan wanted to handle your real estate, Miss Marcy. He took it up with Cleeve, who had to go through with it, being good friends with Dalvan. He figured he was getting himself in pretty hot."

"Get it, commissioner?" Cardona swung to Weston. "As Q, Cleeve had it in for both Thurgin and Dalvan. Since Thurgin was likely to wonder about the empty house, too, Cleeve decided to get rid of both of them, and he might have finished Miss Marcy, too. No wonder he told Dalvan to meet him at the Rexwell house. He knew that Dalvan would never get there."

"We should have known this before," declared Weston. "Cleeve wouldn't risk a trip to the house, at present."

"Why not?" demanded Cardona. "If he thinks he's safe, he might go. If he's worried, all the more reason. He'd want to ship all the stolen stuff somewhere else."

Rather than betray arrival by using a large squad, Weston decided upon stealthy tactics. He and Cardona would enter the place alone, leaving a pair of detectives outside.

Adele promptly said that she would accompany the party; when Weston objected, the girl produced a technicality.

The house happened to be hers. If she refused permission for the law to enter, a search warrant would be needed. She would give the permission only if allowed the privilege of entering her own property.

Adele's determination won.

WHEN they reached the old house, it was dark. It was a small house, old-fashioned, but still in good condition. Adele produced the keys; they entered.

Searching the ground floor, Cardona discovered that the back door was unlocked. Joe did a stealthy job in going to the back, and was glad of it; for on his return he found that the door that led from kitchen to cellar was open.

Cardona led the way to the cellar, Weston and Adele following. They didn't need a flashlight after they had gone halfway down. A light was glowing below. Cardona tiptoed toward an open bin, shoved a gun into the space and gave a gruff command.

Garry Cleeve bobbed full around, from a corner. Caught gunless, he let his arms rise. Weston and Adele moved forward to see what Garry had been up to.

They found a metal coffer, its lid pried open. Beside it were newspapers that had hidden it. While Cardona kept Garry covered, Weston counted stacks of bonds. Turning to Garry, he wanted to know where all the wealth had come from.

"I don't know," said Garry coolly. "I suppose that Adele has told you about my phone calls. I've been getting some funny ones. That's why I kept mum. They were from somebody who seems to be mixed in the Q racket."

Cardona inserted a jab: "Like the call at Meadowfield?"

"There wasn't anyone on the line, then," replied Garry. "I received a call the other night, when Adele and I were at a night club. It said to watch the Hotel Andorra. I did, and nearly grabbed Dip Perkin for you.

"Early this evening a call came to my apartment, in the same odd voice. It said I'd find something in this cellar. The person who called must have been spying on Dalvan and myself. Dalvan is due here pretty soon."

Garry was looking at Adele. The accusation in her eyes made Garry exclaim:

"I haven't done any crime, Adele!"

"None except murder!" snapped the girl. "You killed my uncle, and your friend Dalvan, too!"

Garry registered such exaggerated amazement that Cardona shoved the gun against his ribs and told him

to quit faking. The stammers that Garry gave weren't even articulate. Then, swept with a fit of anger, he declared:

"You can't prove anything against me!"

There was a whispered laugh from outside the bin. All turned, to see the cloaked figure that had stepped from opposite gloom. There was a commanding power in The Shadow's presence.

Seeing automatics level in The Shadow's fists, Cardona let his own gun relax. He wanted to see The Shadow handle Garry in the inimitable style that made all crooks quail, big shots as well as small fry.

"Count the bonds, commissioner," suggested The Shadow. "Their total, half a million dollars, may remind you of a crime that occurred ten years ago."

"The Pierre Lebanne robbery!" exclaimed Weston. "Why, this is the swag taken by the Hoxel mob!" He swung to Garry. "So you were in on that, Cleeve! I suppose that's when you first began bluffing Thurgin."

"Ten years is a long while between crimes," reminded The Shadow. "We must find another explanation, commissioner. Let us assume that Q was seeking this wealth, instead of holding it."

The Shadow paused. Listening, he sensed creaky sounds from the floor above. Raising one automatic, he thumped the low ceiling - heavily twice, once lightly, then heavily again. The Shadow was beating the signal "Q."

He repeated the thumps. The creaks went toward the stairs. The Shadow slowed the beat, whispered low to Cardona.

"Not only 'Q,' inspector. The signal" - he suited the slow strokes to the letters - "also means 'TNT,' a very appropriate symbol."

The thing amazed Cardona; for the moment, he scarcely realized that footsteps were on the stairs. Then came the most surprising thing of all.

The Shadow's level hand made a neat downward slash, knocking the revolver from Cardona's fingers. With a quick sweep, The Shadow had his other automatic on the move, covering all except Garry Cleeve!

TO the astonished Garry, The Shadow passed his other gun and gestured toward the stairway. His whisper was in Garry's ear, but the rest heard it.

"The friends of Q are here," The Shadow told Garry. "Meet them, and prove which you prefer: law or crime!"

Garry sprang from the bin. The Shadow's back was toward him. One yell from Garry and half a dozen guns would have joined his own, with The Shadow as a target.

But Garry did not yell. He aimed the .45 straight toward the stairs and opened fire.

There were howls from arriving crooks: Dip Perkin and four followers. Expecting no trouble, Dip was at the head of his crew, instead of the rear. He couldn't run. He had to shoot it out, along with the rest.

They had revolvers and were aiming them, when The Shadow, spinning suddenly from the bin, gave them a challenging laugh that made them forget Garry.

Then three guns were in it, against five; for Cardona had grabbed up his Police Positive and was blasting away. A fourth picked up the tune. Weston was getting in shots with a stub-nosed pocket revolver.

But the commissioner's fire wasn't needed. The floor was studded with Dip and his pals. The surprise reception had caught the last batch of Q crooks entirely off guard.

Garry had started it. The Shadow had put in the heavy power. Cardona had added the finishing touches.

There wasn't a doubt of Garry's honesty after that. Yet the strange mystery of Q remained, until The Shadow solved it, which he did in brief, prompt style.

"Ten years ago," spoke The Shadow, "Rupert Thurgin engineered secret crime. He arranged with the Hoxel mob to steal Lebanne's bonds. He told them to murder Lebanne, the only man who could identify the loot, and bury the bonds under the first tee at the Meadowfield Country Club.

"Once the job was done, Thurgin double-crossed Hoxel by a tip-off to the police. Hoxel and his followers were exterminated. Hoxel managed to get word to Jute Bantry, the forger, telling him where the bonds were."

A thought struck Cardona. Jute had worked for Thurgin, under another name, probably planted there by Hoxel early in the game. Thinking Thurgin trustworthy, Hoxel had withdrawn Jute. But Thurgin could have suspected Jute, all along. The Shadow's next statement indicated it:

"Thurgin believed that Jute might know where the bonds were. Accordingly, just before Jute's parole from Sing Sing, Thurgin had Nick Logus dig them up and bring them here. Knowing that Jute might think he had a list of Lebanne's bonds, Thurgin forged his own check and left it in his desk as bait."

Astonishingly simple, yet remarkably subtle. A man forging his own check! A few slips in Thurgin's customary signature, and he had paved Jute's route back to Sing Sing. Of course, Thurgin had returned to New York early and phoned the tip off to the bank.

"Another master mind was in the field," resumed The Shadow. "One who wanted to build a future, whereas Thurgin wished to hide a past. I refer to Bryce Dalvan, better known as Q. He was quite successful in his crimes, except the time when a bomb exploded before it could be planted in the Gibraltar Trust Co."

The case of Tillingham's car! A worker for Dalvan, Tillingham had been supposed to place the bomb on his collection trip. Dalvan didn't know it had gone off, for he sent the Q signals later. But when he learned the facts, Dalvan had smartly turned the whole occurrence to his advantage.

"Dalvan learned where the Hoxel swag was," continued The Shadow, "and blew up the old first tee, only to find that the bonds were gone. Until then, he thought that I had falsified the check that trapped Jute Bantry. The empty space beneath the tee gave him a lead to Thurgin, for it showed another crooked hand at work.

"He sent Rigger Shoy and a full crew to wipe out Nick Logus and his cronies, so that they wouldn't talk. Later, Dalvan ordered the robbery at the Hotel Andorra, believing that Thurgin was cleverly trying to ship the bonds away, through Lyden."

THE thing that struck home to Cardona was The Shadow's analysis of the Shoy-Logus fray. No wonder The Shadow had made his sudden dive!

Only a few of the crooks had spotted him, and with the rest prepared to fight it out like Kilkenny cats, it would have been folly for The Shadow to remain and divert them. Ruefully, Cardona realized that his

men weren't such amazing marksmen after all.

"The friendship between Thurgin and Dalvan," concluded The Shadow, "was built on mutual distrust. Each was trying to outwit the other; but Thurgin was safe until Dalvan found out where the bonds were. Today, Dalvan really learned.

"He decided to murder Thurgin. To make it sure" - The Shadow's tone was speculative, yet his analysis was accurate - "Dalvan planted two bombs. One in a light bulb at Thurgin's Wall Street office, the other in a flower box that he substituted for Garry's orchids.

"Something aroused Thurgin's suspicion. He found the light bulb and took it to Dalvan's penthouse. Pleased by his own smartness, Thurgin never thought in terms of a second bomb. Not knowing of Thurgin's trip to the penthouse, Dalvan, too, was unaware of danger."

Garry Cleeve stood wholly vindicated. The Shadow did not have to tell the rest: how Dalvan had picked Garry as the man to be blamed for Thurgin's murder.

Dalvan had worked many tricks to keep Garry in the limelight; particularly his telephone calls, in which he pretended to be giving tip-offs regarding the Q business.

Tonight, Dalvan had intended to come to this old house ahead of Garry; to remove the bonds and leave some loot from the Q robberies in their place. Garry, arriving later, was to be trapped with the goods, as indeed he had been, but not as Dalvan expected.

Crook versus crook. Two master brains, instead of one. Such was the strange story that The Shadow alone had divined, through clues which were very numerous once the truth was recognized.

As The Shadow turned and moved toward the steps from the cellar, those who had heard his statements stood in wonder. The Shadow had covered everything except the question of the loot that the Q ring had gathered before going after the Hoxel half million.

But The Shadow had an answer to that riddle, too. At the steps, he stooped among the groaning mobbies; from their midst, he pulled a whining man, who was faking himself to be seriously wounded.

With a fling, The Shadow sent Dip Perkin spilling into the arms of Joe Cardona. One glance at Dip's drooling face told Cardona that the squeaking rat knew where the Q loot was, and would tell with the slightest of persuasion.

Garry's roadster was out back. When Garry drove away, Adele was with him. Misunderstandings of the past were buried, each had undergone too great an ordeal to think of trifling squabbles.

In Garry, the girl saw a man who deserved her love because of his real honesty. In his turn, Garry knew that Adele needed all the love that he could possibly give, to make up for her years of trust in the false affection of an unworthy uncle.

The night seemed strangely silent, as they drove away, until they heard a strange quiver from the darkness; a tone of parting mirth which, to them, was anything but sinister. Its message seemed to blot out the past, to assure them that their lives lay in the future.

Vaguely, weirdly, it died upon the night, but, its echoes remained as a lasting memory.

The laugh of The Shadow!

THE END