



THE BLACK HUSH

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. CARDONA GOES ON DUTY

The spacious lobby of the Olympia Hotel presented an interesting study to the man who viewed it from a corner chair. No longer a pretentious establishment, the old hotel at least gained its share of patronage. Nearly all of the chairs and lounge seats were filled, and many persons were strolling back and forth near the desk.

The man who was watching from the corner had chosen a spot which was quite inconspicuous.

Hunched in the chair, watching from a gloomy spot, Detective Joe Cardona was effectively avoiding recognition, and at the same time taking good measures to spot anyone whose features he might know.

The ace of New York sleuths was living up to his reputation.

Cardona's watchful eyes picked out a small group of men who entered through a revolving door. The detective's quick glance settled upon one individual - a heavy-built man of more than average height, whose chief item of attire was an expensive astrakhan coat. As this arrival strode across the lobby, he half turned his head in Cardona's direction. Grinning at a companion's remark, the man displayed a glimmer of gold in his thick-lipped mouth.

Cardona needed no further sign of recognition. This glitter from a full, heavy face was the identifying mark of Goldy Tancred. This was the man whose coming the detective had awaited.

As Goldy and his friends crossed the lobby and entered an elevator, Cardona remained more watchful than before.

At length, satisfied by his inspection, Cardona arose and strolled toward the revolving door. He turned as he neared it, tracing his steps so that only his back could be seen from outside.

Shifting the position of his derby, the detective slowly changed his course, so that it neared the row of elevators.

Waiting for a car, Cardona spotted the outer door from the corners of his eyes. He saw another man enter and go to the seat which was now vacant at the edge of the lobby. Just the trace of a satisfied smile flickered on Cardona's lips. This arrival was another detective who had come in response to Cardona's signal at the revolving door.

"Ballroom floor," announced Cardona, as the elevator ascended. "Which way to the Mohawk meeting?"

"Over to the right, sir," responded the operator. "The meeting is in the Blue Room."

"The Blue Room?" quizzed Cardona. "I was told that the crowd met in the Red Room."

"They used to," explained the operator as he brought the car to a stop, "but they changed it for this meeting. Go down to the right; turn at the end of the corridor. You'll see the door."

Reaching the Blue Room, the detective looked in through the door at an angle. He spied a waiter and beckoned to the man. He drew the attendant out beyond the screen.

"I want to speak to Mr. Tancred," explained Cardona. "He just came in a few minutes ago. Wearing a fuzzy coat. Tell him a friend's out here to see him."

The waiter nodded. He went into the Blue Room.

Two minutes passed, then a head was thrust from the doorway. Cardona recognized the face. It was that of Bowser Riggins, a man who had come in with Goldy Tancred.

"Huh!" greeted Bowser. "It's you, eh? O.K."

He turned and waved to someone in the room. A moment later, Goldy Tancred appeared in person, to display his shining molars when he saw the detective.

"Wait inside for me, Bowser," ordered Tancred.

Dressed in Tuxedo, the gold-toothed man made an imposing appearance despite the hardness of his heavy face. He joined Cardona outside the screen, and walked a few paces along the side passage. Then with a quizzical frown, he turned to the detective.

"What's up?"

"You know what," Cardona answered. "I've heard the boys are out to get you. What about it?"

"Listen, Joe," Goldy was serious, "that's all hooey - that talk about them being out to get me. I'm not in any racket. Never carried a gat in my life. Take a look, now. Do you think I'd be a sap if I was in danger?"

He spread the sides of his Tuxedo jacket, offering the detective an opportunity to frisk him for a weapon.

Cardona did not accept the invitation. Instead, he made another comment.

"You've got Bowser Riggins along with you," remarked the sleuth. "He sticks pretty close most of the time, doesn't he?"

"Sure he does," admitted Goldy. "But he doesn't pack a rod, either. I'll bring him out. Look him over. He's a pal, Joe, not a bodyguard. Maybe he does a strong-arm job for me once in a while - but it never amounts to much."

"Have it your own way, Goldy," remarked Cardona, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Just the same, I'm staying around awhile."

The detective strolled along the corridor after Goldy Tancred had gone back into the Blue Room. He walked toward the elevators, and stared suspiciously into the vacant blackness of the ballroom.

CARDONA noticed that men in Tuxedos were coming from an elevator and heading toward the Red Room, at the other end of the corridor. He caught a few snatches of conversation and gained the knowledge that a dinner was being held there by a society of electrical engineers.

Moving back toward the Blue Room, Cardona began to wonder whether or not he had made a mistake in coming to the Olympia Hotel.

Goldy Tancred had hit the nail squarely when he had suggested that Cardona must have been listening to misleading rumors. Persistent rumors from the underworld had it that Goldy Tancred was going on the spot.

There was reason in such rumors. Goldy Tancred was a big shot deluxe. Informants kept him posted regarding the doings of racketeers. He found ways to make it difficult for those whose activities bordered on crime.

To be successful, a racketeer found it wise to keep in the good graces of Goldy Tancred. Time and again, soft graft had been smashed because the perpetrators had ignored the big shot. Hence, there were many who might like to see Goldy Tancred out of the way.

Goldy was too wise to be at odds with the police. He could not be branded as a racketeer, for there was no proof that he engineered schemes of his own. He merely sat back and watched others work. Here, tonight, he was mingling with a group of quasi-politicians, who called themselves the Mohawks.

That was part of Goldy's game. He dealt in protection, giving it or refusing it as best suited his purposes.

Had someone crossed Goldy Tancred? Were important figures of the underworld anxious to launch a new scheme of crime free from his clever, tribute taking surveillance? If such were the case, there was reason why Goldy's life might now be threatened.

The detective was not here just to protect Goldy Tancred. He was here to thwart crime that might be in the making.

With a shrug of his shoulders, Cardona entered the Blue Room. He found a chair at a corner table along with a group of lesser politicians. These men, enjoying their first evening with the Mohawks, were quiet in demeanor. They accepted the detective as another of their ilk, and made no effort to open conversation.

The detective sensed that violent death would be attempted within the walls of the Olympia Hotel. On this very night. He waited patiently while the Mohawks chattered and burst forth in boisterous song.

At last, restless and uneasy, Cardona pushed his chair from the table. He sidled along the edge of the room, and paused as he neared the door. Something told him that danger might lie without. He felt that the crucial moment was close at hand.

Then, while the merrymaking was rising to a new height, the unexpected happened. One instant, Joe Cardona was watching Goldy Tancred and Bowser Riggins as the pair were laughing at the capers of a stout, bald-headed politician. The next moment, the entire scene was gone.

Without a warning, the room was plunged in darkness. Every light, not only in the Blue Room, but throughout the entire hotel, was blotted into blackness. With that unfathomable gloom, shouts and laughter seemed to die away. A black hush lay over all!

CHAPTER II. MURDER STRIKES

WHILE the Mohawks had been enjoying themselves so loudly in the Blue Room, a quiet dinner was in progress at the other side of the Olympia Hotel. Within the Red Room, some thirty men were listening to a presiding officer at the head table.

This gentleman was Richard Reardon, a prominent member of the Association of Electrical Engineers, the organization which was assembled here tonight.

On this occasion, he was introducing a young man who sat beside him. In quiet, convincing terms, Reardon was telling the assemblage that in Roland Furness, the association possessed a member whose ability would soon be widely recognized.

While Roland Furness, red-faced and uncomfortable because of Reardon's praise, was glancing toward the tablecloth, the darkness came to the Red Room. As promptly as if someone had pulled a hidden switch, blackness replaced light. The change caught Richard Reardon in the middle of sentence.

After a momentary pause, the president resumed his discourse, in a voice that sounded strangely modulated in the midst of that impenetrable darkness.

"We shall wait," he announced, "until the light is restored. Then we shall be ready to hear from our associate, Roland Furness."

A sharp exclamation came from the man beside the president. Roland Furness had risen to his feet in the darkness. Something in the hushing power of the new atmosphere had evidently alarmed him.

He spoke excitedly - almost gasping - amid the thickened gloom as he turned in the direction where Richard Reardon had been sitting.

"Something is wrong," he said, in a low, muffled tone. "Something that I never believed could happen - something that may mean serious danger to -"

Only Reardon caught the worried words. The president groped blindly and found his companion's arm. He could feel Furness trembling.

A sudden gleam of light was sweeping through the room. The brilliant rays of a powerful lantern were focused upon the men at the head table. The diners could see Reardon and Furness, both raising their arms in surprise as they were caught within the circle of that terrific glare.

The light was coming from the door of the room. Held by an unseen person, it was a veritable spotlight that had picked out the two principal men in this assemblage. Furness, open-mouthed, was partly in front of Reardon's form.

The bark of a revolver sounded from the darkness. Although its flash appeared behind the light, the shot had a sound that was almost muffled. The firing was repeated - again - again - again.

Roland Furness staggered. He collapsed upon the table, his falling form clearly revealed in the circle of illumination.

A second later, Richard Reardon dropped. Two men, living but a few moments ago, were sprawled lifeless before the horrified witnesses!

The powerful glare went out. Stygian darkness was all that remained.

Not a man in the room possessed the immediate resourcefulness to cope with this unexpected situation. Tragedy had happened before their startled eyes; tragedy that was hidden by an amazing blackout!

APPALLING gloom! The same black hush lay within the Blue Room at the other side of the hotel. There, Joe Cardona, grim amid the darkness, still stood beside the door, expecting to hear the sound of shots before him.

But the man who expected did not hear. Those muffled reports from the other side of the hotel had not reached his ears.

Joe Cardona waited. A click sounded from his left hand. He had drawn his flashlight, and had pressed the button. The instrument, however, did not work!

Cardona growled. He could not understand this. He jockeyed grimly with the button while his right hand clutched a revolver. Seconds were ticking into minutes, still the torch was useless. The detective cursed his negligence; he hoped only that he could fight without the aid of light.

Then came unexpected relief. The Blue Room was suddenly flooded with brilliance. The lights had come on. For a moment, the detective saw a sea of whitened faces. Then a buzz started as the Mohawks resumed their interrupted noise-making.

Cardona saw Goldy Tancred. The man was serious and worried in expression; then, slowly, he showed his teeth in a sickly but glittering grin. Bowser Riggins, gaining courage from his chief, smiled feebly.

A false alarm?

That was Cardona's momentary thought. Then, seeing that all was well here, the detective swung from the door and entered the corridor. There, as in the Blue Room, light had been restored. No person was lurking in the corridor, but Cardona's ears caught the sound of wild, terrified shouts.

Responding, the detective dashed along the corridor to the other side of the hotel. He arrived at the open door of the Red Room. He dropped his flashlight into his coat pocket and displayed his badge as he

encountered a group of frightened, struggling men, who were pushing toward the corridor.

The sight of badge and revolver stayed the near stampede. Men dropped into their chairs. They looked at Cardona for help. Pointing fingers and excited words directed the sleuth's attention to the sight that had caused this commotion.

SLUMPED across the head table were the bodies of Richard Reardon and Roland Furness. Cardona needed no testimony to tell him what had happened. His practiced eye knew that the middle-aged association president and the young electrical engineer had been slain in cold blood!

Cardona calmly closed the door of the room and locked it. He ordered one man to telephone for assistance. He motioned all who were standing, to chairs. Grim-faced, he took command; then, after studying the persons present, he walked up beside the bodies.

It was not long before police arrived. Cardona unlocked the door to admit the officers.

The detective had done the best thing possible under the circumstances. Coming through the corridor, he had seen no one who might have figured in this double murder. He felt sure that the killer had probably escaped; nevertheless, it had been essential to hold all who were present. Cardona had done this effectively.

With policemen to do his bidding, Cardona began a quiz.

He learned immediately that the shots had been fired from the door; that the victims had been spotted by a powerful light. No one present - and most were close friends of Reardon and Furness - could suggest a motive for the killings.

Important details in the handling of this case required time. Inspector Timothy Klein arrived; more men came on the job. At last, with testimony taken and witnesses examined, Joe Cardona found himself alone in an emptied room. He went out into the corridor and walked slowly to the other side of the hotel. He looked into the Blue Room.

The Mohawk meeting was still on. Politicians, highly convivial, were still at their merrymaking. They had not heard the news of murder. Cardona saw Goldy Tancred and Bowser Riggins enjoying themselves at the head table.

THE detective went back toward the Red Room. He met Inspector Klein. His superior noted the serious expression upon Cardona's face.

"What is it, Joe?" inquired Klein.

"There's a meeting in the Blue Room." responded the detective slowly. "That's on the other side of the hotel. The Mohawk Club."

"What about it?"

"It used to be held in the Red Room."

"You think that has something to do with this -"

Cardona nodded.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "it probably has lot to do with it. A gang killing, inspector - one that didn't click."

The pair started toward the lower lobby. Cardona paused a moment at the head of the stairs. He wanted to see if there was any trace of a man who had come in this direction.

He drew his flashlight from his pocket, remembered suddenly that it was out of order, then stopped and uttered a puzzled exclamation.

The flashlight was turned on! It had been gleaming in Cardona's pocket! The switch was just as it had been pressed; the instrument that had failed to function in a time of need, was now casting rays of useless illumination.

Puzzled, the detective turned the flashlight off and on. He repeated the operation several times. The torch worked perfectly.

With a grunt, Cardona extinguished the flash light and thrust it back into his pocket. Even though it appeared to be in perfect order, he would get a new one. No use to rely upon a flashlight that had failed once at a crucial moment.

There was important work to do now. Cardona wanted to find out who had entered the Red Room and left, probably scurrying down the stairs and out to the street amid the darkness. He wanted to learn what had caused the lights of the hotel to fail.

These proved insurmountable questions. When Cardona's investigation was finished, he had gained nothing. He thought he knew the motive. He understood the style of killing. Those were important matters. But the clue that he wanted - the cause of the extinguished lights - was something that he did not manage to gain.

Cardona, when he reached headquarters, was still disturbed because he had not obtained a shred of evidence that involved the mysterious darkness. He sat at his desk, and scratched his chin. He felt something in his pocket thump against the arm of his chair.

Angrily, Cardona pulled out the faulty flashlight and tossed it into a wastebasket. He got up from his chair and sauntered out to report to Inspector Klein. He did not realize the importance of the action which he had just performed.

Unwittingly, Detective Joe Cardona had thrown away the only clue that he possessed. That discarded flashlight was the one link that might have led him to the solution of the black hush that had fallen over the Olympia Hotel tonight!

CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW BEGINS

Headlines told of the double killing at the Olympia Hotel. New Yorkers read of gangland's outrage. Mingled with bacon and eggs came the cry of murder as breakfasters perused their newspapers.

Richard Reardon and Roland Furness were unfortunate victims. Everyone granted that fact, and agreed that the perpetrators of the outrage should be brought to justice. But in back of all the disapproval was the established idea that the men had died through a mistake.

Detective Joe Cardona had expressed that belief, and it had been accepted. Every journal in Manhattan was in accord. The case was too obvious for doubt. Even the man who had been missed was known.

Unknown mobsmen, out to get Goldy Tancred, had made a blunder. Somehow, they had extinguished the lights in the Olympia Hotel. Under cover of darkness, they had entered the Red Room where they had believed the meeting of the Mohawks was being held.

Richard Reardon, heavy and conspicuous, had been mistaken for Goldy Tancred. Well-directed bullets had marked Reardon's form. Roland Furness, also in the danger zone, had been put on the spot as well. It was possible that he had been taken for Bowser Riggins.

Newspaper columns were filled with hectic details which included garbled statements of the witnesses. Members of the Association of Electrical Engineers, when interviewed, had given varied stories. Such statements received no more than passing mention.

One man said that the shots had preceded the light; another told the opposite. One declared that he had seen the light move away; another that it had been extinguished before it moved. One more declared that the killer had used an acetylene lantern instead of an electric flashlight.

But the sum and substance of all the reports was that Goldy Tancred had been slated for the spot. A big shot, liked by politicians, but unpopular among certain gang leaders, had escaped the doom that was intended for him.

Goldy, himself, knew nothing. He was staying close to his palatial apartment high up in the Hotel Marathon. His famous astrakhan coat no longer would be seen at Brindle's restaurant. Goldy Tancred - so reporters affirmed - would prefer to send out for sandwiches in the future.

DETECTIVE Joe Cardona read the morning newspapers with a real relish. His presence at the Olympia Hotel was universally commended. He had used good sense in watching Goldy Tancred. It was not his fault that the killers had blundered.

Commissioner Ralph Weston, overlord of New York police, had voiced his approval of Cardona's tactics. He supported the detective's finding, and he had promptly deputed Cardona to handle the case.

Among the newspapermen who were active on the story was Clyde Burke, a reporter for the New York Classic. A veteran news gatherer, Clyde believed that Cardona was right. Secretly, however, he wondered what the outcome of this affair might be. For Clyde knew, from experience, that there was someone who could deal with gangland's slayers even when the most ardent police measures failed.

Clyde Burke was thinking of The Shadow. For Clyde Burke, himself, was a secret agent of The Shadow!

In a room at the Metrolite Hotel, another young man was pondering upon the same matters that concerned Clyde Burke. A resident guest of the hotel, Harry Vincent was scanning the day's headlines. Like Clyde Burke, Harry believed that Joe Cardona had the correct information. Nevertheless, Harry was wondering what would follow. He, too, was an agent of The Shadow.

In an office of the huge Badger Building, a chubby-faced man also studied the morning newspapers. With careful shears, he clipped the columns that carried the story of the double slaying at the Olympia Hotel. By profession, this placid individual was an investment broker. His name was Rutledge Mann, and his many acquaintances knew him merely as a specialist on financial advice.

But Mann, who held no opinion regarding Cardona's theory, was also wondering about the future. Like Clyde Burke and Harry Vincent, Rutledge Mann served The Shadow. Where the others were active and frequently in the field, Mann acted as a contact agent. He supplied information and data that might be required. These clippings, that he was gathering today, were being prepared for delivery to The Shadow.

His compilation completed, Rutledge Mann put all his clippings in an envelope. He left his office, took a taxi to Twenty-third Street, and entered a dingy building. On an upstairs floor, he stopped at the door of

a deserted office which bore the name "Jonas" on its cobwebbed pane. He dropped the envelope in the mail slit.

Mann's work was done, until later orders might be received.

The mail slit was the delivery box that enabled Mann to reach The Shadow. Complete reports on the Olympia outrage were now posted to the master mind. Whatever the sequel might be, Rutledge Mann would be ready to obey instructions.

Clyde Burke's reportorial work - Harry Vincent's perusal of the newspapers - Rutledge Mann's clipping service - all these were productive of an important aftermath. A strange, unseen event occurred somewhere in New York and its beginning was a click that sounded in a secret room.

INTENSE blackness was suddenly ended by a bluish light that appeared in the corner of a black-walled apartment. An uncanny glow was focused upon the polished surface of a table, directly beneath the shaded circle of a blue-bulbed light.

In only one place could this phenomenon occur. That spot was The Shadow's sanctum. Away from all the world, the very location of his secret room unknown, The Shadow, master of darkness, planned his warfare against the hosts of evil.

Two hands appeared beneath the bluish glow. They were long hands, with tapering fingers that combined smoothness with strength. There was no mistaking the hands of The Shadow, for upon a finger of the left hand rested the identifying token of the master.

This was a gleaming gem that shone with a changing hue that symbolized mystery. The Shadow's girasol - a fire opal unmatched in all the world - glistened like a sparkling eye in ever-changing hues.

From azure, the girasol took on the shades of a rich purple. Its glowing depths became a brilliant crimson, only to change to a deep maroon that gave the stone an appearance of unlimited depths. All the while, the illusion of sparks persisted. Flashes of flames seemed to leap upward toward the light.

The white hands produced an envelope and removed its contents. Rutledge Mann's clippings lay in view. The right hand brought forward a pen and a sheet of blank paper. While hidden eyes studied the reports, the hand began to write.

Brief, pointed facts appeared like thoughts. As the hand rested, eyes from the dark visualized those statements. Bluish ink dried, then disappeared. The memory of the vanished words remained, locked in the brain.

Could Joe Cardona have seen those inscriptions, he would have been amazed. For The Shadow, step by step, was shattering the detective's theory! He was tracing a very definite connection between the big shot and the murders in the Red Room!

Where Cardona had pictured Goldy as a man who had escaped a menace. The Shadow saw the big shot as one who had known of a designed murder. Goldy Tancred - threatened - was the last person whom the police could suspect of complicity. But The Shadow deduced otherwise.

The change of the Mohawks' meeting from Red Room to Blue Room - the holding of the affair on the same night as the meeting of the electrical engineers - those had been accepted as mere coincidence. To The Shadow, however, such an obvious conclusion was not to be accepted.

Cold-blooded mobsmen who attacked beneath a barrage of blackness were not the ones to make so clumsy an error. The Shadow, versed in knowledge of underworld tactics, was quick to reject Cardona's

theory.

Richard Reardon and Roland Furness: one - perhaps both - had been marked for death.

Why?

They were not men of crime. Yet the explanation must exist. From a study of the past, and an observation of the future, the reason could be discovered.

CRIME was impending - crime that bore the mark of genius. The secret of mighty schemes was unrevealed, yet there were ways to reach it. Where the police were content to look for unknown murderers, The Shadow intended to follow other courses.

The Shadow wrote:

Goldy Tancred.

A soft laugh came through the gloom of the room. Its whispered tones awoke pulsating echoes. The hand inscribed terse comments beneath the name that it had written. Goldy Tancred must be watched. There was a way to do it. The Shadow was making his plans.

Two other names appeared upon the paper. Side by side, The Shadow considered them.

Richard Reardon - Roland Furness.

Again, the hand began its comments. The careers of these men must be traced. Somewhere in the events of their lives might lie an item of evidence.

Earphones slid across the table as the hands reached beyond to obtain them. The Shadow spoke into a mouthpiece. His low tones were passing over a private wire to a listener as secretive as himself.

"Burbank speaking."

The quiet voice over the wire was that of The Shadow's hidden contact man. Always ready for the Shadow's bidding, Burbank dwelt in obscurity and kept up a telephonic communication with The Shadow's agents. Words that came to Burbank were relayed back and forth between The Shadow and his men.

"Clyde Burke on duty," responded The Shadow, in an even monotone. "Commence observation on the activities of Goldy Tancred -"

The voice continued. Burbank listened. While The Shadow spoke, his hand was writing. Every word that he gave to Burbank was inscribed in blue upon a blank sheet of paper. The statements, however, were in code.

The Shadow concluded his orders. As he told Burbank to stand by, he folded the paper before the writing had reached the vanishing stage, and placed it in an envelope. This was to go to Rutledge Mann. The writing would not disappear until after the investment broker had learned its import.

"Harry Vincent on duty," The Shadow went on. "To cooperate with Rutledge Mann in uncovering facts regarding Richard Reardon and Roland Furness -"

The voice continued; the hand wrote and closed its message. The earphones slid across the table. Instructions to Burbank were ended. The orders to Rutledge Mann, sealed in separate envelopes, were carried away by The Shadow's hands.

The light clicked out. Invisible within the walls of his windowless sanctum, The Shadow laughed again. Weird echoes of a mocking cry reverberated from the hollow space. The Shadow's work had begun.

During the future, his eyes would watch the activities of Goldy Tancred, the man who had escaped. Meanwhile, delving into the past, his investigating forces would discover facts regarding Richard Reardon and Roland Furness, the men who had encountered death.

Somewhere, between the affairs of the big shot and the dead engineers, lay crime of an insidious nature. Goldy Tancred, feigning a connection with small-fry politicians, was seeking to cover up the game.

Clearly, The Shadow saw that Goldy's pretensions were a bluff; that he was using the unsuspecting Mohawks as an alibi. Just as plainly, The Shadow knew that there had been a definite purpose in the killings of Reardon and Furness.

The echoes of The Shadow's laugh persisted. At last, like dying whispers from invisible ghosts, they faded into nothingness. Only impenetrable darkness remained within the sanctum.

Strange darkness! Like a shroud it had veiled the presence of the master mind. From that darkness, The Shadow had gone into light. He would find darkness again - for The Shadow struck best from Stygian gloom.

This time, however, a curious analogy remained. Out of darkness had The Shadow gone. Into darkness he must come to deal with the hidden foe.

For The Shadow, now, was dealing with strange fighters who also had used blackness to mask their crimes!

It was darkness that The Shadow sought. It was darkness that he would find. That strange black hush that had fallen over the Olympia Hotel would spread its blanketing depths again.

Its sinister folds would envelop The Shadow along with fiends of crime. The Shadow had begun his campaign against the menace of the black hush!

CHAPTER IV. FROM THE TOWER

In contrast to the impenetrable gloom that always pervaded The Shadow's sanctum, the light of day still shone above the island of Manhattan. It was waning afternoon and the city streets were darkening, but the sun gave sparkling brilliance to the offices of great skyscrapers.

Glinting rays of light were reflected by the polished walls of futuristic buildings. Most conspicuous of these was the new Judruth Tower, which lifted its jutting shaft ninety-five stories toward the sky. A pinnacle that formed a tribute to modern engineering, this structure added a new spectacle to Manhattan's sky line.

The highest office floor was the ninety-third. There, in a private office, a bespectacled stout man was studying the afternoon edition of a New York daily. Behind his flat-topped mahogany desk, he was reading rewritten accounts of the tragedy at the Olympia Hotel.

A knock at the door. The stout man laid the paper aside, ordered the person to come in. A stenographer entered; the man at the desk peered toward her through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"It is after five o'clock, Mr. Fawcett," said the girl. "The office force has left. I am going now, unless you have some additional letters that must be mailed."

"Quite all right to leave," responded Fawcett. "I intend to wait for Hobbs. He couldn't get back to town in time for the sales conference this noon."

The stenographer nodded and left. Then, with a smile upon his lips, Fawcett went from his corner office. He entered another room, and closed the door behind him. The glass panel of his private office bore the name:

HECTOR FAWCETT

President

Continuing, Fawcett reached another door, and stepped through it to an anteroom where a row of elevator doors greeted his eye. The door behind him bore another legend:

CLIMAX CORP.

ELECTRO-THERAPEUTICAL EQUIPMENT

The elevator doors were heavy-metal barriers that completely closed this anteroom from the outside world. Hector Fawcett smiled in satisfaction. His eye ran along the doors. All but one were stopping points at the ninety-third floor. The sole exception was a special shaft which ran exclusively to the observation floors above.

SURE that no one was loitering in the anteroom, Fawcett returned to his offices, leaving the door unlocked behind him. This would be an invitation to the expected visitor. In the meantime, the president of the Climax Corp. began a short tour through his suite of offices.

The entire space of the ninety-third floor was occupied by the one enterprise. Fawcett strolled from office to office. Each corner of the floor had a private office like the one which the president occupied. But with the exception of Fawcett's own room, these were devoid of desks and chairs. Instead, they served as display rooms for electro-therapeutical equipment and many kindred devices.

Sun-ray machines, health devices, other items designed for treatment of illness - these made up a galaxy of shining apparatus. Hector Fawcett's business was in keeping with the times. People were ready to purchase mechanical inventions of this type. The business was one that afforded tremendous profit.

Hector Fawcett continued to an inner office. This room, its door locked, served as a storage place for new items of equipment. Fawcett, himself, had the only key. He opened the door, turned on the light, and looked over the assemblage of electrical apparatus.

Most of the machines were duplicates of items on display in the corner offices. There was one noteworthy exception. This was an oddly shaped device mounted on rubber wheels. It consisted of a cylindrical box with a curved door in the front. Above it, mounted on a thick post, was a burnished projector that resembled a searchlight.

There was a control switch at the side. There were also focusing levers and pivoting arrangements. These were oddly designed, but they were not the chief item of peculiarity. That lay in the glazed front of the searchlight itself.

The face of the projector was solid black!

An amazing paradox - a device that seemed designed for the issuance of light - yet it was coated with a surface which light could not penetrate!

HECTOR FAWCETT'S smile became a laugh. The corporation president turned on his heel and left the storeroom. He closed and locked the door behind him. He went back into his own office, and picked up the telephone from the desk. In a methodical voice he gave a number. He recognized the tone that responded.

"Hello," greeted Fawcett. "Yes... Waiting now... Yes, I've been reading the newspapers right here... Exactly as we expected... No reason for delay now."

Fawcett was moving toward the window of the office; standing there, he still talked on the telephone while he stared outward and downward.

"Yes," he continued, "I've made the observations. It's up to Hobbs now... No... No... A test is unnecessary... Just the sighting at the correct hour... I'll call you later."

Hector Fawcett hung up the receiver. He stood by the window and studied the vista of the city below. Afternoon was waning, even at this height, where the final rays of the setting sun lingered.

Hector Fawcett chuckled.

This altitude gave the bespectacled man a sense of vast superiority. The feeling would have been justified from even a commercial standpoint: the thought of salesmen who had issued forth from here to find limitless sources of revenue among the thousands of potential customers in those buildings.

But Fawcett's ideas were of a vaster scheme. Commercial enterprise meant nothing to this watcher. To him, those buildings were masses of ore, among which were veins of profitable material.

Within a huge radius from the Judruth Tower, that source of wealth was workable. From this office - from the other corner rooms - Hector Fawcett could point his finger at the spots he wanted; then, when the proper time arrived, he could arrange the action that would bring prompt results.

A promoter of experience, Hector Fawcett was now in back of a scheme that could mean millions. Completed plans were ready. The first test had been made and, with it, the way had been paved toward success.

Crime? What of it?

Murder? It had proven necessary.

Such considerations did not restrain this man. His longing for gain surpassed all else. Behind an exterior that denoted a business man of integrity, the real Hector Fawcett was an individual without conscience.

There was reason for his smile. In all his former schemes of promotion, Fawcett had carefully masked all unscrupulous activities. He knew how to obtain the prestige that went with successful business. President of the Climax Corp., his affairs would pass the closest scrutiny.

Like Goldy Tancred, Hector Fawcett was a man who had avoided crime. But Fawcett had not even allowed himself to deal with shady enterprises. Like Goldy, Fawcett had watched his actions purely because he knew the risk involved.

There were easier ways to make money, but when crime could be perpetrated with the dangers minimized, that altered the aspect. It was the attainment of such a condition that had turned Hector Fawcett to his present schemes.

High above the world, safe from observation, he felt positive that his actions were also free from possible

detection. Sleuths could do their utmost, they would never reach this stronghold.

Many opportunities had come to Hector Fawcett. This was the time that he had engaged in the promotion of a new and alluring enterprise - that of crime. Here was crime that would be fool-proof; crime that had stood the test; crime that would increase in power with each succeeding effort.

The sky was darkening now. In the gloom of his office, Hector Fawcett turned away from the window, where Manhattan lay helpless before his eyes.

He had heard the sound of an opening door. His visitor had arrived. Turning on the light, Fawcett took his seat behind the desk just as another man entered the room.

Hector Fawcett smiled in greeting. This was the person he had expected. Known to the office as Hobbs, accepted by others as a traveling salesman who spent most of the time on the road, this visitor was actually Hector Fawcett's associate in stupendous crime.

CHAPTER V. BURKE REPORTS

Goldy Tancred was seated in the living room of his luxurious suite at the Hotel Marathon. Bowser Riggins, the man whom he called a pal, and others termed his bodyguard, was lolling in a corner by the window.

A heavily built man entered the room and turned a sour, motionless face in Goldy's direction. Although dressed in a business suit, this fellow had the manner of a servant who had come to make an announcement.

"What is it, Curry?" questioned Goldy.

"Reporter outside to see you," answered Curry. "Guy named Burke. Comes from the Classic. Wants an interview."

Bowser Riggins offered an objection before the big shot could make reply.

"Say" - the bodyguard's expression was a growl - "ain't there no end to those guys? There's been half a dozen up to see you, Goldy -"

The big shot waved his hand for silence.

"Show him in, Curry," he ordered. "I'll talk to him. I know Burke."

The big shot held out his hand when Clyde Burke entered. Although he made no effort to rise, Goldy's clasp was cordial as he received the reporter's handshake. Burke took a chair that Goldy pointed out to him, and drew the seat alongside that of Goldy's.

"Listen, Goldy." Burke was serious as he took up the conversation. "You know what I'm after. A story. The boys are all wise. What's the use of kidding them?"

"Wise to what?" queried Goldy suavely.

"Wise that somebody's out to get you," returned Clyde. "Why don't you give us something to work on? If you know who's on your trail, it won't hurt to spill the news."

"No?" Goldy's question came with a smile that showed his shining dental equipment. "Say, Burke, you're no nitwit, like most of these news hounds. You don't think I'm a squawker, do you? If I was" - Goldy

indulged in a contemptuous leer - "I'd have been pushing up posies long ago. Squawkers don't go, that's all."

"Murder has been committed," said the reporter gravely. "If you have any way of rectifying it - of bringing justice against the killers - you should take the opportunity."

Goldy Tancred leaned back in his chair, and loosed a long horse-laugh. He looked toward Bowser Riggins, then pointed at Clyde Burke.

"Listen to that, Bowser," chuckled the big shot. "This column-filler talks like Joe Cardona. Remember the line he passed out when he dropped in here this morning?"

Bowser grinned and nodded.

"Say" - Goldy was speaking to Burke now - "if I couldn't tell Cardona anything, you don't think I'd have any dope for you, do you?"

"No," admitted Burke. "But when Cardona talked to you -"

"I told him the truth," interposed Goldy. "I told him that I didn't know of any rat that had nerve enough to try to get me. I admitted there were a lot of boobs who might have it in for me because I had queered their cheap rackets for them. But I didn't need to name them."

"Why not?"

"Because Cardona already had the list. What do you think he pays a lot of stool pigeons for - just to hear them tell funny stories? Listen, news-hound. If any guy was after me last night, Cardona has just as good a chance of guessing who he was as I have.

"There's the whole lay. It's easier for Cardona to locate the bird he wants. I'm not worried. I'm not going around to look for trouble. It's a police job; let him do it. It's his business."

Goldy smiled more pleasantly when he saw Clyde Burke nod in agreement to his statement.

"Murder," said the big shot, becoming somewhat serious. "That's what it was, Burke - cold murder. Cardona is a smart detective. As a matter of fact he's beginning to convince me that they were really after me - but at the same time, I'm not sure enough to say so.

"Now suppose that a pot shot had been taken at me. Suppose that Bowser, here, had taken a dose of lead trying to protect me from some sap who had more bullets than brains. Well, it would be different then, Burke. I'd be forced to admit that they were on my trail.

"But as it is, I've got no proof. If I come out and try to place the marker on some bozo, I've got to mark every one that I think is sore at me. What would that mean? I'll tell you - it would give me a dozen enemies - maybe two dozen.

"Instead of a flock of rats, I'd have a troop of foxes on my list. You know how those small-fry mobsters work. They hide out and run away until they think they're in for something. Then they get nasty. So I'm just sitting back and saying nothing. That's all. No names. Not one."

"Well," volunteered Burke, "if Cardona is satisfied -"

"Satisfied?" came Goldy's interrupting quiz. "Say, boy, he saw the light mighty quick. You want to know why? I'll tell you - provided that you don't use it in your paper."

"Go ahead," said Burke.

"Cardona," explained Goldy, "figures that the birds who bumped these electrical engineers won't be satisfied until they take another crack at me. He believes me when I tell him I don't know who the killers are.

"So he's laying quiet, like I am. Why should he stir up a lot of other rats or force me to do it? There's a bunch might take the trouble to come after me if they got worried. Then Cardona would be stuck. He wants the guys who killed the engineers to show themselves again.

"I'll tell you what I've done for Cardona. I'm laying low, playing possum, acting almost like I'm scared. That's a good come-on, isn't it? Of course. I'm playing safe, even though this talk of danger may be hokum. But if these tough bimboes want to waltz into trouble of their own making, I'll be satisfied. So will Cardona."

Goldy Tancred grinned and clasped one hand with the other to demonstrate an illustrative shake. It was an effort to explain the entente cordiale that existed between Goldy and Joe Cardona.

Clyde Burke smiled.

"Thanks, Goldy," he said. "You've explained what was puzzling me. There's no story in it - but it may mean that something will break a lot quicker."

Despite his expression of new understanding, Clyde Burke had actually learned nothing which he did not know before. This unofficial arrangement between Cardona and Goldy Tancred was a logical procedure. In fact, it was possible that the detective and the smooth racketeer handler might have checked up the names of certain gangsters.

Clyde's conversation had been intended as a stall. He wanted to stay in Goldy's suite as long as possible. That was not part of his work for the Classic. It was a duty that had been ordered by The Shadow.

WHILE Clyde was thinking of some way to prolong the visit, the telephone rang on a table at Goldy Tancred's side. The big shot lifted the receiver. Clyde caught a gleam of the gold teeth as Goldy talked across the wire.

"Hello... Yes..." Goldy seemed intensely interested. "Yeah... All right. It's settled, then... Hobbs will be there? Good... Good..."

Intense interest had entered Goldy's eyes. Now, upon sudden thought, the big shot had apparently remembered that a visitor was listening to his talk. Perhaps it was the fact that he had mentioned the name of Hobbs. Whatever the cause of Goldy's change might have been, the result was immediate.

"That's all right," continued Goldy in a noncommittal tone. "Glad you called. Sorry I can't be at the party... No, I'm feeling pretty good, but I'm sticking around the apartment for the time being... Sure - I'll tell him when I see him... Yeah, I'll call you some day soon..."

Goldy looked toward Bowser Riggins as he lowered the receiver.

"Just been finding out I'm nothing but a big playboy," he remarked. "That's about the tenth guy that has called me up to go on a night-club party. Bunch of chorus girls and other molls. They can leave me out of the night life for a while."

The pretense was well done. But Clyde Burke sensed that Goldy Tancred had sought to cover up a message of real importance. The reporter remembered that name that Goldy had mentioned - Hobbs.

Rising from his chair, Clyde Burke cast a glance about the room. He noted the elegant furnishings, and his eye fell upon a corner by the window. A bookcase, set at right angles to the window, jutted out until it reached a hanging curtain that draped to the window ledge. Beyond the window, Clyde espied the brass railing of a balcony.

"So long, Goldy," said the reporter. "Maybe I'll drop in again."

"Wait a moment," suggested the big shot. "Bowser will ride down with you, Burke. He's going out."

The bodyguard joined the reporter. They descended to the hotel lobby, and left by the same door. There, their paths separated.

Ordinarily, Clyde Burke would have gone directly to a telephone to communicate with Burbank. The proximity of Bowser Riggins restrained him on this occasion.

Clyde covered several blocks before he dropped into a drugstore and entered a phone booth. He obtained his number quickly, and talked with Burbank. In short, low sentences, Clyde stated that Goldy Tancred had received a suspicious call, which involved the name of Hobbs. He added the fact that he had noted concerning the proximity of a bookcase to a balconied window.

When Clyde Burke left the store, he called a taxi and directed the driver to take him to the Classic office. The reporter's only regret was that he had lost fifteen minutes between the time of his departure from Goldy's apartment, and his arrival at the telephone booth. On the contrary, he felt sure that he had escaped all observation.

In that thought, the reporter was wrong. From the time that he had left the Hotel Marathon, a skulking figure had followed him along the opposite side of the street. That same follower had waited outside the drugstore, and had heard Clyde order the taxi man to take him to the Classic.

Now, a fox-faced, dark-sweatered gangster came into view, and scurried away along a side street. The appearance of Bowser Riggins with Clyde Burke at the door of the hotel had been this skulker's tip to take up the trail.

Such was Goldy Tancred's game. Secretly, the overlord of racketeers was in league with forces of the underworld. He had forces at his disposal, but he kept them hidden.

A big shot deluxe, Goldy Tancred, like Hector Fawcett, was a power in the menace that was now impending. The black hush that had preceded murder at the Olympia Hotel had been no mystery to Goldy Tancred!

Clyde Burke, agent of The Shadow, had gained a partial inkling of that fact. Soon The Shadow, himself, would visit the abode of Goldy Tancred!

CHAPTER VI. IN GOLDY'S APARTMENT

Hardly had Clyde Burke left Goldy Tancred's apartment before Curry entered to speak to his master. The servant's expression was quiet. His tone was confidential. He was announcing another visitor.

"Ping Slatterly," he informed.

"Bring him in," ordered Goldy.

A short, squat, hard-faced man was ushered into the room. With the frame of an orangutan, a visage like a chunk of hewn rock, and hands that looked like mallets, Ping Slatterly looked like what he was - the

toughest gang leader in the underworld.

"Hello, Ping," greeted Goldy.

"How're ya?" returned the gang leader. "Say - I've been stickin' around on the floor below, waitin' to hear from you. Well - what's the news?"

"All set."

"Yeah? Well, leave the rest to me. I'll pull this one like I did that job at the Olympia."

"You're laying low?"

"Say - I'm like a dead log, Goldy. There ain't nothin' creepin' out, neither. There ain't nobody knows what's comin' - even the mob I've got. They're waitin' for the word; an' they're keepin' mum while they wait.

"I'm just nobody - see? They think I'm through - all tough looks an' no punch. That's the way they're goin' to stay. I mean the guys that ain't in the know. I've got my mob trained all right."

"Stay away from here," warned Goldy, "until I send for you. That won't be until after we pull the job. You're sure that it's all set?"

"Just the way we want it, Goldy. Douse the glims, an' I don't care if there's a hundred bulls in the place. How about the bump-off at the Olympia? Good, eh?"

"Perfect," admitted Goldy.

Ping Slatterly's huge chest swelled. The evil-faced gang leader leered. He sauntered toward the door, with Goldy Tancred following, and turned to deliver his parting expression of assurance.

"They'll all be close to me, see?" he concluded. "When I shoot on the bull's-eye, the rest is easy. Each guy has his place. Teamwork. Fast pick-up and a quick get-away. You've got it set for fifteen minutes, huh?"

"That's the time"

"Soft. Nothin' to it. Wait and see."

Curry appeared at Goldy Tancred's call. The servant went with Ping Slatterly down a flight of stairs. He was taking the gang leader to a service elevator on a lower floor. A dumb operator, an exit at the rear of the hotel - that was the course which Ping Slatterly took when he visited the big shot.

BACK in his living room, Goldy Tancred strolled about, smoking a cigarette. His teeth gleamed in occasional smiles. At last, with a bored expression, the big shot sauntered from the room.

Minutes drifted by. Not a sound came to this apartment high above the street. Then, so slowly that its motion was almost unnoticeable, a window sash began to rise. Through the opening came a long, black silhouette that projected itself across the floor.

Something blotted out the reflecting surface of the raised window pane. The sash moved downward. The silhouette advanced across the floor. Seemingly from outer darkness, a tall figure materialized. It developed into the shape of a being clad entirely in black.

With cape reaching from his shoulders, with hands encased in thin black gloves, his features obscured by

the turned-down brim of a slouch hat, The Shadow stood within the confines of Goldy Tancred's living room!

A soft, whispered laugh came from invisible lips. The black-hatted head tilted upward. A pair of burning eyes studied the scene. Those glowing optics turned in the direction of the bookcase, close beside the window.

The position of the heavy articles of furniture answered Clyde Burke's description to Burbank. The Shadow stooped, a small object showed in his hands.

With calm precision, the strange visitant moved the bookcase slightly away from the wall and attached a small instrument. The bookcase moved back. The Shadow's hands urged a thin wire behind the curtain. Then continued to draw the connection toward the window.

Suddenly, the worker stopped. Stepping half behind the curtain, he became entirely motionless. Not even the slightest rustling of the hanging betrayed his presence. The long silhouette still stretched its black shape across the floor, but it did not waver.

Curry had entered the room. The servant was closing the place for the night. He walked directly to the window, passed within inches of The Shadow's hidden form, and tried the sash to find it locked. Wheeling, Curry went back toward the outer door and extinguished the light.

Departing footsteps faded through the hallway beyond the room. The Shadow's laugh came in a sinister whisper. By absolute stillness, this weird investigator had completely avoided discovery. That was The Shadow's purpose on this night.

The window sash moved upward. The Shadow reached the balcony. Invisible, he lowered the sash so subtly that it seemed to creep downward of its own accord, inch by inch. A steel instrument entered between the sections of the sash. An unseen hand relocked the window from the outside, so perfectly that no trace of the deed remained.

The free end of the wire dropped from the balcony and hung down the darkened wall of the hotel. The Shadow's phantom figure moved to the end rail, then stretched itself upward and outward. Long, strong fingers caught the projecting cornice of a window above. Climbing like a human fly, The Shadow reached his goal and entered an apartment.

This place was occupied, but no one was awake. The Shadow's cloak swished slightly as its wearer made his way to an outer door. Silence lingered after The Shadow had departed.

TEN minutes afterward, a window opened in an apartment a few floors below Goldy Tancred's domicile. An invisible hand stretched out into the night, and caught the end of the slender, hanging wire. A tiny flashlight threw a dollar-size disk of light upon the wall of the apartment where The Shadow now was. A gloved hand drew the end of the wire to the bell box of a telephone that was set against the wall.

There, The Shadow attached another mechanism. The operation here required a multitude of details. When it was completed, The Shadow stepped back and viewed the completed job with the light of his tiny torch.

This was a private telephone, and the owner of the apartment was away. Upstairs, in Goldy Tancred's living room, The Shadow had attached one end of a dictograph connection. Here, he had hooked the line with the telephone.

Through a perfected mechanism of his own invention, The Shadow now had the communication that he

desired. It merely remained for Burbank to call up this apartment. The ringing of the bell would do the rest. The call would apparently be completed; actually, a connection would be formed with the dictograph line. This meant that Burbank could listen in at will to whatever was said in Goldy Tancred's place.

By hanging up his own receiver, Burbank would complete the supposed call. Thus The Shadow's hidden agent could follow everything at a distance, whenever the occasion might require. There would be some long calls over this wire during the next few days!

The flashlight went out. The Shadow swished through darkness. The closed apartment was once more empty. The Shadow's work was done.

Impending crime! Could The Shadow learn its secret? Would his efforts frustrate the schemes of evildoers?

Tonight, Clyde Burke had gained an inkling. The Shadow, although too late to witness Ping Slatterly's visit, had accomplished something that would reveal to him all telephone calls and conversations in which Goldy Tancred might be concerned.

Well had The Shadow planned! His eyes had seen; now his ears would hear. Important contact formed. The Shadow held a great advantage.

Only one factor served to spoil The Shadow's measures. Tonight, Goldy Tancred had completed plans so effectively that the big shot had decided to abandon all communications for the present.

Unwittingly, Goldy had acted with great wisdom. The black hush was due to fall again - in a place other than the Olympia Hotel. Where it came, crime would follow. Until then, Goldy was preserving silence.

The ingenuity of The Shadow had already been counteracted by the man who did not even suspect its presence.

CHAPTER VII. THE SHADOW MOVES

"BURBANK speaking!"

This was the statement that came over the wire. The reply, made from a telephone booth, was uttered in the quiet voice of The Shadow.

"Report."

"Nothing."

There was a tinge of helpless regret in Burbank's final word. The Shadow's hidden agent, usually unemotional in his conversation, had realized his present inability to help.

The receiver clattered in the telephone booth where The Shadow stood. Silence followed while The Shadow planned.

Two days had passed since The Shadow's visit to Goldy Tancred's apartment. In that space of time, not one report of consequence had come from Burbank. Night had come once more, and with it, a new threat of unknown action by dangerous men of crime.

The door of the phone booth swung open. It was not, however, a tall black figure that emerged. Instead, the huddled form of a shifty, capped-and-sweatered gangster made its appearance.

The Shadow, master of disguise, was garbed as a ruffian of the underworld. While Burbank waited, hopeful for news tonight, The Shadow, himself, had penetrated into gangdom's terrain.

This was the second successive night upon which The Shadow had visited the underworld. Denizens of the badlands, unaware that their common foe was among them, had accepted the disguised visitant merely as an unrecognized gangster.

Thoroughly familiar with every feature of the underworld, The Shadow was undertaking a swift and methodical process of elimination. His analysis of approaching crime had connected Goldy Tancred with the activities of some gang leader. One by one, The Shadow had visited the hang-outs where representatives of different mobs were wont to appear.

His keen eyes, obscured by the visor of a wrinkled cap, had studied the bloated faces of a score of sordid mobsmen. His sharp ears had listened for snatches of conversation. Yet the cause had been fruitless. The Shadow had learned many facts; but none of them gave evidence of a connection with the case that now needed his attention.

In the middle of a darkened alley, the shuffling figure paused and turned to descend a flight of broken stone steps. His hand pushed open a rickety door. With hunched shoulders, the visitor entered an underground den where some two dozen mobsmen were assembled beneath the glare of two large incandescents.

TOUGHENED gunmen turned toward the doorway as the newcomer appeared. They saw a grimy, square-jawed visage beneath the cap visor. Somewhat suspiciously, they accepted this stranger as one of their own ilk. Not one man present suspected that he was viewing The Shadow.

No mobsmen could truthfully boast that he had ever seen the face of The Shadow. There were a few who claimed that they had seen his mysterious shape, and all descriptions agreed that The Shadow was a tall being, habitually garbed in black. Had this stoop-shouldered gangster announced his true identity, no one in this dive would have believed his words.

This was one underworld hang-out that had no exact title. Once it had been called Gorky's Joint, in honor of its proprietor. But Gorky's period of ownership had terminated amid a barrage of gun play that had counted him a victim. Since then, three proprietors had taken charge in turn.

The unknown gangster drifted over to a table at the side of the room. He flung a crumpled dollar bill in front of him, and a grimy-faced waiter brought in a bottle and a glass. The unknown poured out a long drink, but let the glass stand idle while he stared glumly toward the barren wall.

Drifters of the underworld were here tonight, but among them were a few who looked like regular mobsmen. The Shadow, in choosing his table, had picked a spot close by a promising pair. Now, apparently indifferent to what was going on about him, he was listening to the conversation of these gunmen.

"It's nearly ten o'clock," came a growl.

"Yeah," was the reply. "Wait'll I have another drink. I'll be goin' with you."

"You'd better be. Ping ain't the guy that'll stand for hokum. It's a long jump from here up to the old Windsor Theater, an' we've got to do a sneak into the back alley when we finally get there -"

The conversation broke as the gangsters prepared to leave. The Shadow, however, had learned all that he needed to know. The objective of the gangsters could not be the Windsor Theater itself, for the old,

closed playhouse offered no attraction to men of crime. But the mention of the alley along side was a give-away. A fashionable apartment house was located next door to the theater, and it could well be a lure to smart crooks.

THADDEUS HARMON lived in that building. New Yorkers had heard much of him during the past few weeks. A millionaire whose name was frequently in the news, Thaddeus Harmon had expressed his approval of valuable gems as an investment.

He had spoken of important purchases which he had made through diamond merchants, and it was a known fact that he had invited wealthy friends to see the collection of resplendent gems that he brought back and forth from storage vault to apartment.

Until now, The Shadow had been unable to lay his finger upon the exact type of crime which might be impending. Murder - cold and exacting - had been the toll at the Olympia Hotel. More murder - racketeering - blackmail - all these had been possibilities.

But the connection of two sullen-faced gangsters with a rendezvous in a deserted alley between the Windsor Theater and the next-door apartment was a definite clue that pointed to unusual crime.

The men had spoken of one whom they called Ping. The Shadow knew of Ping Slatterly - a gang leader who had recently dropped out of sight. The fact that these rowdies were connected with so formidable an evildoer was important. Whether or not Ping Slatterly was Goldy Tancred's unidentified associate, it was in keeping with The Shadow's policy to impede the progress of impending crime.

Such opportunity was here. The Shadow had gained a definite mission. With other possibilities exhausted, the investigation had tapered down to a point where almost any definite warning of crime could be regarded as a clue to Goldy Tancred's enterprise.

The Shadow knew their destination; he had knowledge of their possible goal. Nevertheless, he could accomplish most by following them. Often, in the past, The Shadow had thwarted the schemes of malefactors by suddenly appearing in the midst of their trusted cohorts.

Once these men were clear of this dive, The Shadow could trail them with ease.

The pair had left through the door by the time The Shadow was standing on the floor. With the leisurely shambling of a purposeless mobster, The Shadow moved slowly toward the exit.

His perfect disguise now served him well. Many eyes were upon him, but none suspected him to be other than an unimportant toady of some lesser mob.

There were two stone steps up to the door. On one side was the wall; on the other, an iron rail. The Shadow reached this point. With bowed head and sullen lips, he grasped the rail.

His departure was timed to perfection. But for the intervention of chance, he would have been outside of the dive within the next few seconds.

AN unexpected occurrence stopped The Shadow's plan. As his forward foot reached the first of the stone steps, the door of the speakeasy was flung open. A huge, broad-shouldered, beefy-faced man stood glowering into the underground dive. His bulky form blocked The Shadow's path.

A buzz swept through the room. The newcomer was known to the assembled crowd. He was a hard-boiled gangster who went under the name of Smash Harlow; directly behind him was the stocky figure of his pal, Bozo Guckert.

Glancing downward, Smash Harlow saw the disguised figure of The Shadow. He observed a face that was tough and grimy.

In bullying fashion, Smash expressed an immediate dislike toward the person who blocked his path.

"Out of the way, dopey," he growled. "Whatcha trying to do - hog the whole doorway?"

Guffaws came from mobsters within the dive.

"Poke him one, Smash," came an urging cry. "He doesn't belong in this joint, anyway."

Smash continued to glower. When he saw that the figure before him did not move away, the bullying mobster did more than try a punch. With a quick jerk, he pulled a large revolver from his pocket, and thrust the muzzle directly toward the hawk-like nose that was before him.

Finger on the trigger, Smash was ready to shoot down this small-fry mobster who had no friends.

Then came swift action. The stoop-shouldered figure seemed to lengthen. The Shadow's long left arm shot directly upward, and caught Smash Harlow's wrist. As the beefy man fired, the bullet took an upward course, and crashed against the stone ceiling.

Smash Harlow had no opportunity for another voluntary action. The Shadow's right arm had caught him now. Raised by the crouching form that wore the sweater, Smash was lifted clear from the steps.

With a terrific upward snap, his assailant threw him headlong. The big man's body whirled as it swept over the cap which The Shadow wore. Smash Harlow's revolver sailed from his grasp and clattered against the wall; a moment later, his bulky form landed prone upon the floor.

Bozo Guckert was drawing his revolver. He never had a chance to use it. Straightening forward with incredible swiftness, The Shadow made a sideswipe with his left fist. The blow knocked the revolver from Bozo's hand; then with a continued motion, The Shadow's right arm swung.

A fist like a trip hammer caught Bozo Guckert on the chin. The powerful punch lifted the mobster over the rail beside the steps. Bozo Guckert landed back downward upon a table where two gangsters were sitting. The flimsy piece of furniture crashed beneath his weight.

In the midst of the confusion, the unknown gangster who had so ably defended himself made a swift departure. Guns flashed into view. Shots were fired at the spot where The Shadow had been. The bullets of the excited mobsmen found no target other than the closing door.

Nevertheless, the chase was on. Smash Harlow and Bozo Guckert were popular in this dive. Half a dozen gangsters leaped to their feet, ready to avenge the downfall of their friends. The snarling mobsters swarmed to the exit. They reached the alley and fired pot shots in the dark as they spread out in different directions.

They could not find their man. Somehow - somewhere - he had slipped from view.

WHILE the mobsmen were hustling along the alley, the stoop-shouldered figure which The Shadow had chosen as his disguise appeared from between two buildings on another street.

Swift, stealthy and spectacular, The Shadow would readily have met his pursuers in hand-to-hand combat. But, on this occasion, he could not afford the time. The encounter with Smash Harlow and Bozo Guckert had consumed valuable minutes. The two gunmen whom The Shadow was following had gained too great a headway. There was only one course now: to make for the destination which they had

named.

This offered obstacles. The Shadow, still using the pose of a shambling gangster, was forced to choose a circuitous course in order to avoid the mobsmen who were prowling in search of him. He could not afford to waste precious moments in purposeless combat.

At last, his scurrying figure appeared upon a street which bore the appearance of a respectable neighborhood. Away from the borders of the underworld, The Shadow was free to make all speed. Stooped and hurrying, he approached a powerful coupe that was parked beside the curb.

It was then that new eyes saw the huddled figure. A challenge came from across the street, as a policeman hurried up to find out what this sweated individual was doing beside the expensive automobile.

Quickly, The Shadow slipped within the car. His cap dropped to the floor beside him. The sweater seemed to peel itself from his body. It fell, also; and from the back of the seat came a crushed opera hat, which popped open and reached The Shadow's head just as the officer arrived.

White hands came up and pressed against the grimy visage. They seemed to be wiping away the traces of dirt; and with it, they were forming a molding process. The action continued as the officer circled the coupe. Just as the policeman thrust a flashlight into the open window, the white hands dropped to the steering wheel of the car.

"Hey, you!" came the policeman's growl. "What are you doing in this car -"

The officer's challenge ended with the sight of a surprised man attired in full-dress clothes and wearing an opera hat. Questioning eyes were staring at the open-mouthed policeman.

"What is it, officer?" came a calm voice.

"Guess I made a mistake, sir," returned the policeman. "Thought I saw a tough-looking rowdy fooling around this car. There wasn't anybody trying to get in, was there?"

"I saw no one," responded the gentleman at the wheel. "Perhaps if you look around a bit, you might find the man you observed."

LAMONT CRANSTON'S lips wore a smile as his hands turned the wheel and the car pulled away. The Shadow had worn a double disguise tonight. Beneath his sweater and baggy trousers was a closely tailored full-dress suit. He was kicking off the trousers now. The officer had not seen them in the dark.

The bloated gangster face had changed to a dignified countenance as if by magic. The difference had lain partly in expression; partly in grimy make-up which had been quickly wiped away with skillful motions.

The Shadow was now playing the part of Lamont Cranston, millionaire clubman, well known in Manhattan. It was one of his most effective guises. Whirling up Fifth Avenue, The Shadow was bound for the apartment house which adjoined the old Windsor Theater.

Now, however, The Shadow's smile was grim. Two delays: one at the dive; the other with the officer - these had obstructed his plan of action. There was no chance to overtake the mobsters who had gone on duty.

Only one possible course could be taken. As Lamont Cranston, The Shadow would appear at Thaddeus Harmon's apartment, playing the part of an unexpected guest.

That was The Shadow's move. It was the method that he must now employ to cope with crime.

CHAPTER VIII. IN THE PENTHOUSE

THADDEUS HARMON was entertaining in his penthouse, atop the roof of the apartment house which adjoined the old Windsor Theater.

Perched upon a building of some twenty stories in height, Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse formed an isolated spot. The millionaire had chosen it for that very reason. Here, tonight, he could entertain wealthy guests in absolute seclusion. In fact, Harmon was commenting upon that very fact.

Standing in the middle of a sumptuous living room with a long, thin cigar clipped between his fingers, the millionaire was addressing a dozen guests who were seated about the room. While he talked, Harmon waved his cigar toward an oddly shaped cabinet that stood against the wall. Strong and bulky, this article of furniture had a heavy, broad-hinged top.

"There you are," remarked the millionaire. "Nearly half a million dollars' worth of gems underneath that lid. The cabinet is unlocked. All I have to do is raise the lid, and the jewels will be accessible to anyone who wants them."

The millionaire paused to smile while he drew a few long puffs upon his panatela.

"I am mentioning a few facts," he continued, "because certain of my guests have expressed apprehension regarding the safety of my valuables. They have wondered why I run what they consider to be a risk - bringing these jewels up here, and leaving them apparently unguarded.

"Let me inform you that this penthouse is impregnable. Were it situated upon the top of the Rock of Gibraltar, it could be no safer than it is at the present moment.

"Whenever I bring my valuables here for display, I have detectives stationed in this penthouse, and also on the ground floor of the apartment building. They are private men, all capable and ready for any emergency.

"There are two ways to reach this penthouse. By elevator, the way which all of you came, and through the fire tower. Both routes terminate on the ground floor. In this room, I have a special alarm. It is operated on a system of its own. With it, I can immediately notify the men downstairs. There is also the telephone, but it is not necessary to rely upon it.

"Should any dangerous persons enter here - and entrance would not be difficult - they would find it quite a task to capture the jewels, with my men on guard. Should they succeed, they would find escape the great problem. The sounding of the alarm would enable the men below to trap them.

"No matter what might occur, my men below will remain at their stations in the lobby until they hear the special alarm, which cannot fail to work, or receive a direct telephone call from this penthouse. So be at ease, everyone. My possessions are quite secure."

The guests seemed pleased at Thaddeus Harmon's assurance. They had all learned that detectives were present; it was easy to pick out the quartet of sleuths who were stationed in the room. The additional precautions, however, came as an interesting revelation.

"When the rest of my guests arrive," declared Harmon, "I shall show the gems to the entire company. There are only two or three who are not yet here. I expect them shortly."

A few seconds after the millionaire concluded, the telephone rang. Thaddeus Harmon answered it

himself. He repeated names of persons who were announced from the lobby. Then a pleased expression came upon his face.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "You say that Mr. Lamont Cranston is calling? Yes, indeed! Tell him to come up with the others!"

Hanging up the receiver, Harmon announced that the final guests were now on their way to the elevator. He added that another visitor was coming up with them.

"You will enjoy meeting Lamont Cranston," he stated. "The man is a connoisseur where valuable gems are concerned. He has a remarkable collection of his own, and every jewel is unique. A great traveler, Cranston. I did not know that he had arrived back in town.

"His presence will be most welcome as I have acquired two diamonds which he may be able to identify. Wonderful legends attach themselves to certain gems. To me, such stories, when verified, are quite as valuable as the stones themselves."

Thaddeus Harmon motioned to two of the detectives. The men strolled across the living room and stationed themselves beside the cabinet which contained the collection of jewels. The other pair of sleuths took positions near the outer door.

This was evidently the final precaution. As soon as the late guests had been welcomed, the curiosity of the visitors would be satisfied. With the jewels under competent guard, the collection would be viewed in safety.

Thaddeus Harmon turned toward the door of his living room, and glanced out into an anteroom which served also as an elevator corridor. He could just see the bulky door of the fire tower, past the row of elevators.

The millionaire's gaze turned toward the elevator shafts. His manner seemed expectant. In fact, Harmon was as anxious to reveal his gems as his guests were to see them.

Soon one of those heavy elevator doors would open to admit the final members of the privileged group whom Thaddeus Harmon had invited here tonight.

A vertical row of tiny incandescents were set beside each elevator. Harmon noticed the lowest light of one row. The bulb flickered; the one above it lightened. The indicators changed in slow succession. This elevator was coming up. It was bringing the final visitors - with them Lamont Cranston.

Puffing his panatela, Thaddeus Harmon serenely watched the indicated progress. A quiet, gray-haired gentleman, the millionaire had a habit of forgetting all about him while he watched something that consumed his interest. He was entirely oblivious to the conversation of his guests as he counted the floors that the elevator was passing.

"Sixteen - seventeen" - Harmon's lips were silently forming the numbers - "eighteen -"

The count ended. Without an instant's warning, the penthouse was blanketed in complete darkness. Even the lights of the elevator indicator went out as the pall of gloom fell.

WITH all the thickness of a cloudy, blackened night, a fearsome darkness seemed to tell of impending disaster. Even the windows of the apartment were blotted out completely.

Impenetrable gloom had taken full command. The entire building was wrapped in a shroud that prevented the entrance of even a distant glare!

Yet the completeness of that dark was not fully comprehended by those who were within it. Other phenomena had occurred as well. With that stroke of blackness, not only the electric lights, but every other current-controlled device within the entire building had failed!

The rising elevator was stalled midway between the eighteenth and the nineteenth floors. Telephone service was automatically ended. The special alarm between the penthouse and the ground floor was rendered worthless!

Gasps of surprise and fright seemed muffled as they came from the lips of Thaddeus Harmon's guests. The sensation of a choking, suffocating power gripped everyone. The darkness had the reality of a solid substance. It menaced; it throttled; it brought a fear of blindness.

Those within the pall scarcely dared to move. Hands clawed feebly at chair arms. Persons arose to grope their way to a less dreadful spot; then dropped back to their seats, awed by the terrible sensation.

Caught by hideous alarm, Thaddeus Harmon spent every ounce of effort as he managed to move slowly back into the living room. This weird darkness savored of the unknown. Its terror caused the millionaire to tremble.

It was the strangeness of the thick gloom that produced this effect. Actually, those within it were free agents; yet the unbelievable condition of absolute dark could not be combated by these persons who were experiencing it for the first time.

A menace shrouded the atmosphere of the penthouse. The black hush had come; and in its wake, crime was due to follow!

CHAPTER IX. THE ROBBERY

INVISIBLE men were moving through thick darkness. While silence still persisted in Thaddeus Harmon's living room, the invasion of crime was on its way. Issuing from the door of the fire tower, Ping Slatterly and his group of henchmen were coming through the gloom.

The sound of the advance had not reached the group in the penthouse living room. There, Thaddeus Harmon was groping his way to the alarm switch.

Detectives were trying to get results with their flashlights - all in vain. Even these appliances had succumbed to the strange force of the black hush.

A match flickered; its illumination did not carry far. Even the face of the guest who had ignited it was not distinguishable. It needed greater light than that to pierce this thick haze of blackness.

The light came. From the doorway, the glare of a bull's-eye lantern flashed suddenly into view. Supplied by acetylene, this instrument of illumination brought a strange brilliance throughout the living room. Guests and detectives were staring at the bright spot through a murky atmosphere.

A voice spoke from behind the lantern. Its tones were uttered in a harsh growl that was plainly audible, despite the muffling effect that pervaded the air.

"We've got you covered" - Ping Slatterly was talking - "and the first one that moves gets bumped. Do you savvy that? Stick up your mitts!"

Thaddeus Harmon yanked the alarm just as Slatterly spoke. Then the millionaire backed against the wall, with arms upraised. His action was followed promptly by his guests. The detectives, in turn, sullenly obeyed Ping's command. The suddenness of the attack had caught them completely unprepared.

"We're not worryin' about that alarm," informed Ping, in his harsh voice. "Yank it again, if you want. Try the telephone, too. It won't do you no good."

His words were followed by an order to his henchmen. Two roughly garbed invaders stepped into the glare of the acetylene light. Between them, they were carrying a double-handled bag. These men were masked. It was impossible to identify them as they moved straight toward the cabinet against the wall.

While the detectives remained helpless under the threat of unseen guns, one of the mobsters opened the top of the cabinet. Grimy hands dipped into the large jewel chest. Out came sparkling gems which were dropped into the bag in glittering array.

THADDEUS HARMON forgot caution. The sight of his valuable collection of precious stones, taken openly before his eyes, was too much for the maddened millionaire. He made no attempt to attack the robbers, but he did follow the advice which Ping Slatterly had suggested.

Seizing the telephone, Harmon raised the instrument from its hook and tried to establish a connection. The experiment convinced him that the leader of the invaders had spoken the truth. The telephone was dead.

Ping Slatterly laughed. His workers were completing their job in rapid time. The top of the cabinet descended with a thump that sounded muffled in the gloom. The gang leader saw a detective shift uneasily. He growled an order.

A revolver spoke through the darkness. Its suppressed roar was a warning. A bullet flattened itself against the wall above the detective's head. The threat was sufficient.

"Remember" - Slatterly's tone followed the abbreviated echoes of the revolver shot - "the first guy that moves gets drilled. We're leavin' you - but we'll be back quick enough if anybody tries to make trouble. It won't be safe to try anythin' until the lights come on again. Forget these sparklers if you know what's good for you. Savvy?"

The men were backing away from the cabinet. One was lugging the bag; the other had a revolver in his hand, and was turning it menacingly in all directions.

Thaddeus Harmon groaned at the thought of his plight.

This unexplainable situation was one for which he had not provided. Fully did he realize the helplessness of the present conditions. The elimination of light throughout the apartment house would mean nothing to the men stationed on the ground floor. There was no reason for them to suspect trouble in the penthouse unless they received a summons by telephone or heard the specially wired alarm.

The invaders had come from the fire tower. They would depart by the same route. In this amazing blackness, which only the acetylene torch seemed capable of penetrating, they could make a swift escape. Already they had captured the jewels. Half a million dollars was slipping away unhindered!

Pursuit?

Harmon realized that it would be impossible until after the crooks had made good their escape. They could easily barricade the door of the fire tower behind them. A hurried flight down the stairway of the tower - that would conclude the raid.

The millionaire knew that the elevator service, like lights, telephone and alarm had been interrupted. Harmon and his detectives were trapped here in the penthouse. Until the black hush ended, they could not move.

PING SLATTERLY, still out of sight behind the glare of the acetylene light, was emitting a gloating chuckle. He knew that his warning would be heeded. No one would dare move until complete illumination returned. It would be suicidal, even after the acetylene lamp had been extinguished. Ping's threat of lurkers in the dark was too potent to forget.

Events had passed swiftly since the invaders had arrived. The purloining of the gems had been a rapid action. Less than four minutes had elapsed since the black hush had fallen, up to the time of the warning shot that had ended all thoughts of resistance, or attempted recovery of the stolen wealth.

Ping Slatterly had estimated that the descent through the fire tower would require no more than four additional minutes. This allowed for a complete escape before anyone outside of the penthouse could possibly know that trouble had occurred here.

Until the black hush was lifted, these people would be helpless. Knowledge of that fact was the only reason why Ping had desisted from murder. This fiendish gang leader would gladly have massacred the helpless detectives, but he was under orders to concentrate upon the removal of the gems.

All that he wanted was a good excuse to shoot some helpless victims. The warning shot had shown the tendency of Ping Slatterly's evil brain toward killing.

Giving the command to retire, Ping began to back away from the door of the penthouse living room. With his men crouching backward with him, the malefactor engineered a steady retreat until he was standing close beside the door of the fire tower.

A growl from a henchman told Ping that the barrier was open. The way was ready for the swift escape. Ping Slatterly paused. He rasped an order for the others to stand by.

The glare from the acetylene searchlight still illuminated the entire living room. Through a peculiar, dusky haze, faces were visible in strained whiteness. Frightened guests - sullen detectives - Ping viewed them with disdain.

The gang leader's gaze turned toward Thaddeus Harmon. The millionaire, alone uncowed, wore a look of defiance. His expression aroused Ping Slatterly's complete antagonism. The gang leader sneered in the gloom.

Instructions flashed through Ping's hostile mind. He had been told to get the jewels; to make an effective getaway; and to stay his gun until its use proved necessary. Murder was Ping Slatterly's forte; he saw good occasion for it now.

Only one man among the helpless people in the room seemed capable of planning action against the crooks. That one was Thaddeus Harmon. Why not eliminate him?

In moments of quick thought, Ping saw the advantage. To Harmon, the jewels were of prime importance; to the others, the welfare of the millionaire was the chief consideration.

If Thaddeus Harmon fell, riddled by bullets, a second before the acetylene light made its exit, the only thoughts of the remaining people would be the fear of death. That terror would persist; and when the penthouse lights returned, confusion would occur at the sight of Thaddeus Harmon's slain body.

With cool deliberation, the evil gang leader raised his revolver. Ready to loose unexpected death, he held the brilliant lantern steadily in his left hand, taking aim with the weapon in his right.

"Hold it," growled Ping to his clustered companions. "Wait until I cut loose with this smoke wagon. Then we'll scam."

With final deliberation, Ping Slatterly belittled the consequences. He could explain matters to his associates. Murder did not matter, so long as the robbery had been completed. Success would stifle criticism.

Thaddeus Harmon's life was hanging in the balance. The crime of death was to follow lawless entry and theft. Ping Slatterly gloated as he prepared to slay the helpless millionaire. One minute more; then the enveloping shroud of the black hush would close upon a scene of murder!

CHAPTER X. SHOTS FROM THE SHAFT

PING SLATTERLY'S powerful light had carved a beam through the blackness that pervaded the penthouse. The awesome pall of the black hush had not, however, been dispelled elsewhere. Within the elevator that was bringing guests upward, a solid block of impenetrable gloom had struck with amazing power.

The car had come to a stop midway between two floors. The startled gasps of the passengers had died upon frightened lips. After the first seconds of astonishment, a muffled terror had gripped quivering hearts.

Among those passengers, so suddenly invisible to each other, was one to whom the coming of blackness had brought no awe. This person was the unexpected guest whom Thaddeus Harmon had been so eager to welcome; namely, Lamont Cranston.

Within the darkness of the elevator, Cranston's first action was to press his hands against the interior wall of the car. Probing fingers found a crevice. They wedged a metal implement into it.

A hushed click in the gloom was unnoticed by the terrified passengers, who were mumbling incoherent comments to each other. The side of the car, when it came slowly inward, disturbed no one.

The Shadow, working in the darkness, had opened the emergency door in the side of the car. This barrier was designed for the removal of passengers from one elevator to another. At present, it was useless for this purpose; there had been no opportunity to bring a second car up alongside the stalled lift.

The Shadow, however, used the opening for another purpose. His invisible form slid through the unlocked side of the car. The door closed and clicked behind him as he clung to the outside of the elevator. Then, with calm precision, he clutched the front wall of the shaft, and raised his long body upward.

While Ping Slatterly and his men were effecting the robbery in the penthouse, The Shadow, silent and unknown, was ascending the interior of the elevator shaft, fighting his way upward through the deep gloom of the all-pervading hush of blackness!

Strangely, the progress of this invisible being was timed with Ping Slatterly's actions. At the very moment when the gang leader paused with his men at the open door of the fire tower, the hand of The Shadow clutched the door of the elevator shaft on the penthouse level!

While Ping was giving his final orders, The Shadow's hands were working with the barrier. The heavy door moved slowly open. The gleam of the acetylene light greeted The Shadow's eyes!

THE door of the shaft was outside the range of Slatterly's special searchlight. The thick gloom of the black hush covered all of The Shadow's actions. Ping Slatterly could not see the phantom form emerging through the door of the shaft; nor could The Shadow observe Ping's outline behind the glare of the acetylene lantern.

Nevertheless, The Shadow's actions were identical with those of the gang leader. While Ping Slatterly was drawing and leveling his revolver, the hand of The Shadow was bringing forth an automatic, to handle it with deadly aim!

Each had a different target. Ping Slatterly's objective was Thaddeus Harmon; The Shadow's was the gleaming lantern that hung from Ping Slatterly's left fist!

Trigger fingers poised, unknown to each other. A man's life was momentarily at stake. In that tense moment of decision, the chances seemed equal that Ping or The Shadow would fire first.

One element of mental reaction alone decided the result. Ping Slatterly, confident and firm in the belief that Thaddeus Harmon was a helpless victim, let his finger linger. The Shadow, knowing that the cowed group in the living room were at the mercy of lawless invaders, did not pause.

A shot rang out in the darkness. The powerful roar of an automatic forced its mighty sound through the repressing gloom. With that shot came a metallic crash as The Shadow's bullet shattered the lantern in Ping Slatterly's hand!

The lantern was extinguished. Down came the pall of the black hush, like a dropping cloud of ghostly darkness. A second shot broke the tension. The Shadow delivered a pot shot in the direction of his first. This time he had no target, but his aim was limited to the small area by the fire-tower door.

Instinctively, the people in the living room scrambled for safety. They had lost their awe of the black hush in face of the gunfire menace. Ping Slatterly and his gangsters began a frenzied attack with their revolvers as they clustered toward the exit.

Smudgy flashes of flame from gangster revolvers gave The Shadow the targets that he needed. Each spurt from the fire-tower door gave The Shadow a new opportunity. With each burst of his automatic, he dropped back into the shaft, only to emerge for a new response.

Shots came from the living room. The detectives were crawling forward to action. The Shadow was forced to stay his fire.

The elevator door closed shut; bullets battered against it. The sleuths, not knowing from whence aid had come, were firing toward the elevators as well as the fire tower.

HAD the detectives not intervened, The Shadow, by his skillful tactics, might well have stayed the flight of the gangsters. The new turn of events, however, compelled him to withhold his fire. With no new shots coming from the elevators, the detectives directed all their efforts toward the corner exit.

Coming through the darkness, firing as they advanced, they stumbled over prostrate forms. Then the heavy door pressed shut. The sleuths beat vainly at the barricade. The gangsters had fled, leaving some of their companions on the floor.

A revolver spurted from a wounded gangster's fist. It brought a frenzied response from the detectives' guns. Fearing stabbing bullets from the floor, the sleuths emptied their revolvers.

Who had escaped? Who remained? Where were the jewels? These were questions that the gloom withheld. Then, one prowling detective made an accidental discovery as he stumbled over an object on the floor.

The jewel bag!

The sleuth's blurring cry came to his comrades' ears. They gathered round about him, clutching at the bag

to make sure it had been recovered.

Flashlights were still useless. Matches glimmered feebly and cast an insufficient glare. In the confusion, the elevator door was forgotten. No one could hear its muffled opening. Obscured in the total darkness, The Shadow arose from the floor and closed the door behind him.

His form moved silently into the living room. There, when the lights came on, he would be among the guests.

Let the detectives blunder on; there was no need to aid them now. Some of the mobsters had escaped, but The Shadow knew that their purpose had been thwarted.

Soon the black hush would lift. Then, amid restored light, the result of The Shadow's might would be revealed!

CHAPTER XI. THE HUSH LIFTS

"ONE minute longer."

The voice of Hector Fawcett was speaking in the corner office of the suite in the Judruth Tower. Ninety-three stories above the street, the president of the Climax Corp. was staring from the opened window.

The room was dark, save for the slight glimmer of chromium-plated apparatus close beside him. The strange machine from the storeroom was in use. A breathing sound denoted the presence of another man at the control switch.

The lamp-like portion of the odd mechanism was turned at a downward angle. From it extended a conical widening beam like the ray of a powerful searchlight. But this shaft was different from any projected illumination.

Instead of light, the machine was focusing blackness downward toward the city! Through the dim glow that showed from the lights of Manhattan, a shaft of complete darkness was spreading its mysterious ray!

Just as the glare of a searchlight might carve through the night and spread a circle of bright illumination upon its objective, so did this amazing beam do its work in direct opposition. The lights of buildings were glimmering below, but the spot where the black ray ended was totally dark.

Differing from among neighboring structures, the entire surface of the apartment house beside the old Windsor Theater was blotted out from view!

Focused darkness - a beam of night - black light! This was the power that was in operation tonight. It was the force that had laid the strange lull of the black hush throughout Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse!

"Good work - Hobbs -"

Hector Fawcett chuckled as he paused upon the name by which he had addressed his companion. There was significance in Fawcett's tone. It indicated understanding.

Only these two men were witnessing the distant effect of the strange demonstration of new science. From their towering vantage point, they were creating a mysterious result.

One edifice in Manhattan was blackened; not only was it in total darkness, but the tremendous force of

this gloom-projecting beam had also wreaked temporary havoc with all electrical equipment in its path.

Hector Fawcett consulted the luminous dial of his wrist watch. Time was up. The man lingered, however, to enjoy a few more seconds of this sight which intrigued him. Fawcett's eye followed the spreading wedge of darkness; it dwelt approvingly on the splotch of blackness that indicated the position of the hushed apartment house. Then, in a regretful tone, the corporation president gave the final order to the man at the controls.

"Time's up."

The man by the machine pressed a lever.

The effect was magical. The black beam disappeared. Where complete obliteration had marked the presence of a building, a host of twinkling lights sprang into being.

BELOW the indirect glow of the great city, the outline of Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse showed atop the apartment building. Windows shone, indicating the position of the living room. Hector Fawcett chuckled.

He had seen this phenomenon before. With his same companion, the man whom he addressed as Hobbs, he had observed the effect of the black beam upon the Olympia Hotel. Once again, a barrage of darkness had been laid and lifted so that a time space for swift and effective crime might be created!

There was confidence in Hector Fawcett's chuckle. It was answered by a pleased mumble from Hobbs. Both men knew the all-pervading force of the power that they had loosed. Projected on a perfectly arranged schedule, the black hush had given full opportunity to men of crime.

Gleeful thoughts were humming through Hector Fawcett's cunning brain. He was inspired by the surety of evil now accomplished; he was considering the confusion that must surely reign in the place from which gems valued at half a million had been stolen.

THE scene in the penthouse was, however, quite different from the mental picture which Hector Fawcett had created. The restoration of the lights came with amazing suddenness. Blackness; then dazzling illumination.

Blinking, wondering eyes of frightened guests were staring at the strange results which had occurred in Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse.

People were spread all about; in corners, behind chairs, in other spots of safety. But the guests paid no attention to each other. The place of interest was the corridor outside the living room. There lay the results of unwanted crime.

The bodies of two gunmen were huddled upon the floor. Both men were dead. The Shadow's bullets had brought them down amid the darkness. The detectives, fearing that the men were still in ambush, had riddled them with shots.

Two sleuths were still pounding at the closed door of the fire tower. The other two were crouched upon the floor, grasping the bag which had fallen from the hand of the robber who had held it.

Thaddeus Harmon sprang forward with a cry of delight. He knew that his precious jewels had been saved. The other guests, relieved in turn, were crowding close behind him.

The telephone began to ring. The pulled alarm switch was functioning now. Tiny lights flickered by the elevator shaft. The stalled car had resumed its progress. The metal door opened, and the delayed guests

surged forth, pleased at their release from bondage.

Amid the chaos, a tall, dignified gentleman stepped calmly across the corridor and joined the cluster of people who had come from the elevator. Thaddeus Harmon, guiding the detectives back into the living room, jostled against his new group of guests. Turning, he spied Lamont Cranston; for it was he who had just joined the others from the elevator.

Singling Cranston as the most important of the newcomers, Harmon extended a hand in greeting and began a series of explanations. Cranston and the others who had been in the elevator listened with intense interest.

"Burglars!" exclaimed Harmon. "They must have done something to the electrical equipment. They threw out everything - lights, telephone, alarm!

"They were getting away with my collection of gems! Fortunately, I had detectives on hand. My men were afraid to fire, for fear of bringing a reprisal. But when the burglars started to shoot of their own accord, our detectives entered into it.

"We landed two of the crooks. The rest managed to escape. It was wonderful work! Wonderful! The criminals were forced to drop the bag in which they had the jewels. The ones that eluded us fled down the fire tower."

"CONGRATULATIONS, Mr. Harmon," remarked Lamont Cranston, in a quiet tone. "Your detectives are to be commended. We were unfortunately unable to assist. We were stranded in the elevator a few floors below -"

"It is well that you were not here," observed Harmon seriously. "The situation was very dangerous. You were fortunate not to be present, Mr. Cranston."

The faint trace of a smile appeared upon Lamont Cranston's thin lips as Thaddeus Harmon moved away. Little did Harmon realize that he had been talking to the one person whose timely stroke had saved a fortune.

Well had The Shadow concealed his hand tonight. As for the detectives, their presence was a matter of regret. Without their interference, The Shadow might have gained a complete triumph over Ping Slatterly and his mobsmen.

The Shadow, master of darkness, had used the black hush to his own advantage. It had been the covering shroud from which he had brought down two desperate crooks - one of them the jewel carrier. Now, as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow strolled to the spot where the bodies lay.

He studied the faces of the dead gangsters. He recognized immediately that neither was Ping Slatterly. The leader was among those who had escaped.

The menace of new crime still loomed in full intensity, for Ping Slatterly was unquestionably the only one of tonight's invaders who could be regarded as a cogwheel in the schemes of those who controlled the weird black hush.

LAMONT CRANSTON joined the people in the living room. The jewels were back in their cabinet. Guests, still quivering from excitement, were gradually regaining their composure. Lamont Cranston idled while the confusion died away.

Time drifted by; at last, the door of an elevator opened and a stocky, swarthy-faced man stepped forth. One of the private detectives noticed him and went to greet him. He brought the arrival to Thaddeus

Harmon.

"Detective Cardona, from headquarters," was the announcement.

Thaddeus Harmon shook hands with the star sleuth. Cardona began a questioning. He turned to men who were with him and sent them to investigate the fire tower. He called downstairs and ordered the manager of the apartment up to the penthouse.

Only a few guests still remained when Cardona had completed his investigation. The star detective, about to leave, paused to speak with Thaddeus Harmon.

"This shows you how crooks work," vouchsafed Cardona. "A couple of nights ago, some gangsters tried to put Goldy Tancred on the spot. They managed to get at the main switch in the Olympia Hotel. Then they bungled by killing the wrong men.

"Now here comes another gang that's out for burglary. They heard about the stunt at the Olympia. They knew we hadn't spotted anybody monkeying with the switch. So they tried the same gag when they came after your jewels."

"But the telephone - the alarm" - Harmon's reply was insistent. "They managed to eliminate those, also -"

"They were just more thorough, that's all," interposed Cardona. "We've gone over the whole works; we're going to make another electrical inspection. We'll find out -"

A puzzled frown appeared upon the detective's brow. To Cardona's ears had come a strange, mysterious sound - a whispered echo from the past. The sibilant note of a faint laugh - a mirthful tone that the detective recognized.

The laugh of The Shadow!

What did it mean? Cardona knew that laugh. He had heard it under strange circumstances. He knew that it meant doom to crooks; that it had intervened more than once in his own behalf. Whence had the laugh come?

Cardona turned quickly. He half expected to see the sinister shape of a tall, black-garbed being. He stared at the walls - at the floor - almost believing that The Shadow would materialize from nowhere.

But the only person whom Cardona noted was a dignified man who was standing a few paces away. Cardona glanced at this person's face. The detective had never seen the visage of The Shadow, but he did know the power of The Shadow's eyes.

No, this man could not be The Shadow. Cranston's gaze was mild, despite its steadiness. Cardona shrugged his shoulders as he turned away and headed toward the elevator. The detective tried to convince himself that he had imagined those faint echoes of a laugh.

The effort was difficult, for as Cardona strode along, he fancied that hidden eyes were watching him. The detective did not turn; instead, he tried to forget this new effect that was disturbing him.

HAD Cardona turned; had he again studied Lamont Cranston's face, then would he have known that facts, not fancy, were at work. An amazing change had come into Lamont Cranston's eyes. Those mild orbs were burning with a weird, uncanny light.

The elevator door clanged behind Joe Cardona. Lamont Cranston stood alone by the door of Thaddeus Harmon's living room. A soft laugh came from thin, unmoving lips. Its whispered echoes were an eerie

aftermath to that stirring hush which had so recently pervaded his penthouse.

There was knowledge in The Shadow's laugh. The strange mockery that had derided Cardona's decision was something that spoke of higher deduction. By hand, The Shadow had thwarted crime; by brain, he was seeking an explanation of the protection which had so effectively aided the burglars up to the time of his arrival.

Where Cardona had overlooked the minor facts, The Shadow, in the guise of Lamont Cranston, had studied clues. He had heard one of the private detectives commenting upon the fact that his flashlight had failed to function in the darkness.

The sleuth, however, had forgotten the matter as promptly as Cardona had disregarded the insufficiency of his own flashlight on the night at the Olympia Hotel.

To The Shadow, this was an important clue. It brought him the knowledge that he needed. The finger of The Shadow was on the throbbing pulse of mystery. Inspections of the electrical equipment in the apartment building would be useless.

The Shadow knew that some blanketing force had counteracted all electric devices during the invasion of crime. He had felt the lull of the black hush; he had detected in it a strange significance of the unknown.

To find the mysterious, scientific power that had produced the unaccountable phenomenon was the mission that lay ahead. The Shadow knew that the source of crime must lie in the secret of the black hush!

That weird force had lifted, but it was due to fall again. Not here, where crime had failed, but at a new spot where its menacing power would cover the perpetration of another lawless outrage.

Wherever the black hush might strike next, there must The Shadow be to meet it.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XII. NEW ORDERS

"PING'S outside."

"Show him in, Curry."

Goldy Tancred's teeth were glittering when he gave the order, but it was not a smile that displayed those shining molars. An evil scowl showed on the big shot's face when Ping Slatterly entered.

"Well?" questioned Goldy harshly.

"Things went flooey," growled Ping. "That's all. It wasn't my fault, Goldy. It was too tough a job."

"Maybe you weren't tough enough to spring it!" rasped Goldy. "Did you try to figure it out from that angle?"

"It was all in the bag, Goldy," protested Ping. "All in the bag -"

"But you left the bag there, eh?" interposed the big shot, with a sarcastic leer.

"I didn't leave it," declared Ping. "Somebody winged Goofy Zelleno. He had the bag in his mitt. I thought he had scrambled. Some dick plugged the light. Then we had to dive out in the dark."

"So that's that," commented Goldy. "Well, I'm giving you a break, Ping. You've got the mob all set - so you can do a new job tomorrow night."

"Sure thing."

Goldy Tancred produced a sheet of paper from the jacket of his showy dressing gown. He unfolded the paper and handed it to Ping Slatterly.

"Read it over," ordered the big shot. "That gives you the whole layout of the new job"

Ping Slatterly studied the document. A slow grin appeared upon his ugly lips. He finished his perusal and gave the paper back to its owner.

"Say, Goldy," he exclaimed. "that's a real lay. The New City Bank -"

Ping's voice stopped as the gang leader caught a scowl on Goldy Tancred's face. The big shot sneered contemptuously. Bewildered, Ping looked for an explanation of the action.

"Smart, aren't you?" quizzed Goldy. "Why do you think I gave you this written layout? I'll tell you why - because I didn't want you to open your mouth about it. The first thing that you do is begin to talk."

"I didn't get the idea," responded Ping, in a sullen tone. "You always used to talk about what you wanted done."

"Not any more, Ping."

Wearing a cryptic grin, Goldy Tancred struck a match and ignited the paper which bore the plans for the next crime. He let the sheet burn nearly to his fingertips; then blew out the flame and let the ashes drop with the charred remainder into a metal wastebasket.

"There's been some double-crossing around here," remarked Goldy. "I don't know who's responsible for it, but I can show you the result. Come here."

HE led this visitor to the corner by the window. The bookcase had been drawn a few feet away from the end wall. Goldy pointed to the half of a rubber ball, which was adhering to the wall like a suction cup.

"What is it?" questioned Ping Slatterly.

Goldy Tancred held his finger to his lips. Ping nodded that he understood the command for silence. Goldy pulled the rubber hemisphere from the wall, and revealed the microphone attachment. He covered the apparatus with the improvised muffler, and pressed the half ball so it stayed in place again.

"A dictograph," declared Goldy "It's been here a couple of days at least. That's why I'm playing mum. Just to get in the habit. They can't hear anything over the line since I covered it up with the silencer I invented."

"A good stunt," commended Ping. "But say, Goldy - who put that thing in here - and where does it go?"

"That's the trouble," said the big shot. "It's got me guessing, Ping. I figured maybe it was some gag Cardona worked up - just to see if he could find out who was after me. But when I traced the line, what do you think I found?"

"Somebody at the other end?"

"No," snarled Goldy. "If there had been, it would have been too bad for the guy. It's smarter than that,

Ping. This thing is hooked up to a telephone in an empty apartment. I can't trace it from there on."

"Why didn't you rip it out?" queried Ping.

"And let the guy know I'm wise?" scoffed Goldy. "No, sir. I keep it covered up, except when I talk with Curry once in a while. Then I take the lid off; if anybody is listening, they don't hear anything important. Curry was the one who found the thing."

"How?"

"Happened to be shifting the bookcase. Spotted the hook-up. Now, listen, Ping. You've got your orders. You remember what I showed you on that paper. Be ready; that's all. Lay low, until the right time. I've got the rest fixed."

Ping nodded.

"What's more," added the big shot, "I don't want you to take any chances coming in here. Cardona is still squawking that there must be somebody trying to get me - and he thinks it's the same bozo who bumped off those two electrical engineers at the Olympia.

"It wouldn't be funny, would it, if he spotted you around here? He might think you were the bird he wanted and in a way, he'd be right. You never were after me; but that wouldn't matter if Cardona suspected you of that double killing -"

"Say" - Ping's interruption came as a protest - "what's the use of goin' back to that, Goldy? I thought you said that we were goin' to keep mum around here."

"The dictograph is covered," smiled Goldy. "Nevertheless, you're right about it, Ping. I'm glad I worried you some - it won't do you any harm. That's all. You know the lay. Do your fadeout."

Ping Slatterly laughed and strode toward the door. Curry met him there, and went along with him to the usual route on the floor below.

Goldy Tancred picked out a comfortable chair and sat down to light a cigarette. While puffing away, he looked up to see Bowser Riggins at the door.

The bodyguard nudged his thumb toward the bookcase. Goldy laughed and nodded.

"Got it muffled," he said. "Pull off the cap, Bowser. Then we'll talk a lot of foolishness, and let them listen in to nothing."

THE bodyguard went to the corner and removed the rubber hemisphere. He started chatting with Goldy and the big shot responded. None of their talk had any bearing upon current crime. Goldy seemed to enjoy the farce of providing a distant listener with useless information.

Curry appeared at the door. He made a gesture that indicated a new visitor. Goldy raised his eyebrows, as though questioning Curry about the importance of the person outside.

"It's the reporter," explained the servant. "You know the one I mean - this fellow Burke, from the Classic."

"Show him in," ordered Goldy. "No - just a minute, Curry."

While the servant paused, Goldy signaled to Bowser to again cover the apparatus on the wall. The big shot had decided that some turn of the reporter's conversation might prove troublesome. Goldy never

placed too much confidence in any newspaperman.

CHAPTER XIII. THE SHADOW SPEAKS

"HELLO, Burke," greeted Goldy Tancred, when the reporter appeared. "Why the visit? Anything new?"

"Nothing new," returned the reporter. "That's why I'm here."

"Yeah?" laughed Goldy. "Well, you've came to the wrong place. I told you all I knew the other night."

"Listen, Goldy" - Clyde spoke in a confidential tone as he drew up a chair - "I've been talking to Cardona - sounding him out a bit - on the subject of that list you said he had."

"That's a hot idea, Burke," remarked Goldy. "Cardona won't tell you what he thinks, so you come around to me. You're working in circles. Trying to pump me all over again, trying to make a lot of trouble."

"Not at all," returned the reporter who served as The Shadow's agent. "Figure it this way, Goldy. I get around places; and I hear a lot of things that Cardona doesn't. All right. If somebody is trying to put you on the spot, it won't hurt for me to find it out, will it?"

"I get the idea," said Goldy, as his smile became unpleasant. "You want me to take you on as a stool pigeon. Is that it? Fine work for a newspaper reporter!"

"Put it that way if you want," returned Burke. "Just the same, it's only part of my job. Look here, Goldy; if I can spot the fellow who killed Reardon and Furness, it will be a scoop for the Classic. It won't do you any harm; maybe it will do you some good."

"Nothing doing," growled Goldy. "I'm out of it - see? That's all I've got to say."

The finality of the big shot's tone indicated that the interview was ended. Clyde Burke smiled and shrugged his shoulders. He arose and turned toward the door.

"So long," said Goldy, resuming his affable tone. "That means you, too, Bowser. Scram. I've seen enough of you tonight."

The bodyguard joined Clyde Burke, but as he strolled to the door, Bowser caught a glimpse of Goldy Tancred's right hand. The big shot holding his first two fingers crossed.

Bowser knew the meaning of the signal. He was to repeat it at the door of the hotel lobby. Seen by a lurker across the street, it was a sign that Burke should be followed until further orders.

Something in the reporter's manner had excited Goldy's suspicion. Perhaps it was the fact that Burke, while conversing, had stared directly across the room toward the bookcase. At any rate, Goldy was inclined to consider Burke as a menace. The big shot picked up a telephone, called a number, and conducted a short conversation with a party at the other end.

THERE was reason for the big shot's suspicion. Clyde Burke had overplayed his part tonight. He had come here with a purpose other than his interview. As an agent of The Shadow, he had been sent to study Goldy Tancred's living room.

It was Clyde Burke who had informed The Shadow of the convenient bookcase by the window wall. The Shadow, in turn, had installed the dictograph. Burbank, however, had reported poor results.

The hidden listener had noted interruptions in various conversations. This had been due to Goldy's system of capping the microphone and uncovering it at intervals. Even tonight, Bowser Riggins had not covered the mechanism until after Clyde Burke had arrived. Therefore the voice of the reporter had not passed over the wire despite the fact that he had been definitely admitted to Goldy's living room.

Such incidents during the past days had led Burbank to believe that the apparatus had been discovered. The hidden contact man had forwarded that information to The Shadow; in return, he had been instructed to send Burke to investigate.

Had Goldy Tancred known that Clyde Burke was an agent of The Shadow, he would have taken prompt action to eliminate the inquisitive reporter.

The big shot, however, had taken a different avenue of thought. Burke's mention of Cardona had led Goldy to believe that the reporter might be working with the star detective. Cardona, wise and taciturn, was the type of sleuth who would employ a dictograph in his detecting work.

The telephone bell rang after Burke's departure. Goldy Tancred picked up the receiver and heard the voice of Hector Fawcett. With the dictograph covered, Goldy was free to speak, but he was sparing and cautious in his remarks. He passed off last night's failure, as he stressed the importance of tomorrow's action.

"Hobbs is ready. He will be here."

It was not long before a creeping splotch of blackness appeared upon the floor beside the window.

Once again The Shadow was paying a secret visit to Goldy Tancred's abode. The blackness stretched and wavered; above it, materializing beside the curtain, appeared the tall, phantom form in black.

Silently, The Shadow moved toward the wall beside the bookcase. His sharp eyes spied the improvised rubber cap. His hidden lips emitted a sibilant, whispered laugh.

Turning, The Shadow noted a radiator on the opposite side of the window ledge. Going to the spot, The Shadow stooped and attached another microphone. He ran a thin, invisible wire along the base of the wall, then up behind the draped curtain near the bookcase.

Wedging the original wire into a crack beside the window ledge. The Shadow connected the new one, guiding his operation by occasional flashes of his tiny light. When he had finished, he stepped back toward the radiator and spoke in a low, hushed voice.

"Connection completed," announced The Shadow's monotone. "Burke off duty until recalled."

Those words went to Burbank. They were followed by The Shadow's laugh.

The Shadow had come here a second time to cunningly counteract Goldy Tancred's accidental discovery of the original microphone. The first connection was ended. Goldy, fully confident of his capping device, would never suspect the new installation.

But The Shadow, by a simple rearrangement of the circuit, had planted a new listening apparatus. Goldy, when he talked, would be heard. Even if the big shot again went over the line, clear to the apartment below, he would not discover that neat connecting wire that came in at the crack beside the window ledge.

Nevertheless, desired contact had been lost temporarily. What had happened during the interim? Did any evidence exist that would aid The Shadow in his quest?

The tall figure glided across the room. Searching eyes missed no spot that might furnish a clue. The Shadow's gaze rested upon the wastebasket. The charred remainders of Goldy Tancred's written instructions showed within the metal container.

A black-gloved hand dipped into the wastebasket. It brought out a tiny fragment of scorched paper. The eyes spotted a portion of a written word. The same hand carefully gathered ashes, while the other hand produced a sheet of paper.

Working upon a convenient table, The Shadow laid out these remainders of Goldy Tancred's message. The ashes rested upon The Shadow's sheet. The tiny flashlight clicked. A spotted glare showed traces of writing in the ashes.

The inspection went on amid complete silence. At last the hand of The Shadow raised the sheet of paper, and let the fragments of Goldy's instructions drift back into the wastebasket. The tall figure swung toward the window. The blank paper that had served as a background slipped out of sight beneath the cloak.

A sibilant, whispered laugh - scarcely audible; yet it brought eerie echoes. That was the token of The Shadow's departure. The phantom shape merged with the darkness of the window.

Several minutes afterward, Curry entered the room. The servant noted the wastebasket and took it out for emptying.

Little did Curry suppose that a silent visitor had been in the room tonight. The servant did not realize that his delayed action of a simple duty - the emptying of the wastebasket - had enabled a powerful foe of crime to gain an inkling of Goldy Tancred's scheme.

For among the ashes in the wastebasket, The Shadow had learned broken facts concerning the next crime on the schedule. There he had read the words "New City" - the name of the bank which Ping Slatterly was to attack when the black hush fell again.

Amid the next pall of blanketing darkness, the hand of The Shadow would be present. How did the master intend to meet the sinister menace?

Only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XIV. AT HEADQUARTERS

THE next night found Detective Joe Cardona seated at his desk in headquarters. The star sleuth was going over a stack of papers which referred to the interrupted raid on Thaddeus Harmon's apartment.

Cardona looked up from his desk as a man entered. He nodded as he caught sight of Detective Sergeant Markham, the aid who had been working on this case with him. Markham took a chair; Cardona swung to face him.

"Any new clues, Joe?" questioned Markham.

"Not a thing," responded Cardona gruffly. "Nothing but a hunch" - he paused to smile - "and this hunch is based upon what happened up at Harmon's."

"What is it?"

"That the same crooks who did those killings at the Olympia were the ones who raided Harmon's."

"I thought you figured differently, Joe. You said first that it looked like one crowd had picked up the idea

from another."

"That's what I told the reporters," grinned Cardona, "and I gave them the idea I had at the time. Now, I've picked a different slant. I haven't told anyone about it yet."

"I get you." Markham caught on. "Two perfect jobs mean the same method and that connects the first with the second."

"Right." asserted Cardona.

"It sounds reasonable to me, Joe," declared Markham. "But why haven't they gone after Goldy again? That was their first objective."

"I'll tell you why," said Cardona, wagging his forefinger. "They know that Goldy is smooth. They're afraid he will get wise to them and demand a cut to keep mum. That's Goldy's racket. So they went after him first, but they're afraid to chance it again because he's laying low."

"They figure, too, that Goldy is afraid of them. Maybe he is. So they're going right ahead with a regular schedule of crime. This mess up at Harmon's was just the first job on their list. There's others coming."

"That's bad, Joe."

"Sure it's bad. That's why I'm keeping tabs on Goldy. They may take another shot at him; if they do, we'll find out who they are. At the same time, Markham, I'm letting the newspapers hold the old idea. It may help fool these smart crooks."

"Listen, Joe," said Markham suddenly, "you've given me a thought there. I was over by Goldy's apartment house last night. I saw a reporter coming out of the place. Maybe -"

"Who was he?" questioned Cardona sharply.

"Burke, the fellow on the Classic," returned Markham.

"Clyde Burke, eh?" Cardona's tone was analytical. "Say, Markham, he's been on both of these cases. Maybe he's been trying to get Goldy Tancred to talk."

"Not much chance," said the detective sergeant. "You quizzed Goldy. He claimed he told you all he knew - which wasn't much."

"Yeah, but Burke may have something."

With his final statement, Cardona reached for the telephone. He called the Classic office. He was connected with Clyde Burke. The detective requested the reporter to come to headquarters.

CLYDE BURKE arrived in Cardona's office with the air of a man who expected information. He expressed surprise when the detective began to question him.

"Sure, I was up to see Goldy," asserted Clyde. "I thought the same as you, Joe. Maybe Goldy would know who was trying to get him, and would spill it. But he was like a clam."

"All right, Burke," returned the detective. "If you run into something, let me know. It would help if I could find out who was after Goldy."

Clyde Burke departed. Detective Sergeant Markham followed a minute later. When the reporter reached the street, the sleuth was on his trail.

Off duty, with nothing more important than a quiet evening at the Classic office, Clyde Burke strolled along the street, totally unconscious of the fact that he was being trailed by the detective.

There was also another incident that Clyde failed to notice. A prowling figure was moving up the street ahead him. He had been followed from the Classic office to headquarters; now, the lurker who had trailed him was preceding him.

Detective Sergeant Markham, keeping well in back of the reporter, had no suspicion that a creature of the underworld was moving ahead of the reporter. Yet this odd condition of affairs was due to bring unexpected consequences.

The prowler neared a corner; there he stopped to greet a man who was idly waiting. Quick words passed between the two. Then, as Clyde Burke approached, the pair began a conversation. The reporter did not hear it until he had passed. He hesitated as he caught the louder words.

"He's going to get Goldy, eh?"

"Yeah - I'm meeting him down at Jerry's -"

A buzz; then, as Clyde paused to light a cigarette, he heard the mention of a street address in a disreputable neighborhood. As he flicked the match away, Clyde turned slightly and saw the backs of the men as they moved along the street.

Clyde Burke's decision was a prompt one. Like all of The Shadow's agents, the reporter was expected to use his own wits in a time of opportunity. He thought no more of the two men, he simply decided to head for the spot that they had mentioned, and see what was happening there.

As Clyde quickened his pace toward a subway entrance, Markham also increased speed. The detective sergeant was some distance behind the reporter; he had not observed that Clyde had overheard the conversation between the two idlers.

Markham simply decided that Burke must have an important destination. Tailing a newspaper reporter was a new experience for the sleuth, but under the present circumstances, Markham felt that the trail might lead somewhere.

That had been Joe Cardona's idea, and the ace detective still held to it. Back at his desk in headquarters, Cardona was smoking a cigar while he continued to pore over the accumulated data in hope of a new hunch.

Methodically, Cardona placed papers aside when the phone rang. He growled a hello into the mouthpiece. A quiet voice replied. Cardona listened.

That voice brought back recollections. Cardona was sure that he had heard it before. It was not the voice of The Shadow - a strange, sinister tone that Cardona had sometimes heard - but the calmness of this voice brought up strange connections that concerned the master of the night.

There was a reason for Cardona's impression. The ace detective was listening to the voice of Burbank, The Shadow's hidden agent. In accordance with special instructions, Burbank was telephoning detective headquarters at an exact time appointed by The Shadow.

The call finished, Cardona slammed the receiver on the hook and leaped to his feet. He bellowed to men who were in another office. They responded to his summons.

"Everybody on this job!" exclaimed Cardona, in a quick but steady voice. "We're making up a raiding

squad. We start inside of five minutes. We're going to stop a robbery at the New City Bank!"

CHAPTER XV. ON THE ELEVATED

CLYDE BURKE stopped in front of a dilapidated building. He glanced at his watch, illuminating the dial with a lighted match. It was not quite half an hour since he had left Cardona's office.

This was the destination which he had heard the men give on the street corner. Nevertheless, Clyde was not sure that he had heard aright when he had listened to the naming of the location. He had expected "Jerry's" to be some meeting spot of the underworld. Instead, he was viewing the end house of a quiet row - a structure which was bounded on one side by an alleyway.

As he glanced across the street, Clyde thought that he saw another man on the opposite side of the thoroughfare.

His eyes were right; they had glimpsed the form of Detective Sergeant Markham. But, like all quick glances, this one faded under direct surveillance. As Clyde watched closely, he could see no further trace of anyone.

Clyde moved toward the entrance of the alley way. It was darker there, he decided; less chance of being seen when the men who had talked kept their rendezvous.

It never occurred to the reporter that he had been lured to this spot; that Goldy Tancred had given instructions for henchmen to seize him, should he pay a visit to detective headquarters.

Joe Cardona's telephone call had actually been an unwitting death warrant for Clyde Burke. The reporter, in turn, had made two serious blunders. The first had been his folly in believing that two gangsters would talk over plans so close to detective headquarters. The second had been his failure to call Burbank.

Had Clyde been on duty for The Shadow, he would have communicated with the contact man. But since he was a free agent for the night, Clyde had gone out on his own. In so doing, he had deliberately placed himself beyond the sphere of The Shadow's protection - a mistake which no agent of The Shadow should have committed.

Just as Clyde moved slowly into the darkness at the side of the building, he caught a sound ahead of him. He stepped back as he raised his hands.

A MAN sprang forward from the darkness. A swift arm came downward as it swung a blackjack. Clyde did not see the blow, but he anticipated it. Swinging his own arm upward, the reporter deflected the stroke. The man's form fell upon him, and Clyde shot out to the sidewalk as he locked in a quick struggle.

This was just the beginning. Three more men scrambled from the darkness and leaped forward to the fray. Fully engaged with his one antagonist, Clyde Burke would have fared ill but for the presence of Detective Sergeant Markham across the street.

The sound of the attack, the sight of dim forms hurtling to the sidewalk - these told Markham that Burke had met with unexpected foemen. The sleuth pulled his revolver, and fired at the front of the building above the heads of the men who had emerged from the alleyway.

The effect was instantaneous. Figures scattered. The man who was fighting Clyde Burke wriggled free and dived for the shelter of the alleyway.

Markham fired again. Dodging, the gangsters drew their own revolvers and returned the shots.

Clyde Burke, prone upon the sidewalk, rolled toward the house and crouched in the shelter of some stone steps. The move was just in time. Gangster bullets spattered at the spot where the reporter had been. The mobsters were making a last effort to riddle their quarry, whom they had been ordered to kill.

Markham's shots zipped dangerously close to the scattered attackers. One bullet winged a gangster's shoulder, and the wounded man's cry brought consternation to the rest. These rats were merely paid assassins, not gorillas of a doughty caliber.

As the wounded man fled, clutching his shoulder, the others followed suit. Markham sent two shots down the alleyway as a parting thrust to the men who had disappeared in that direction; then, coming from his position of vantage, the detective sergeant hurried across the street, and reached the place where Clyde Burke was huddled.

"All right, Burke?" growled Markham.

Clyde recognized the voice, and responded as he arose from beside the steps.

"That you, Markham?" he asked. "Say - I didn't know you were tailing me. Thanks, old fellow."

"Lucky I did tail you," said Markham gruffly, as he began to reload his revolver. "Got yourself into a pickle, didn't you? What was the idea?"

"Listened in on what some gang boys had to say," replied Clyde calmly. "Heard them talking about a get-together in this neighborhood. Thought I'd find out what it was about."

"Fine idea," snorted Markham. "Well, you nearly found out too much. Come along. The gun's loaded up again. I'm going to call Joe Cardona, Burke. Maybe he'll want to talk to you after this."

"Suits me," responded Clyde, in an indifferent tone. "I was just after a story - that's all."

THEY reached a small store a block away from the spot of the short fray. Markham entered a telephone booth. Burke watched the detective sergeant phoning. He saw an excited look appear upon Markham's countenance.

Hanging up the receiver, Markham plunged from the booth and gripped Clyde Burke's arm. Without a word, he led the reporter hastily along the street. They came to an elevated station and the detective sergeant hurriedly ascended the steps, with Clyde still in tow.

The pair entered a train. The car was almost empty. Markham thrust Clyde in a corner seat, and gave a low, grim laugh.

"What's up?" panted Clyde still winded from that mad rush. "Where are you dragging me, Markham?"

"Started to tell Cardona I had you with me," Markham explained. "Before I could tell him what had happened, he gave me new instructions. He was just leaving with a raiding squad. We're going to join them - at least I am. You can hang back and watch."

"Where?" questioned Clyde eagerly.

"It's the New City Bank, Burke. Somebody's going to try to crack it tonight."

"Whew!" exclaimed Clyde.

The ejaculation masked the sudden thought that had occurred to the reporter. Was the hand of The Shadow connected with this tip-off? The mysterious master of the night had warned Cardona of other contemplated crimes in the past.

Only one station more! The train was rumbling rapidly along the elevated platform. Clyde could see that Markham was eager to join with the raiders, even though the man was maintaining a calm expression.

Then came blackness.

Without warning, every light in the elevated train was extinguished. The cars slid to a grinding stop. Halted midway between stations, they rested amid a strange silence that fell from nowhere.

Neither Clyde Burke nor Detective Sergeant Markham understood the significance of that sudden, appalling gloom. They did not realize that the mysterious power of the black hush had once again been projected upon a designated spot in the midst of teeming Manhattan!

That was a fact that only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVI. OUT OF THE VAULT

THE same pall that had stopped the train on the elevated had accomplished another purpose. It had cast its strange blackness upon the polished face of the low-storied New City Bank.

As completely as if an invisible hand had stretched forth to wipe it away, the white marble front of the strong-walled edifice had been blanked into oblivion by a powerful ray of superdarkness.

Joe Cardona and his raiding squad had not arrived in this locality. While they were still hurrying to the spot, the first stroke had come. Amid a barrage of total gloom, men of crime were advancing to attack the vault of the blotted bank.

A tremendous hush lay over this one low building. It formed perfect coverage for the unseen men who were moving up to the side of the New City Bank.

Zoom!

An explosion made the side of the bank building tremble. But even that blast which blew the door clear of its fastenings was no more than a low rumble. The blanketing effect of the hush seemed to stifle all sounds within its enveloping folds.

Mobsmen pressed forward. They were entering a building equipped with all the most modern of alarm devices, but tonight they did not fear these mechanical sentinels. Every electrical apparatus in the entire bank had gone out of order when the black hush had struck.

Watchmen?

They were powerless, too. Telephonic communication was ended. Flashlights and powerful electric lanterns would not avail. Ping Slatterly thought of that fact with relish as he ignited the strong acetylene torch which was to play so important a part in this raid.

Immune from interference, the strong gleam lighted up the interior of the bank. A watchman scurried away as gangster shots were directed toward him. With his men forming a protecting cordon to meet stray shots from the darkness, Ping Slatterly headed for the vault which he had come to crack.

THE acetylene light shone upon the vault. Ping lowered the gleam so that his safe-blowers could prepare.

This would be a job as quick as the one at the outside door.

The gang leader gave a muffled laugh. The outside explosion could not have been heard very far away due to the sound-stilling gloom. This blast would not be heard at all. It required a larger charge, but the walls of the bank would aid the black hush in its silencing power.

"Ready?"

Ping's voice had a hushed sound in the midst of that strange scene, where even the downward-turned gleam of the lantern was forced to penetrate a murky haze.

Growls of assent were the reply to Ping's question. The men moved forward. Ping Slatterly turned his lantern up to the big door of the vault. An audible gasp escaped the mob leader's thick lips.

Impelled by a power from within, the door of the vault was swinging open. As it moved wide, from the interior came a glare as forceful as the one from the lantern which Ping Slatterly carried.

Some being from within the vault was meeting the rays of the acetylene lantern with another illuminating device of the same type!

Ping Slatterly could not see the person behind that light, but the other could see him, for the light within the vault was focused with even greater power.

Moreover, the strange, unexpected intruder was able to observe Ping's gang of followers. In the misty illumination, every one of the invaders was in plain view.

The light was astonishing in itself. Blinding, it came as a terrific counteragent to Ping Slatterly's first weapon of attack. But another token of a formidable presence within the vault brought dread consternation to the gang leader and all his band of ruffians.

From the hollow interior of the vault came a sound that no man of the underworld could fail to recognize. It was a laugh that broke with rising echoes - a sinister burst of derisive mirth that seemed to shatter the spell of the black hush.

The laugh of The Shadow!

Cognizant of the plans to raid the New City Bank, knowing the hour for which the attack had been arranged, The Shadow had entered this building long before - while the bank had still been open.

Keeping in seclusion, he had managed to elude discovery by the watchman. Familiar with every ingenious contrivance of vault protection, The Shadow had worked upon that massive door, and had opened it without detection. He had chosen it as the vital spot from which he could strike against the crooks when they appeared.

The Shadow's method had proven its worth. He was here to meet the enemy. He had caught Ping Slatterly and his gangsters flat-footed.

The opening of the door; the appearance of the powerful light; the mighty laugh of The Shadow - these acts of gangdom's greatest enemy had been timed to exactitude.

MEANWHILE, unknown to Ping Slatterly and his henchmen, forces of the law were coming to this beleaguered spot. The Shadow's purpose was to meet the crooks with a surprise attack, and drive them in flight into the toils of Joe Cardona!

An amazing scene - this meeting between The Shadow and the hosts of crime. While that ringing laugh hurtled from the vault, the gang leader and his men stood like petrified figures, unmoving characters in a sordid tableau.

So had The Shadow planned; now, he acted with full precision. A shot burst from the vault. Like the first stroke which The Shadow had delivered at Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse, this one was again directed at the acetylene lantern in Slatterly's hand.

The bullet reached its gleaming target. Ping's lantern was shattered. The gang leader dropped back, unwounded by the deflected bullet.

Revolver in hand, he cried to his men to reply in kind. The Shadow's lantern made a shining bull's-eye. Behind it was The Shadow himself!

So Ping Slatterly had reasoned. The gang leader, however, had not reckoned with the wisdom of The Shadow.

That lantern was not in The Shadow's hand. It was propped upon a stack of boxes in the vault. Below it, prone upon the floor, lay The Shadow. His form was protected by a raised ledge of steel that ran along the bottom of the vault at the very front!

As Ping Slatterly pressed finger to revolver trigger, The Shadow's automatic roared. Loosing his powerful .45s, The Shadow directed one squarely toward Ping Slatterly, while the other began a sweeping motion about the semicircle of mobsmen.

Ping Slatterly fell, an oath upon his lips. The sight of their leader dropping, the spatter of bullets aimed in their direction - these were tokens that threw the mobsmen into confusion. One gangster paused to fire at the lantern in the vault. His shot went wide. He never dispatched another. Like Ping Slatterly, he crumpled as an automatic roared. The other mobsmen were scrambling to shelter. They dashed for the protection of marble walls, seeking to avoid the glare that outlined them. The Shadow's shots, quick as a warning, were intermittent as the gunmen fled.

The Shadow knew where they would go - out through the broken door - into the forces of the law that awaited them there. His task was to deal first with those who attempted resistance to his might.

Ping Slatterly - a second mobster - these had fallen. A third, turning to crouch on the verge of the area of light, fell wounded as a bullet from an automatic shattered his revolver arm. The man screamed as he dived after his companions. His hoarse cry was strangely suppressed by the blanketing hush.

Again came the laugh of The Shadow! This master fighter who struck from darkness, had beaten back the invaders by his irresistible might. Not one shot had reached that glowing lantern which gave The Shadow his advantage over his enemies. He had beaten a dozen and more men of crime to the first shots.

As the last of the defeated invaders fled from the room where Ping Slatterly lay before the opened vault, The Shadow arose from his place of protection. The light moved forward as he gripped it. The door of the vault swung shut.

The Shadow's ambush had succeeded. Now, with one automatic in his hidden right hand - a fresh weapon which had come from beneath his cloak - The Shadow moved forward in steady pursuit of the fleeing mobsmen.

The glaring acetylene headlight cut a misty swath through the smudgy gloom. Its penetrating rays,

reaching every cranny, were seen by the last of the fleeing mobsmen, now well ahead in the darkness.

The moving threat impelled every departing rat to scurry to the only exit that seemed to offer safety - that opened door which Ping Slatterly had so boldly blasted from its mighty hinges.

Watchmen, saved from destruction, still cowered in spots of safety. They did not know what had happened; they, like the fleeing mobsmen, also avoided the acetylene glare. Then, with the same suddenness with which it had appeared, The Shadow's light went out.

A triumphant laugh stirred up feeble echoes amid the awesome atmosphere of the black hush. The final whispers died away. The Shadow, lurking in the gloom, was planning his secret departure, timing it with the confusion which was due to break outside of the bank when the mobsters met the police.

Single-handed, The Shadow had brought disaster to these fiends of crime amid the pall which they had sought. Once again, the perpetrators of the black hush had been foiled!

CHAPTER XVII. THE POWER OF THE RAY

FROM the window high in the Judruth Tower, Hector Fawcett was again viewing the awesome ray that symbolized the hidden power of the black hush.

Bathed in darkness, the front of the New City Bank was a blank space among a mass of looming buildings. It was toward that single spot that Hector Fawcett was looking. In his intentness, the bespectacled man did not notice that the elevated trains were stopped.

"Time's nearly up," informed Fawcett.

"Good," came the voice of Hobbs.

"Why?" questioned Fawcett.

"Because of the elevated," was the reply. "The trains are stopped. It couldn't be helped."

Hector Fawcett laughed. He was sure that this phenomenon would add nothing to police investigations. He was thinking only of what was going on within the bank.

"Time's up," exclaimed Fawcett, glancing at his watch. "Turn off the ray."

Hobbs responded. His hand pressed the switch, Released from black bondage, the front of the New City Bank gleamed anew. Tiny trains began to move along the elevated.

IN the dwarfed cross section of Manhattan, which was suddenly restored to light, Hector Fawcett beheld odd signs of activity. He caught glimpses of tiny figures beside the bank building; he saw automobiles spurt forward. A sudden connection came to his mind.

"The police are there!" he exclaimed to Hobbs. "Those men who fled were our workers! Up the avenue - beyond the bank building -"

The man at the black-ray machine made no comment. Clicks indicated work that he was doing. The dark-faced projector was turning. Its front surface was undergoing adjustment.

"There they are!" cried Fawcett.

In the gloom of the room, the bespectacled man tried to point out a car that was speeding along the avenue. He saw it at one cross street; immediately in back of it were pursuing vehicles that flashed into

view. Fawcett thought that he could glimpse tiny figures about to wage battle.

The car turned; it took a side street, and suddenly swung into an avenue that led almost beneath the Judruth Tower.

The situation was plain now. The fleeing car was closely followed. Fawcett could see men on the running boards of police cars, firing as they chased.

Click!

The black ray was on again. Now its beam was slender, tapering out to a comparatively small circle. Focused almost directly downward, Hobbs threw the shaft directly into the avenue behind the carload of escaping gangsters.

The pursuers shot into the gloom. Their cars did not reappear. Hobbs wavered the circle slowly forward, taking account of the momentum which the cars had acquired. Hector Fawcett laughed.

The new maneuver had paralyzed the pursuing police. Their cars were blotted out by darkness. Motors stalled, lights gone, the chase could not be continued!

The fleeing gangsters were gaining blocks, but a new menace to their flight had now appeared. They were coming to an important crossing. Swinging in behind from side streets were new pursuers, and from both directions on the wide cross street, other cars were converging!

It was too late now! Fawcett uttered an oath - for he fancied that more than men were in those cars. He did not know that the fleeing gangsters had failed to make their haul from the coffers of the New City Bank.

The mobsters would be captured surely, Fawcett thought, for cars were closing in ahead and from the rear. He expected Hobbs to widen the ray; to blanket the entire area with blackness, that the fleeing men might leave the car and run.

Fawcett added a groan to his oath as he saw that the clear avenue traffic was about to be interrupted by the cross-town flow. Total darkness would be the only resort now.

HOBBS did the unexpected. The circle of his ray swept forward with amazing speed, a veritable lever wielded from a distance of a thousand feet. It freed the stranded police cars that were now far behind. It stopped suddenly upon the important intersection toward which the gangster car was fleeing.

Spreading, the ray caught the cross traffic just as it was starting. No blocking car could reach the intersection.

It was a perfect maneuver, but Fawcett feared that it was futile. The police were stopped on the cross street, but the fleeing car was heading directly into the black circle with a trio of pursuers gaining on it, less than half a block behind! Those new chasers had come in from side streets!

Click!

Just as the gangster car reached the edge of the black circle, the huge spot disappeared. Traveling at a mile-a-minute clip, the fleeing automobile shot across the cleared intersection.

Click!

Hobbs resumed the ray. Clear of the further arc, the escaping car kept on - but the intersection was again

bathed in blackness, which enveloped the police cars as they came into the range!

"Great work! Great work!" cried Fawcett. "Keep them there! They can't follow now!"

"Not too long," decide Hobbs.

The gangsters had gained half a dozen blocks. Both watchers saw the car swerve into a side street.

Hobbs pressed the switch. The black hush was ended at the intersection. It had been a matter of broken minutes. The police chase had begun anew, but now the law would have to guess which direction the escaped gangsters had disappeared.

The Shadow had won his fight tonight. He had driven back a horde of criminals. He had defeated the scheme of cunning brains. A handful of the thwarted raiders had escaped; but that fact marked an empty attainment for those who wielded the strange black ray.

It was the belief that Ping Slatterly was fleeing with a mass of stolen wealth that had caused Hector Fawcett's anxiety to aid the speeding gangsters. Had Fawcett known that those in flight were traveling empty-handed without the leader, he would have ordered Hobbs to let them fall into the hands of the police.

Ping Slatterly was the only one who counted. He, alone, had controlled his henchmen. None of the underlings possessed an inkling regarding the source of the black hush. Ping's contact with Goldy Tancred had been guarded, even from his own men.

Thus, The Shadow, by his strategy, had not only thwarted the power of the black hush. He had also caused the hidden malefactors - Fawcett and Hobbs - to take drastic action which had not been contemplated.

With their moving barrage of blackness, the men in the Judruth Tower had revealed new clues which would serve The Shadow well in his unceasing efforts to learn the source of the weird black hush!

The power of the ray had been demonstrated in a new way, but it had gained nothing for the men behind it.

CHAPTER XVIII. FACTS FOR THE SHADOW

AT noon the following day, a young man appeared in the outer office of Rutledge Mann's suite. The stenographer recognized the visitor. She entered the inner office, and announced that Mr. Vincent was calling.

Mann ordered the girl to tell Vincent to enter.

This had not been the first conference between these two agents of The Shadow. While The Shadow had been battling against the crooks who worked with the black hush, Rutledge Mann and Harry Vincent had been cooperating in an effort to gain information that concerned Richard Reardon and Roland Furness, the electrical engineers slain at the Olympia Hotel.

To date, they had made progress. Rutledge Mann, by methodical research, had learned a pointed fact concerning the past of Roland Furness. In his senior year at college, Furness had been expelled with his roommate, Don Chalvers. The young men had completed their education elsewhere.

The cause of the expulsion, Mann had discovered, was due to repeated experiments in which the roommates had indulged. On several occasions, they had thrown the electrical equipment of the

dormitories into disrepair. This had led the college authorities to request them to continue their studies at another institution.

Roland Furness was dead. He had met his end amid a strange blackness which was significant, for it linked his demise with his expulsion from college.

Rutledge Mann had forwarded these facts to The Shadow. He had been ordered to locate Don Chalvers.

This had proven difficult. Mann had learned that Chalvers owned a small, isolated estate in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Independent because of a legacy, the young engineer preferred travel to seclusion in his home among the wooded hills.

Aided by Harry Vincent's efforts, Mann had traced Chalvers to New York City. The whereabouts of Dan Chalvers had been left for Harry to learn. It was concerning this matter that Harry had come to Mann's office today. The investment broker was sure that the active agent had gained new information. This proved to be the case.

"I've located him," announced Harry, when Mann had put his clippings aside.

"You mean Chalvers," returned Mann, voicing his words as an agreement.

"Yes," asserted Harry. "He has an apartment on Fifty-fourth Street. He's there occasionally; and I caught up with him at a Broadway night club" - Harry smiled - "at two o'clock this morning."

"What then?"

"I introduced myself. Made friends. Pretended to have met him before. Helped him get home to his apartment. I'm due to drop in there this evening."

Methodical, Rutledge Mann required precise descriptive data pertaining to Don Chalvers. Gazing thoughtfully at Harry Vincent, the investment broker put forward careful questions.

"What reaction did Chalvers show when you introduced yourself?" asked Mann.

"He seemed a bit surprised," declared Harry. "Then he became very friendly."

"Did he take your word for it that you were an old acquaintance?"

"Yes. After a short befuddlement, he felt sure that he remembered me. He remarked that he had been many places, and had met many people. He said that he could remember faces, but not names."

"Where did you say that you had met him?"

"In Bermuda. Our data showed that he had made several trips there."

"Your visit tonight," observed Mann thoughtfully. "Do you think that it will bring up any complications?"

"Not a chance," laughed Harry. "It will be a get-acquainted affair. My only hope is that Chalvers will mention Furness. They were roommates at college, and close friends after that."

"All right," decided Mann. "I'll call you later at the Metrolite."

WHEN Harry Vincent had left, Rutledge Mann made inked notations, and sealed them in an envelope. He turned to his clippings.

Today's news stories told of the police rescue at the New City Bank. Led by the intrepid Joe Cardona, a squad of policemen and detectives had arrived in time to prevent the cracking of the vault.

They had driven back several of the mobsters who were confused in the darkness. The restoration of light had caught these lawless men just within the side door of the bank. Cardona, leading the advance, had opened fire.

By force of superior numbers, the officers had quickly won the engagement. Among dead and wounded mobsters who had staggered in all directions, the police had discovered one slain man whom they were sure had headed the expedition.

This was Ping Slatterly.

The fact that the electrical equipment of the New City Bank had been put out of order was an important item in the story. The newspapers also stressed the fact that some marauders had managed to extinguish the street lights at an important intersection, thus enabling the mobsters to escape.

In the rapidity of events at that point, the drivers of pursuing cars had scarcely realized the importance of the other unusual phenomena which had occurred. They spoke of stalled cars; of extinguished headlights; of blanketing gloom. But there was much that they made no effort to explain.

It was known now, however, that some peculiar form of electrical disturbing power had been utilized, but the newspapers, ringing with the reports of how the major criminals had been caught, gave little attention to the details of the unsuccessful pursuit.

Joe Cardona was the hero. Inasmuch as he had been at the bank itself, the ace detective was naturally concerned with the success of the police raid. He stated emphatically that the death of Ping Slatterly must mark the end of these odd crimes which had involved the extinguishing of lights in buildings.

Another item went into Mann's envelope. This pertained to a tie-up on the elevated, which had occurred on the preceding evening. Newspapers had not connected this with the foiled bank robbery. But, along with his clippings, Mann enclosed a statement from Clyde Burke.

The quick-witted reporter had gained a theory which he had not mentioned at the Classic office. Traveling with Detective Sergeant Markham, almost at the spot where the bank had been attacked, Clyde was sure that the ended service on the elevated line possessed a definite significance.

Rutledge Mann sealed the envelope and left his office. He told the stenographer that he would return after lunch. On the street, the investment broker took a taxicab to Twenty-third Street.

Entering the old, dilapidated building, Mann ascended to the blind office which bore the name of the mythical Jonas. He returned to the street and continued on to his club for luncheon.

It was later in the afternoon when Rutledge Mann, back in his office, received a letter which had been thrust through the mail chute. He opened the missive after the stenographer had brought it to him. Inked coded words disappeared following the insurance broker's perusal.

Rutledge Mann smiled wanly as he picked up the telephone and called the Metrolite Hotel.

Instructions had arrived from The Shadow. Harry Vincent was to visit Don Chalvers tonight.

CHAPTER XIX. GOLDY EMPLOYS STRATEGY

"CALL for you, Burke."

Clyde Burke arose from his typewriter in the Classic office. At the telephone he recognized the steady voice of Detective Joe Cardona.

"Want a story Burke?"

"Sure thing, Joe."

"Meet me at Goldy Tancred's, in fifteen minutes."

"Goldy Tancred's! What's up Joe?"

"You'll find out when you get there. I'm giving you a break because I want to know more about what happened to you last night. Markham is coming."

Leaving the Classic office, Burke stopped at a telephone booth on the ground floor. He called Burbank to inform him of this new development. He arranged to call again as soon as he had learned anything more.

In the lobby of the Marathon, Clyde found Cardona and Markham waiting for him. The trio took the elevator.

The three found Goldy Tancred, garbed in dressing gown, pacing the floor of his living room. Goldy was quizzical when he saw Clyde Burke.

"I want to talk to you, Cardona," he began. "What I've got to say is private. I don't want it to leak out too soon."

"Burke's all right," growled the detective. "He's not reporting tonight. There's another reason for him being along."

Goldy Tancred hesitated, then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Joe," announced the big shot, "I'm worried. You've put me in a real mess. It's up to you to give me a chance to get out of it."

"How's that?" questioned Cardona.

"Well," said Goldy, "I know who was after me. I'll be frank with you - I half suspected it all along; but I wasn't sure. Now I know."

"Spill it," ordered the detective. "Who's the guy?"

"Ping Slatterly," declared Goldy.

Cardona was astounded for a moment; then he began to nod. Busy with details after last night's episode, the ace detective had forgotten all about Goldy Tancred. Now he saw the obvious connection.

"I guess you've hit it, Goldy," agreed the detective. "But I don't see why you're worried. Ping's out of the way now -"

"Sure he is," interposed Goldy. "But he's got friends, hasn't he? That's why I wanted to talk with you. How did you get wise in time to spoil Ping's game? Who gave you the tip-off?"

"That's my business," declared Cardona.

"That's just it," responded Goldy. "That's just why there's trouble for me. There's plenty of tough bimboes wondering where that tip-off came from. There's plenty who figure that Ping Slatterly was after me. Putting two and two together, they'll think that I was the guy who told you to watch Ping Slatterly."

Cardona was silent. He saw the logic of Goldy's statement. If Ping Slatterly was not the only powerful gang leader concerned in the attack upon the New City Bank, his companions would certainly be out to avenge his death. Cardona began a new chain of conjecture.

"You've given me something to think about," said the detective, after long consideration. "I'll tell you why I brought Burke up here, Goldy. Last night, he ran into a couple of thugs who would have got him, if Markham hadn't been there. Burke had been up to see you, hadn't he?"

"Sure," retorted Gold. "He was here twice."

"Well," resumed Cardona, "I didn't like the looks of it. I brought him here, so we could hear what you have to say about it."

"About him coming up to see me?"

"No. About this attempt to gang him."

"You want to hear what I have to say?" cried Goldy. "I've said it already - if you could only see the facts like I see them."

"Look here, Cardona. Ping Slatterly was pulling a job last night. He didn't want me to know about it. Chances are, he's had guys watching this place like a hawk."

"Burke here" - Goldy pointed to the reporter - "came in to see me. Outside of Bowser Riggins, he's the only visitor I've had. Can't you see it now, Joe? Those bimboes ganged Burke because they thought he was working for me. They were some of Ping Slatterly's mob. That's easy to see."

Cardona speculated. Once again, the detective found himself agreeing with Goldy Tancred's statement. He nodded automatically, and spoke a slow question.

"What do you want me to do about it, Goldy?" asked Cardona. "How can I help you out of the jam? Got any suggestions?"

Goldy's fancy molars glimmered. The big shot studied the detective with an expression that was almost one of derision. Cardona wondered what the cause might be.

"You want to help me," sneered Goldy. "Then why have you double-crossed me, Joe? Why did you plant a mike here in this room?"

"I planted nothing!" retorted Cardona hotly.

"No?" Goldy strode across the room as he spoke. He beckoned to the others as he thrust back the bookcase. "Look at this. Didn't you put it here?"

Cardona viewed the microphone after Goldy removed the rubber cap. The detective shook his head.

"I don't know a thing about it, Goldy," he asserted, in a frank tone. "Positively, I don't."

THE big shot grunted. He yanked the microphone from the wall, and began to tear away the wire. It broke in his hand as he came to the spot where the slender line reached the window ledge. Reaching beyond the broken point, Goldy gave another yank.

It produced unexpected results. Out came the wiring from below the window ledge.

Pulling away in sudden consternation, Goldy followed the opposite direction, and the microphone behind the radiator snapped suddenly into view.

"Two of them!" exclaimed the big shot. "Say - what is this? Don't you know anything about it, Joe?"

"Not a thing," insisted Cardona. "Maybe when we trace the line -"

"Nothing doing," interposed Goldy. "It runs to a telephone in an empty apartment below. No way of tracing it after that."

In sudden rage, Goldy seized both microphones, and dashed the instruments against the wall. He began to tremble. His smile became a pitiful expression. Claspings his temples with his hands, Goldy Tancred stalked to his chair and slumped into the cushions.

Cardona had little sympathy for this high-stepping racketeer; at the same time, the detective saw Goldy Tancred as nothing more than a prospective victim of the underworld's wrath. It was Cardona's business to prevent murder. He could not ignore Goldy's plea.

"You want police protection?" demanded the detective.

Goldy shook his bowed head.

"What then?" questioned Cardona.

"Let me get out of this," requested Goldy. "Stick with me, Joe. I want a chance to scam. I can go where they won't ever find me."

JOE CARDONA pondered. He still felt that so far as crime was concerned, Ping Slatterly's death marked the end of the recent series of outrages. Goldy Tancred was of no value as a witness.

There were good reasons, also, why Cardona would like to see Goldy Tancred out of New York. The man had unquestionably worked for political connections. He was a conniver who could cause great trouble in Manhattan.

"All right, Goldy," mused Cardona, "I'll let you beat it, if you'll let me make sure you've gone -"

"Let you make sure!" exclaimed Goldy. "Say - Joe - I want you to cover me!"

"How?"

"I'll duck out of here. Up to the Pennsylvania Station - tonight. Train for Florida. If I get on that without anybody knowing it, I'll be safe. Send a man along - I'll pay the round-trip expenses.

"But I want you to cover me from here to the station. Follow my cab. See me buy my ticket. Send me off. It's all I ask, Joe. I'm licked. I want to get away."

Cardona smiled disdainfully. The big shot was proving yellow. The myth that Goldy Tancred was a power, no longer existed. The bubble had burst.

"All right," agreed the detective. "We'll cover you. Markham and I will travel along behind you. Buy two tickets, and I'll have a man waiting at the gate to join you."

The detective turned and motioned to Markham and Burke. The three walked out of the living room,

where Curry met them and showed them to the elevator.

The last glance that Clyde Burke had through the closing door was a picture of Goldy Tancred anxiously clasping his hands as he sat worried in his big chair. The reporter smiled as he heard Cardona laugh.

"A big yellow bum," was the detective's sarcastic comment. "Goldy Tancred - yellow as they make them!"

THE ace detective would have changed his opinion could he have seen through the closed door of the apartment. Back in his living room, Goldy Tancred was no longer a figure of dejection.

A cunning, flashy smile had replaced the pitiful expression on the big shot's lips. Standing in the center of his living room, Goldy Tancred was enjoying a laugh of silent derision.

His servant entered. Goldy's laugh changed to a low command, which brought a knowing smile from Curry.

"All right, Curry," instructed Goldy. "Rig up that funny mug of yours. Slide into the outfit and be quick about it."

Curry went to a table in the corner. He opened a drawer and brought out several tiny, glimmering objects. He slipped them into his mouth, adjusted them, and turned to smile at his chief.

His teeth capped with gold shells, Curry had gained a grin that was an exact replica of Tancred's favorite expression. Even without makeup, the servant bore a startling resemblance to his master.

"That's great!" Goldy Tancred nodded. "Keep going, Curry. Hope you enjoy the climate in Florida."

CHAPTER XX. THE DEPARTURE

DOWN in the lobby of the Hotel Marathon, Clyde Burke remarked to Joe Cardona that he would have to put in a call to the Classic office.

"Don't say anything about this," warned the detective. "I've promised Goldy -"

"Not a word about it," returned Clyde.

In a telephone booth, the reporter called Burbank. As the Shadow's agent, he gave a terse account of the happenings in Goldy Tancred's apartment.

Burbank had already heard the conversation up to Goldy's plea for aid in his flight. Then the dictograph connection had been broken when Goldy had torn the microphones from the wall.

"Report received," was Burbank's comment.

That meant that word would be given to The Shadow. Clyde Burke left the booth and returned to Cardona and Markham.

It developed that Cardona had also made a call while Clyde Burke was phoning. An unimportant man from headquarters had been designated to meet Goldy at the station gate, and accompany him aboard the train.

Markham was watching the elevator steadily. After a quarter hour of waiting, the detective sergeant spoke to his companions.

"Here comes Goldy now."

A stocky form was emerging from the elevator. The man was wearing a heavy overcoat. The collar was raised about his chin, a gray hat pressed down upon the man's forehead.

As the man walked through the lobby, his gleaming grin showed between the peaks of the overcoat collar. The watching men caught that characteristic expression that so plainly denoted Goldy Tancred.

The man went out through the lobby door. The detectives and the reporter followed. They saw the supposed Goldy enter a taxicab and drive away. Cardona hailed another vehicle, and the trio followed.

At the Pennsylvania Station, they watched Goldy get his ticket, and hand another one to the detective Cardona had assigned to cover Goldy's trip to Florida. The pair walked down the steps together as Cardona remarked that the big shot was on his way to hide in the Everglades!

CARDONA'S firm belief was a far cry from the truth. While the detective still stood near the train gate, Goldy Tancred, in the flesh, was riding up Fifth Avenue in a taxicab, with Bowser Riggins beside him.

"It worked great, Bowser," Goldy was saying. "I pulled the stall about some tough guys being after me. Cardona fell for it. So did that news hound, Burke."

"You ought to knock off that bimbo," asserted Bowser.

"Burke doesn't mean anything now," returned Goldy, "Let him ride. Say, Bowser, when Curry was all rigged up and showed his grin, he was a dead ringer for me. Here's another laugh. Cardona has put a dumb dick on Curry's train - to make sure that I get to Florida."

"That's good," laughed Bowser. "Meanwhile, you ducked out through the service elevator. But say - what was the good of having Cardona send the dick along?"

"I'll tell you," growled Goldy. "There was a second dictograph hook-up in my living room - under the radiator. It's lucky I didn't make any phone calls lately. I'm going to make one right now, though."

"There's a big job right ahead, and I'll be in on this one, Bowser. You'll be with me. I'm not taking any chances. I was glad to pay that bonehead's expenses for a soft trip down to Florida along with Curry."

"That dick will be an alibi, Bowser! Whatever happens, I won't be known in it. Those dictographs have got me worried. We're up against some foxy game. So I'm playing it safe; and if Mr. Cardona is in back of some smart plan to trap me, he won't get anywhere. He thinks I'm yellow, Bowser! Let him think that - let him have me trailed to Florida!"

Glistening gold teeth reflected the glare of a traffic light. The cab stopped. Goldy and Bowser alighted and went into a dingy hotel not far from the corner where their trip had ended.

"I'm going to make some phone calls," remarked Goldy. "Stick here. Bowser. I'm taking a room upstairs. Hang around the lobby until I join you again."

GOLDY TANCRED was gloating over his own cleverness. Just as Joe Cardona had laughed at what he thought was the big shot's departure, so did Goldy chuckle over the sleuth's mistake. No one, Goldy thought, could possibly have suspected Curry's make-up.

But there was another observer at the station, a man whose presence none of the others had noticed. A tall personage, whose keen eyes gleamed from either side of a hawk-like nose, had witnessed the entire scene.

Merely one of various persons clustered by the gate, this shrewd spectator had gained a close look at the face which Joe Cardona and the others had mistaken for Goldy Tancred's. The tall personage's observant eyes had spotted a strained expression in the flashing smile that had come from the peaks of the overcoat collar.

This observer was The Shadow. Guised as a chance visitor to the railroad terminal, he had followed up the report relayed to him by Burbank. He, like the trio headed by Cardona, had come to witness Goldy Tancred's departure.

The Shadow knew what the others did not know. An impostor had left in the big shot's stead. The disguise of the masquerading Curry had deceived other eyes, but not those of The Shadow.

Goldy Tancred was still in New York. The big shot had gone into cover. With Ping Slatterly no longer alive to perform desired missions, Goldy was taking up the work himself. New crime was impending, and with it, the insidious menace of the black hush.

A soft, weird whisper came from the lips of that observer who now stood alone by the deserted train gate. The laugh of The Shadow, it betokened grim warfare against the menace that still existed.

The Shadow had one mission now, that was to meet the minds of crime with a method that they did not expect, to locate the source of the black hush.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XXI. THE MAN WHO FEARED

HARRY VINCENT was standing beside the living room window of a comfortable apartment. Before him, stretched awkwardly in an easy chair, was the man whom he had come to see - Don Chalvers.

It was nearing midnight. Harry Vincent, deciding that it would be unwise to sound out Chalvers on his first visit, resolved to forgo a discussion that might lead to some word regarding Roland Furness. Chalvers seemed too restless; perhaps it was because of his carousing on the preceding night. Harry noted that the man was weary.

"Think I'll be leaving you," remarked Harry, as he stepped away from the window. "When can we get together again? Tomorrow night?"

"Busy tomorrow night," responded Chalvers. "But don't go yet, Vincent. Don't go!"

There was a pleading note in the final tone. Harry could not withhold a sharp look toward his companion. He noticed that Chalvers was pale.

"What's the matter?" questioned Harry. "You don't look well, Chalvers."

"I don't feel well," the man complained. "I haven't been feeling well. Wait. If you're leaving, I'll go downstairs with you, and do a turn around the block."

Harry agreed.

THE pair left the apartment and descended by the automatic elevator, six stories to the street. As they strolled along together, Chalvers gripped Harry's arm in the darkness.

"Vincent," he said suddenly. "Come back up to my apartment, will you? I want to talk to you. I have to talk to you. I'm worried - terribly worried - and I must talk to someone."

Harry glanced at his watch. They were standing by the light of a drugstore. After the short consideration, Harry expressed willingness to return to the apartment.

"I'll have to make a telephone call," he remarked. "There may be a message for me at the hotel. I'll go right here in the drugstore."

"Call from the apartment -"

Chalvers made the statement too late. Harry had already reached the door. Chalvers followed him and watched him enter a booth. While the engineer was buying some cigarettes, Harry made a quick call to Burbank.

"Vincent reporting," he announced. "Chalvers may be going to talk. I'm going back to his apartment. We're in the drugstore now."

"All well?" queried Burbank.

"Absolutely," returned Harry. "No possible chance of danger. I'll report through Mann tomorrow morning unless I learn something of great consequence."

With this statement, Harry concluded his call and joined Chalvers by the door of the drugstore. Together, they strolled back and ascended in the elevator.

Chalvers was taciturn now; Harry, however, knew that the man was holding his conversation until they reached the living room.

Back in the apartment, Chalvers flung his hat upon a table. Restlessly, he drew Harry to a chair and began to express his troubles in a breathless voice. All the pent-up worry of the man seemed to break loose at once in a flood of emotion.

"Vincent," confided Chalvers, "I'm terribly afraid. Don't ask me whom I fear. It's what I fear that counts. I'm afraid for my life. Maybe you can help me."

"Tell me the trouble."

"It all goes back to when I was in college" - Chalvers was speaking less hastily, while Harry listened without betraying undue interest - "and it involves a friend of mine. My best friend, he was, but he's dead now. Poor Roland!"

"Roland?"

"Yes. Roland Furness. Do you remember, Vincent, that two men were murdered not long ago at the Olympia Hotel? Two electrical engineers - the newspapers were filled with accounts of the crime."

"I think I did read something of the sort."

Don Chalvers rubbed his hands in worried fashion. He stared toward Harry, and his face displayed an expression that betokened a nervous, hunted man. Harry Vincent remained serene. He was sure that he was about to gain clues that would be of value to The Shadow.

"When I was in college," confided Chalvers, "Roland Furness was my roommate. He and I used to indulge in unusual experiments. We made a discovery, Vincent - a wonderful discovery. I... I don't need to go into the details now. But it was more than a discovery; it was an invention. It was a ray -"

Chalvers paused and looked about him as though the very mention of the fact might cause him trouble.

He licked his lips nervously, then resumed his discourse.

"A ray," he explained, "that cast blackness. It played hob with electrical equipment when we tried it out. We kept on, though, and we got the bounce from college. We never gave the details - simply took the expulsion and said nothing.

"Furness didn't do much experimenting after that. He was too busy getting his degree at the new college, where we graduated. But I kept on fooling with the idea. Had a model at my home up in the Catskills. It's still there; but -"

Chalvers paused and clawed at the arm of his chair. He looked toward the door, then leaped from his seat and went over to turn the knob and peer out into the hall. Satisfied, he rejoined Harry.

"Somebody has learned the secret," he whispered. "Someone has perfected an apparatus like ours. Whoever has it is using it for crime. When Furness was killed, the Olympia Hotel was plunged into darkness. Furness was killed because he knew about the ray - because he might have told!

"I am the only other one who knows. They haven't found me yet, Vincent. I'm practically in hiding here. I'm afraid to tell the police. I don't want it to be known that I'm in New York.

"Look, Vincent" - Chalvers pointed to the window - "and see those twinkling lights. The ray could put them out! It could enter here and grip you and me. It throws a hush, too, Vincent - a black hush -"

As Chalvers pronounced the words, every light in the room went out. Still staring toward the window, Harry Vincent found his vision completely blotted. The twinkling flashes of the city were gone. A blanketing blindness had arrived; with it, a stifling pall that made The Shadow's agent utter an inarticulate gasp.

The suddenness of the happening seemed to paralyze Harry Vincent. He was fixed in his chair, unable to understand this terrible stroke of darkness. Weird silence hung like a shroud. The black hush had fallen.

Grimly, Harry regained his nerve. He started to rise from his chair. But before he reached his feet, hands clutched at his arms. The surge of a powerful body hurled him back. The chair overturned, and Harry sprawled upon the floor. Something struck him underneath the chin.

Blackness surged through Harry Vincent's brain as he succumbed to the attack delivered by men from the dark!

CHAPTER XXII. PLANS OF CRIME

HARRY VINCENT opened his eyes. He was no longer in the room where that strange blackness had fallen. Instead, he was lying in the corner of a stone-walled chamber, bound hand and foot.

Two men were standing close by. One of them looked toward the corner as he heard Harry stir. The Shadow's agent caught the gleam of gold teeth that flashed in the rays of the single light which hung from the ceiling.

Despite a dull ache in the back of his head, Harry Vincent sensed who his principal captor was. He had heard of Goldy Tancred, king among racketeers; and that gleaming face displayed the man's chief mark of identity.

"Still groggy, eh?" jeered Goldy. "Well, go to sleep again. Don't worry about your friend. We're taking care of him. That's right" - Goldy laughed as Harry's eyes closed - "take my advice. You're going to be here a long while. It won't do you any good to stay awake."

To all appearance, Harry Vincent had drifted back to a state of semi-consciousness. This, however, was a pretense. Harry wanted to learn all that he could, and he knew that his captors might speak more freely if they thought that he was in no condition to listen.

"You saw how it worked, Hardigan," spoke Goldy Tancred, to his companion. "Well, that's the way it will work tomorrow night. Plunk - all black - and it stays that way."

Harry Vincent heard the name that Goldy Tancred pronounced. It told him the other man's identity. Clipper Hardigan, dock racketeer, was an ex-gang leader who had developed a powerful influence which the police had been unable to counteract.

"Yeah," growled Clipper Hardigan. "It works all right; but how long can you keep it going?"

"We only needed three minutes, tonight," returned Goldy. "In fact, we didn't need it at all, but I wanted you to be in on a test. Did you notice the way it quieted everything? That's why we've called it the black hush. Keep it going? Just as long as you need it."

"I figure about fifteen minutes is what we'll need," calculated Clipper. "But I can't be sure. That's the trouble, Goldy. Suppose we get caught right in the middle of the job."

"Not a chance," returned Goldy. "Not tomorrow night. We'll hold it for the fifteen minutes. Then we'll lift it. It will be a cinch for us to see if you're clear. If you aren't, we'll put on the gloom again - in less than ten seconds."

"Sounds mighty good," said Clipper Hardigan, in a meditative growl.

STEP by step, Goldy outlined the plan which he had arranged.

With smooth, convincing tones, he won every point in furthering this new alliance. Clipper's head was nodding; his lips were grinning as he approved the final arrangements.

"It's good." Clipper's statement expressed his final agreement. "We'll be there - ready for the blackout. I'm counting on you though, Goldy."

"I'll be at the other end," assured the big shot.

A knock at the door followed Goldy's words. The big shot growled. The door opened, and Bowser Riggins entered.

"Got the car ready in the garage," the bodyguard said to his chief. "All ready to go along?"

"Right," said Goldy. "Come on, Clipper."

The big shot extinguished the light. Harry Vincent heard the door shut. A key turned in the lock. The trio had departed. The Shadow's agent was alone, a helpless prisoner.

He knew that his room was underground. He sensed that shouts would be of no avail; otherwise he would have been gagged as well as bound. Vainly, Harry struggled with the cords that held him. The effort was of no avail to him.

Through Harry Vincent's aching head thrummed a series of troubling thoughts.

His report to Burbank; it had been unwise to tell the contact man that danger would not possibly exist.

Don Chalvers; the young engineer's broken revelations had come just before the attack; Harry was sure

that the hunted man had encountered doom.

But uppermost in Harry Vincent's thoughts came the conversation that had passed between Goldy Tancred and his ally, Clipper Hardigan. In that discussion, Harry had learned the enemy's plans. He knew the details of the crime which was due to strike tomorrow night.

Robbery - murder - those were the contemplated acts which were to accompany a gigantic scheme which only the black hush would render possible. The outlandish plan was one that police could never suspect.

Even The Shadow, if he were alert and ready, would look for criminal activities in a thousand places before he would pick the one where crime was due.

Harry Vincent groaned. He was in the hands of superfiends. His captors were men whose greed surpassed all other motives. Tomorrow night, their stroke would fall. After that, they would attend to Harry Vincent.

The Shadow's agent knew that he could expect no mercy from Goldy Tancred. He knew that the big shot was holding him merely to question him later; then kill him if he did not speak. Yet Harry was not annoyed upon that score.

He felt sure that he would be safe until after tomorrow night. Then, with a new crime to work upon, The Shadow might find clues that would lead to his captured agent. Harry had confidence in The Shadow's power to rescue him from desperate situations. He had never known The Shadow to fail.

Harry's thoughts did not dwell upon his own plight, however. The throbs that passed through his frenzied brain repeated the knowledge that he now possessed - the details of the contemplated crime which Goldy Tancred had so openly disclosed.

If The Shadow only knew! But The Shadow could not learn. Harry Vincent, the one who could tell The Shadow all, was buried in a stone-walled prison!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW LAUGHS

WHITE hands beneath a bluish light; a gleaming gem that flashed amazing sparks from its color-changing depths - The Shadow was in his sanctum! Upon his table lay clippings and other sheets of paper. Beneath them was a map of Manhattan that overspread the entire surface of the table top.

This windowless room knew neither night nor day. Amid blackness that was broken only by the blue light in the corner, the Shadow worked in perfect seclusion. His sanctum was a spot which no one other than he had ever visited.

Night had passed outside the sanctum. The light of a new day had arrived. But The Shadow made no accounting for the passage of time. He was engaged in a tremendous task. Three times, heinous crime had followed in the wake of the black hush. After the first occurrence, The Shadow had been able to beat back the crooks who had advanced.

But now, The Shadow was seeking greater results. Indifferent to what plans the enemy might hold, the master of darkness was striving to reach the source itself. Well did The Shadow know that Ping Slatterly had been no more than a tool in the hands of master schemers.

The Shadow had been piecing important facts. Before him lay the assembled reports that told things which Detective Joe Cardona had failed to even suspect.

The secret of the black hush!

The Shadow was upon its trail!

A hand moved across the desk. It swept the clippings aside. Brilliant eyes from the dark were focused upon the huge map of Manhattan. Deft fingers produced white-beaded pins. One by one, The Shadow placed these markers on important spots.

First, a pin touched the location of the Olympia Hotel. The second pin marked the apartment building which was topped by Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse. The third pin rested upon the exact position of the New City Bank. The fourth entered the street intersection where traffic had been halted to allow the escape of fleeing criminals.

After a pause, the fingers put another pin upon a line that indicated the elevated. The keen eyes of The Shadow surveyed the studded surface of the map.

Those pins indicated an important fact. They showed that the strange blackness of the black hush could easily have been projected from a single point.

Significantly, the forefinger of The Shadow's right hand moved from one pin to another. The markers thus touched were the ones which showed the elevated and the street intersection.

These were the two places that gave the important clue. At the hotel, the apartment, the bank - all three meant nothing more than the manipulation of electrical equipment within the building themselves.

But the elevated line and street intersection! These spots, where blackness had fallen, were sure indications of a pall that had descended from the night itself!

With a pencil, the hand of The Shadow traced dotted lines on the face of the map. From the Olympia Hotel, alone, the indicating line might have gone in any direction. With the penthouse as a starting point, there were logical places where its line and the line from the hotel should cross.

The line from the New City Bank produced a further limitation. The line from the street intersection meant another narrowing of the search. Yet The Shadow's problem of survey work had not yet been completed.

One more pin might have solved the calculation. The Shadow's finger lingered upon the elevated-line pin. That one was useless; identified with the New City Bank, it gave no additional aid to him.

The Shadow waited. His keen brain had been wrestling with this problem for hours. The light snapped off. Within a darkness as total as that of the black hush, The Shadow dwelt in solemn thought. A hand moved forward in the blackness. It found a set of earphones. A tiny light glimmered on the wall beyond the table.

"Burbank speaking," came a voice over the line.

"Report on Vincent," were The Shadow's quiet words.

"No further report," Burbank replied.

"Check through Mann," ordered The Shadow.

The light went out. When it returned, Burbank opened the conversation:

"No report received by Mann."

Silence. Then came the whispered voice of The Shadow. It came as a sudden thought of inspiration.

"Call Burke," ordered The Shadow. "Tell him to call the apartment house where Chalvers lives. Call from the Classic office, requesting information on lighting service interrupted there last night."

The tiny bulb went out. On came the blue light above The Shadow's table.

There, in total darkness, The Shadow had gained a new connection. There was no report from Harry Vincent. The agent might have met with unexpected enemies. If so, the meeting had possibly occurred in the apartment of Don Chalvers.

The enemies whom The Shadow now combated were men who acted under cover of the black hush. Perhaps that strange phenomenon had occurred last night at the place where Harry Vincent had been stationed!

Anticipating this chance, The Shadow placed a pin upon the location of the apartment where Chalvers lived. He began a new tracing of dotted lines.

This was the one he needed. It indicated a central point in Manhattan where all the lines showed perfect convergence.

The little bulb was gleaming. The hand of The Shadow lifted the earphones from the table. Burbank was ready, with a prompt report.

"Call from Burke," came Burbank's quiet tones. "Report from apartment house. Lighting service was interrupted there for a few minutes last night. Regarded as dynamo failure."

The bulb went out. The earphones moved across the table. The hand of The Shadow produced a black-headed pin. Carefully, the fingers placed it at the focal point of the dotted lines.

That pin, with its jet-black top, marked the location which The Shadow had been seeking. It showed the spot in Manhattan from which the black ray had been projected.

It was resting exactly upon the building site occupied by the new Judruth Tower!

A full minute passed while the eyes of The Shadow gazed upon the map. The blue light cast its eerie flicker. The girasol upon The Shadow's finger seemed to flash triumphant sparks from its glimmering depths.

Blackness followed as the hand of The Shadow extinguished the light. A long, reechoing burst of hollow laughter pealed through the confines of the sanctum. Quivering reverberations sent their persistent shudders through the space of that black-walled room. When those sinister echoes had ended, the sanctum was empty.

CHAPTER XXIV. UPON THE TOWER

NIGHT was falling upon Manhattan. The outlines of buildings were still visible; twinkling lights in windows appeared like sparkling jewels in futuristic settings. From the windy, open observation circle atop the Judruth Tower, a few late visitors were viewing the splendid vista that lay below.

Among them was a silent watcher whose keen eyes were moving from spot to spot in the scene that stretched beneath. The Shadow, in the guise of a curious visitor to the observation post, was viewing each place where the black hush of crime had fallen.

The Olympia Hotel was plain with its glimmering windows. Thaddeus Harmon's penthouse was a conspicuous structure upon its apartment roof. The white face of the New City Bank looked like a tiny slab beyond the blackened structure of the elevated line.

The intersection of avenue and cross street was close to the base of the building. The observant visitor noted that point; then turned and located the apartment house wherein Harry Vincent had visited Don Chalvers.

From this pinnacle, The Shadow had corroborated a belief that he had accepted while on his way to the Judruth Tower; namely, that the force of the black hush must have been projected from one of the higher stories of this edifice. Only from a great height could the results have been accomplished.

Leaning over the rail, The Shadow viewed the bulk beneath. A straight shaft, traveling downward into dizzy, depths; a mammoth creation of steel and stone that defied the force of the whistling wind - such was the Judruth Tower.

Somewhere among the windows that were visible lay the source of the black hush. Peering along the blackening surface of the building, this silent observer waited for the opportunity that was soon to come.

"All off the tower!" came a cry from an opened doorway. "Last elevator going down!"

The tall figure lowered itself within the confines of the railed platform. Black cloth swished. When the figure rose again, it blended with the dusk that now surrounded the pinnacle. The last visitor had become a phantom shape garbed in black cloak and black slouch hat.

A metal door clanged. The last elevator started on its downward trip. The tower had closed for the night.

But there was one who still remained. The Shadow, master of darkness, was alone on the observation platform of the Judruth Tower, with the whole sparkling array of glittering Manhattan far below him. Like the brain of a mammoth being, he could visualize all that passed beneath.

WHILE the increasing wind swirled in powerful gusts, this strange phantom began its solitary round of the platform. Sharp eyes gazed out over Manhattan, then peered down the walls of the building. The Shadow was studying the city as well as the edifice upon which he stood.

The shape came to a halt. A weird laugh was caught by the increasing wind. In his circuit, The Shadow had completed important observations. Yet he waited, sensing that time might bring the vital moment at which to begin a strange and hazardous course.

Up here, The Shadow was the master. Above the source of the black hush, he could bide his time!

Gazing westward, the eyes of The Shadow saw the strip that denoted the North River. The lights of many craft were glimmering above the darkened waters. Gigantic liners looked like toys.

One vessel - Lilliputian from this observation tower - showed as an outline that sparkled with many lights as tiny tugboats, barely discernible, drew it out into the mighty stream.

The keen eyes of The Shadow rested upon that ship. A laugh escaped The Shadow's lips. The vessel was the Garronic, the latest and most modernized of all liners that plied between New York and Europe.

The huge ship was driven by electric motors. Once in the center of the river, it would loose itself from the tugs that were backing it into the stream; from there on it would proceed under its own power to the lower harbor.

Why did The Shadow watch that single boat?

There was an answer. Moving backward from the pier, the ship made a conspicuous sight. Of all objects visible from this tower, it was the most plain.

The passenger list of the Garronic had made it famous for this coming trip. Among those aboard was the noted Siamese prince, whose visit to the United States had brought blazing headlines. With him, this celebrity was carrying gems of fabulous value - prized stones that were guarded by his trusted retinue.

The Shadow was dwelling upon that fact. From here, the Garronic had the semblance of a tiny toy, which a mammoth hand could pluck from the river and shake of its contents. Such a hand did not exist; but here, not many feet below, lay a power as mighty as that of a Gargantuan fist.

If ever the black hush could prove of use to crime, now was the opportunity. It was the obviousness of that fact - so plain from this tower - that caused The Shadow to watch the backward motion of the Garronic.

Close to mid-river, the great boat was still under the control of the tugs. They were swinging its stern upstream. The prow was heading toward the bay.

The laugh of The Shadow rose above the wind. Its uncanny mockery was a challenge to foreboding crime. Weird and mirthless, the laugh broke into a wavering sinister tone. With that strange token of The Shadow's mysterious presence came the stroke that the master mind had expected.

In one quick instant, the entire hull of the Garronic disappeared from view. With it went every light. The tiny tugboats and their signals were blotted out from view. Between the great ship and the pier lay a stretch of complete gloom.

The black hush had fallen. Under its spell lay the huge ship, vanished while The Shadow watched. Wealth beyond price was at the mercy of the men who were waiting the blotch that was to serve them!

CHAPTER XXV. OUT OF THE RAY

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SWIFTLY, The Shadow acted. Here, from the observation platform of the Judruth Tower, he held a new and amazing vantage point. The black ray lay below him. Its conical projection formed a tapering tube of darkness that no eye could penetrate.

From below, that darkness could not be observed against the sky. But The Shadow saw it as a swath of black that obscured the lights of the city beneath its path. More than that, he could detect the starting point - a corner room two floors below!

Within the circle of the observation platform was the lounge room and the information desk. The door was close behind The Shadow's form. Turning, the rays of a flashlight guiding his movement, The Shadow reached the telephone that connected the tower with the main floor of the building. An operator's voice responded.

"Police headquarters," ordered The Shadow.

The operator, hundreds of feet below, responded with trance-like precision. A call from the tower at this hour! A voice that sounded like the knell of doom.

The Shadow's call was answered. In cold, steady tones, the man from above passed the startling word that brought news of unknown crime.

"Motor ship Garronic," came The Shadow's voice. "Attacked by gangsters in the harbor. Criminals aiding from post on ninety-third floor of Judruth Tower."

That was all. The receiver was on the hook. Sweeping swiftly through the gloom, The Shadow reached the observation platform. With the abandon of a man seeking suicide, he vaulted the rail, poising his long form above the man-made chasm below!

The Shadow's swing came to an abrupt stop as his body slid down the wall of the building, his hands using the cornice below the rail as a new gripping point. A mighty gust of wind swept the building, but its ferocious blast did not detach the clinging shape in black.

The decorated surfaces below the observation platform were The Shadow's stepping-stones. Poised on the brink of oblivion, undeterred by the gale that sought to break his unerring-clutch, the black-clad master of the night began his death-defying descent.

A thousand feet of nothingness! Yet The Shadow was as calm as if he had been less than a yard above the ground. There were projections that he could grasp, and he found them in the darkness. Blotched against the surface of the uppermost heights which the Judruth Tower could boast, The Shadow was crawling like a beetle toward his goal - the ray of blackness that lay two floors below!

The Shadow had conquered smoother surfaces than this, but tonight, he fought with terrible hazards. Speed was essential; and he acquired it, despite the menace of the terrific wind that whirled the folds of his cloak.

Then, as The Shadow poised above the window from which the blanketed ray extended, he performed a weird maneuver that brought his body sidewise on a level with that open spot.

Death yawned below. Enemies lay within. The Shadow paused. Was he planning to return to the only spot that afforded the slightest vestige of safety - the observation platform above? Only The Shadow knew; but others were soon to learn!

THERE were four men within the secret projection room tonight. Hector Fawcett was staring from the window, yet he could see but little, for the black ray swept close against the side. With Fawcett was the big shot, Goldy Tancred. Behind them stood Bowser Riggins, Goldy's bodyguard.

In keeping with his promise, Goldy Tancred was supervising this end of the crime, while Clipper Hardigan did the work below. But the fourth member of the group was as important as anyone present. In the darkness behind the glittering machine stood Hobbs, the operator.

Silently, this controller of the black ray awaited the orders that were to come. His hand was ready to lift the pall of the black hush at the end of the appointed time; ready, also, to restore it, should Hector Fawcett or Goldy Tancred give the word.

Deeming themselves safe from all attack, these fiends were gloating over crime which they were sure could never fail. The mighty ray of darkness that hurled forth the black hush had stilled action aboard the Garronic.

"We can't be stopped tonight," Hector Fawcett made the comment. "This is the job that can never fail."

"Be ready, though," advised Goldy Tancred. "Watch for the tugboats when we lift it. If they're still close, give them more of the black."

Bowser Riggins chuckled. As usual, he reflected the opinion of his chief, and Goldy Tancred had spoken in a tone of surety. Hobbs said nothing. Stolidly, this man who controlled the ray was performing his duty

with the same perfection that he had employed before.

"Ten minutes," announced Hector Fawcett. "That's half the time they want. They're getting what they're after."

"It's a cinch." commented Goldy. "Say - look at that black - the way it stretches out -"

Hector Fawcett laughed. He knew that Goldy Tancred was realizing the power of this ray. Blackness cutting within blackness, it made a weird and unbelievable spectacle.

"I never saw anything like it," added Goldy. "Say - if anything ever came out of that black, you couldn't see it until -"

The big shot's sentence ended. A gasp came from his startled lips.

The cry caused Hector Fawcett to follow the direction of Goldy's gaze. Bowser Riggins followed suit. The three men of crime staggered backward in the face of a phenomenon more amazing than the shaft of gloom which they were viewing.

Out of the blackness came a living form. As if a portion of the black hush had detached itself from the steady, unerring ray, a creature of another world had materialized itself from that projected gloom.

Like a spirit of darkness, a tall form swung over the window ledge, and landed, in huddled shape, directly in front of the men who watched. Then, instead of a dwindled form, the sinister object stretched upward until it became the semblance of a tall, living being.

With a mighty spring, this weird monster leaped forward with outstretched arms, toward the three men.

Instinctively, the watchers broke for the sides of the room. Their cries caused Hobbs to see the object which had brought them ghastly fear. Grimly, the man at the black-ray machine faced this menace that had sprung from nowhere.

Through an opened window, nearly a thousand feet above the ground; from a formidable blackness that obliterated all objects in its path, had come the superman who had never yet failed in his combats with fiends of crime.

Out of the black ray - The Shadow!

His precipitous descent from the observation tower completed, the master of darkness had used the black shaft to his own advantage. It had furnished him the obscurity which he required to complete this weird attack.

The Shadow had arrived to take his foemen unawares. His objective was the glittering machine that evil brains had turned to the service of crime.

The hand of The Shadow was stretched forth to end the blackness that was now the aid of an attacking band. He was here - to fight the black hush at its very source!

Out of the ray - The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXVI. BELOW AND ABOVE

ONE light glowed aboard the motor ship Garronic. That illumination came from a powerful acetylene lantern in the firm fist of Clipper Hardigan. With water-front mobsters at his heels, this gang leader was

advancing to an assured objective.

Playing the parts of passengers aboard the vessel, Clipper and his henchmen had ignored the cry of ashore. They had clustered close to the rear of the ship, all on the same deck, ready to head for the objective when the order came.

When the liner had been backed to midstream, the black hush fell. A few seconds later, Clipper Hardigan's lantern broke the gloom.

Aboard a helpless ship, on which every means of illumination and power had been eliminated, Clipper urged his men toward the stairway that pointed directly toward the Siamese prince's suite.

The tugboats? They were manned by Clipper's henchmen. Like the motor ship, the smaller boats were wiped out of sight.

The stroke of the ray had been reserved for the moment when the tugs were ready to cast off. Yet they remained; for they were to serve Clipper and his henchmen in their flight.

The tugboats had no light now, but their primitive steam engines were not handicapped by the impelling force of the black hush. With his acetylene light, Clipper was out to gain the treasure of the Siamese prince; then to blaze a trail along a lower deck that would lead his crowd to the waiting tugs.

That was why Clipper wanted the black hush to stay. Plowing out from its depths, the tugs could steam away to safety. They would be clear, while confusion still reigned aboard the Garronic.

A perfect game - one which The Shadow was striving to defeat at the one spot where success might properly be gained; that room in the corner of the ninety-third floor of the Judruth Tower.

Clipper Hardigan and his mob reached their objective. Most of the passengers were on the decks. The way was clear below. Clipper's men moved with the steady precision of soldiers advancing behind a timed barrage.

Stealthily, the black hush aiding in their creeping silence, the mobsters neared the door of the prince's suite. Here, the glare of the light revealed an opening.

Startled members of the Siamese retinue had thought the light was friendly. They learned their mistake as one of Clipper's mob fired an opening shot that implanted itself in the doorway.

The door swung shut, but mobsters hurtled forward and thrust it open. Then came resistance.

The prince was not in his cabin; but he had others here besides the Siamese servants. Detectives and ship's officers, who had been deputed to guard the jewels temporarily, opened an unexpected fire.

They clipped the first gangster who had rushed in front of the light. Mobster shots responded from outside the door. A detective staggered; one of the Siamese servants fell. Clipper and his mob pressed onward as the defenders scattered before the overwhelming fire.

THIS suite possessed an inner room - almost a strong-room. Goldy Tancred had gained full knowledge of the arrangement. Acting in accordance, Clipper ordered his men forward. The brief battle had caused a delay. There was no time for waiting.

The gangsters swept into the main room of the suite. With one accord, the defenders had dived for the shelter of other rooms. While his men covered the barriers behind which detectives and officers had gone, Clipper used the acetylene lantern to bathe the entire scene with light.

Trusted lieutenants made for the strong-room. They smashed at the door, bursting it from its hinges. The defenders knew that their cause was hopeless; they hung to their places of safety, awaiting the return of the ship's lights - the only aid which could equalize the struggle.

The door ahead was open. Clipper could see his men knocking it aside, as he looked through this murky haze that his light was penetrating. Success was here; the surety that Goldy Tancred had promised. But as Clipper's lips emitted a gloating cry, the one thing that he had feared occurred.

The ship's lights came on!

Clipper's men hesitated; then, at the end of long, tense seconds, the lights went out again. Clipper laughed amid the muffling hush. This was as planned. The short spell of light had been ended when watchers had seen that the job was not complete.

Before Clipper's men could continue, however, the lights appeared again! Once more off; then on, off, on - at the end of the quick succession, the lights remained!

Consternation seized the mobsters. Doors opened in the suite, and the defenders fired from ambush. Retreating gunmen dropped as Clipper Hardigan ordered them to withdraw. New enemies were at the head the stairs! A real battle had begun!

THE explanation for the sudden turn lay in what was happening in the corner office near the top of the Judruth Tower. The Shadow, leaping to the black-ray machine, had placed his hand upon the switch. But as his gloved fist clutched it, Hobbs, with a sudden swing, threw himself upon the black-cloaked invader.

The Shadow held no weapon. He had expected to find his enemies without their guns handy. Had Fawcett, Goldy, or Bowser made effort to draw a revolver, The Shadow would have resorted to an automatic.

The men had cowered from The Shadow's wrath; the way lay open to Hobbs, least formidable of all. It was he, however, who put up the resistance. His hand still gripped The Shadow's fist as the ray clicked back and forth. A black arm swung from the darkness; Hobbs collapsed as The Shadow's free fist landed on his chin.

That brought the rush. With one accord, the three who had backed away now flung themselves upon The Shadow. With a wild cry, Goldy Tancred was calling his recognition of this enemy whom all wrongdoers had sought to eliminate.

The Shadow's form seemed to collapse before the onrush. Goldy and Bowser drew revolvers as they fell upon the huddling shape. They sprawled upon the floor as The Shadow swung clear. Hector Fawcett, staggering against the machine, drew a revolver in his turn.

Shots rang out from Goldy and Bowser. They went wide, for The Shadow was making an elusive shift. The roar of an automatic responded. Bowser Riggins, in front of Goldy's body, took the bullet. Hector Fawcett, grabbing with his left hand for the control lever, aimed his revolver at The Shadow. The bespectacled crime plotter had a wonderful advantage, but his attempted double action proved his undoing.

Missing the switch with one hand, he fired wildly with the other. Then he caught the switch and tried to shoot again. The Shadow's fire felled him.

Hobbs was on his feet. Once again, the operator of the ray performed the unexpected. Hurling himself against the heavy machine, he rolled it forward. The Shadow was crouching directly in its path.

The big device thrust him back toward the window. He fired twice. The bullets ricocheted from the side of the machine. Hobbs instinctively shifted his position; The Shadow stopped the progress of the rolling ray machine.

Goldy Tancred scurried through the door, with Hobbs close behind him. The Shadow, too late to stop them with his shots, laughed in the gloom beside the window. These men could not escape him; he had another task more pressing.

Swinging into the room, The Shadow stooped and thrust his shoulder underneath the machine that no longer functioned. With a powerful upward heave of almost superhuman strength, he levered the big device endwise through the window. It glittered there, almost on a balance. A final thrust - the heavy instrument of crime plunged down to a deserted areaway behind the mammoth building!

Before the crash ascended from the depths below, The Shadow had passed the door of this corner room. He had hurled the ray machine to its destruction; now he was on the trail of the fiends who had tried to flee.

Goldy Tancred, king-pin of the plotters; Hobbs, the man behind the machine itself - these were the two with whom The Shadow presently would cope. The door to the anteroom was closed to block The Shadow's path. It was locked from the other side.

Carefully, a black-gloved hand introduced a small pick into the keyhole. The lock clicked. The hand gripped the knob; the door swung open as The Shadow slid backward into darkness, his automatic coming up in readiness.

Across the anteroom, an elevator door was sliding shut. The criminals had gained a lucky outlet. A foolish, unsuspecting operator had answered their frenzied summons. The Shadow had sent a warning below; yet this blunder had been perpetrated!

The Shadow laughed mirthlessly. No elevator could be summoned now; for the men of crime had probably revealed themselves by threatening the operator with their revolvers. Yet The Shadow had not failed.

There was a reason why he had wanted these men to live. He knew that Harry Vincent lay in their power. They, alone, could show the trail to wherever The Shadow's agent might be imprisoned.

If the police had arrived, the fleeing men would be captured; but The Shadow did not count upon the law for aid. He, himself, would take up the chase.

His tall form swung back into the corner room. It moved out through the window. With cloak close about him to avoid the whirling power of the rising gale, The Shadow began the perilous ascent back to the observation tower.

TERRIBLE space lay below. The Shadow ignored it. He paid no attention to the myriad lights of Manhattan; not even to the distant scene in the river beyond, where the motor ship Garronic lay in midstream, with lights ablaze.

A mad fight was ending aboard that vessel. Clipper Hardigan and a handful of unwounded mobsters were clambering over the rail of a lower deck, springing to the safety of a tugboat that lay below. Their goal gained, the mob leader shook his fist at the men who crowded the edge of the upper deck on the Garronic. The tug was steaming away, beyond the range of pot shots. Clipper Hardigan and his last few henchmen were heading for the safety of the shore.

The gang leader cursed as he heard shrill whistles and saw the lights of small, swift boats approaching the tug. This was the finish. The police boats had arrived. The tug could not escape them now.

Jamming cartridges in his emptied revolver, Clipper Hardigan prepared to fight. He stared futilely toward the spire of the Judruth Tower, silhouetted against the Manhattan skyline.

No aid could come from there. Clipper Hardigan did not know why. He could not see the tiny figure of The Shadow, black in the night, as it reached the rail of the observation platform.

There were men upon that circle. They had come up to investigate the mysterious call from this spot. They had found no one.

While they flashed their lights, The Shadow's tall form swung across the rail. It passed between the searchers and entered the room within the circle.

When the investigators arrived there a minute later, they were surprised to see a closed door where they had left an open elevator. Stupidly, they realized that the man for whom they had been looking had chosen that effective means of escape.

The elevator stopped at the ground floor. The door opened slowly. People who had entered the lobby of the Judruth Tower had rushed back to the door, to observe the results of confusion in the street.

The stealthy form of The Shadow glided across the space. It moved through the outer door and merged with darkness at the side of the building, unseen by the group that was looking toward the street, where two policemen were aiding a wounded comrade.

A whispered laugh sounded eerily in the darkness. The Shadow was gone. He had ended the menace of the black hush in Manhattan.

One more mission lay ahead. The trail that Goldy Tancred and Hobbs had taken must be followed. The Shadow was ready for that task.

CHAPTER XXVII. PURSUIT IS ENDED

A SWIFT touring car shot out of a Manhattan garage, not far from the Judruth Tower. The automobile contained three men. Goldy Tancred was at the wheel. Hobbs was beside him. Harry Vincent, bound and helpless, was in the back seat. He had been dragged through darkness by these captors, and hurled bodily into the car.

The vehicle's top was down. Mounted upon the back of the front seat was a post; upon it, what appeared to be a large searchlight.

The moment that the car appeared, shouts told of its arrival. A policeman at the side of the garage fired wildly, and missed his target.

Goldy and Hobbs had made a mad escape by commandeering a taxi and threatening the driver. Goldy had wounded a policeman, an advance member of a raiding squad approaching the Judruth Tower. That had marked the beginning of the chase. The pair of villains had left the cab and hurried into the garage where they had picked up Harry Vincent and thrust him into their own car.

A siren sounded as a police car shot up the street in pursuit of the fleeing touring car. Goldy Tancred clung grimly to the wheel. Hobbs, calm in the darkness, clicked a switch on the peculiar searchlight.

A flood of blackness swept behind the touring car. It filled the street and buried the police car in its

strange darkness. The power of the black hush put the pursuer's ignition out of commission. Goldy Tancred turned a corner, and swung along an avenue.

Another police car was bearing down. Shots burst from it. Hobbs responded with the ray. The new pursuer was crippled. The touring car kept on its mad course.

Then came a procession of strange events. Hobbs pivoted the black-faced searchlight so its darkened rays pointed ahead, throwing a pall that began some fifty feet in front of the touring car's headlights.

Traffic was clear along the avenue. Following a swath of darkness, the speedy touring car continued its mad pace with nothing ahead to intercept it. Cars were stalled by the powerful gloom. Goldy Tancred picked his way by the short space of light which the front lamps furnished.

The black ray became intermittent as Hobbs clicked the switch off and on. This system was effective. It showed the avenue ahead; at the same time, it brought back the darkness that cleared all that lay in the path.

PICKING a new course, Goldy found another avenue and again headed northward. As the touring car bowled along toward the Harlem River, a siren call resounded. A police car was cutting in behind. Word of the fleeing men had been telephoned from headquarters.

Hobbs swung the strange searchlight on its movable pivot. A sweep of blackness caught the police car in its gloom. Once more, a chaser had been thwarted. The touring car shot over a bridge.

A clear path! It seemed open now, but as the fleeing automobile whirled along the light boulevard, a new pursuer threatened. From above came the thrum of a powerful motor. A police airplane had taken up the chase!

Muttered oaths came from Goldy Tancred. He threw a hopeless, sidelong glance toward the man beside him. This meant disaster. The followers from the air could keep pace with the traveling automobile. They could swoop down and riddle this car with machine-gun bullets.

It was Hobbs who counteracted the emergency. He, the operator, knew the full power of the black ray. The black-faced searchlight pointed upward. Its projected darkness suddenly blotted out the lights of the biplane that was swooping from above!

The touring car was traveling at a clip faster than sixty miles an hour. Gauging this speed, Hobbs coolly wielded the ray at a somewhat faster pace. The police plane was enveloped in a wide range of blackness.

Its motor stopped, the pursuit ship was helpless. Close to the ground, it banked as its pilot tried to avoid a crash. Completely obscured by darkness, with ignition out of commission, the situation reached a critical point.

The touring car whirled onward; Hobbs lost the focus. Light glimmered above as the biplane was freed from the power of the black hush. Good fortune, however, came too late. The pursuing pilot managed to pick a vacant space, but his plane crashed in the sudden landing.

Harry Vincent, staring upward, saw the lights of the biplane whirl in the final spin. The Shadow's agent closed his eyes. On through the chilly night - he did not know where he was being carried. He realized only that the last attempt to halt this fleeing touring car had failed. Cold almost to a stupor, Harry forgot the passage of time.

WHEN the prisoner opened his eyes, he found that the car had stopped in front of an old house. They

were in an isolated spot. Harry's captor dragged him from the automobile. They carried him around the house to a low, flat building beyond.

Through a door; then Harry found himself flat upon his back in what seemed to be a stone-floored room. A light came on; Harry stared at the gloating face of Goldy Tancred. There was no mistaking the big shot; the flashing mouth betokened his identity.

Who was the other? Harry had heard Goldy call his companion by the name of Hobbs. The second man was turning; to his amazement, Harry saw the pale face of Don Chalvers!

Like Goldy, Chalvers was grinning. Harry Vincent realized that the young engineer's nervousness had been an affectation.

Well did Harry understand the reason for the murder of Roland Furness. Don Chalvers, possessor of the black ray, had found it essential to eliminate the one man who might have betrayed the secret!

"I'm bringing in the projector," Chalvers informed Goldy. "Setting it up on this flat roof. If anyone heads this way, it may prove useful."

"Not much chance," responded Goldy. "We shook them right; I'm not worrying."

Nevertheless, Chalvers went about his duty. Tancred remained, glowering at Harry Vincent. At last, while his companion was still absent, Goldy addressed Harry with a hostile growl.

"You're working for The Shadow, eh?"

Harry did not respond to the big shot's quiz.

"Trying to keep mum?" Goldy's question was sneering. "Well, we'll find out how to make you talk. Maybe you think we've been licked tonight. Not us. We lost a good guy - they got Clipper Hardigan, sure enough. But the brains are still here. Chalvers fooled you, eh? Framed you up in his apartment. Well, he's smart and so am I."

Harry still preserved silence. Minutes passed. Don Chalvers returned. He and Goldy Tancred held a conference. The big shot swung toward Harry Vincent.

"Look here," he said. "We're giving you a break. We're going to scram, see? Out of the country. I'll tell you where - to London. We're goin to crack the Bank of England when we get this ray of ours in operation."

"You think I'm kidding you? Not a bit of it. There's only one person who might put a crimp in our game. That's The Shadow - the one you're working for. So here's our offer. Spill what you know. Stick with us, and bluff The Shadow into thinking that we'll kill you if he moves."

"He'll stay out of the game. If it looks best, we'll give you a chance to send him phony information. Take him off the trail. You'll get your cut out of the swag."

Harry Vincent remained obdurate. Goldy Tancred watched the captive's face during long minutes. At last, the big shot turned to Don Chalvers.

"He won't squawk," announced Goldy Tancred. "He still thinks The Shadow can pull him out of his pickle. There's only one thing to do. Give this heel the works -"

Goldy Tancred stopped suddenly. His gold teeth shone as he scowled. He grasped Don Chalvers by the

arm and the pair assumed a listening attitude.

The reason for the interruption came suddenly to Harry Vincent's ears.

From somewhere, in the distance, the thrum of a motor was announcing the approach of what could be only a ship of the air. That sound brought joy to Harry Vincent. It might mean that the Shadow was coming to this spot!

But as Harry thought, he could not repress a groan. Don Chalvers had made preparation for such an attack. The Shadow was coming into the power of the black ray!

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE FINAL STROKE

UPON a flat roof, beneath which Harry Vincent still remained a prisoner, Goldy Tancred and Don Chalvers were standing in a hazy gloom. It was still dark here, close to the ground, but the sky above was tinged with early dawn.

Beside the two men stood the pivoted projector that could cast its dread black ray. Goldy Tancred, growling, was staring toward the sky, while Don Chalvers - again playing the part of Hobbs - was ready with the machine.

"There he comes!" snarled Goldy, pointing high above the horizon. "Be ready. When he gets closer, you can spot him!"

An oddly shaped plane was visible in the pale hues of dawn. Hovering as it approached, the ship revealed spinning blades that whirled like a windmill.

That craft told well who piloted it. The Shadow was arriving in his autogyro!

"Good," snorted Goldy. "That ship of his can't move as fast as the biplane you knocked off. Give him the ray when he gets closer. It's The Shadow - if we get him -"

The big shot did not conclude the statement. He was watching the progress of the ship, and he left his companion to understand that the end of The Shadow would mean the finish of all possible attack or pursuit.

The autogyro came on. Don Chalvers was waiting. He could see that the pilot was picking out the spot that he wanted.

The Shadow had found the connection between Chalvers and the ray. He knew that the flight which had baffled the police must have ended here.

Thus the criminal engineer bided his time. The black-faced searchlight pivoted upward. Still, Chalvers waited, until the moment when the autogyro would be in perfect range. The ship seemed to pause in air - not quite directly above the spot where the two villains were waiting.

"Give it to him!" snarled Goldy.

The autogyro was descending as the big shot gave the order. Less than a thousand feet above, The Shadow had picked out the whiteness of the flat-topped building in back of the old house which belonged to Don Chalvers.

Click!

The black ray cut a widening swath up toward the dawning sky. Just as a searchlight cleaves the night, so did this stream of darkness carve through light. The autogyro was blocked out by the great circle of blackness. The thrum of the motor ceased.

"That ends The Shadow," announced Goldy Tancred. "Watch him come plopping out of there the same way the biplane crashed. His motor's gone!"

The two men waited. As their eyes looked upward, they could see no result. The autogyro was lost in the path of blackness. It was vanished as completely as if it had disintegrated within the folds of the black hush.

Seconds went by. Goldy emitted a puzzled growl as he turned to Chalvers. In the dimness beside the black ray, Goldy saw a sudden expression of understanding appear upon his companion's face.

"He's coming downward in the ray!" cried the engineer. "He's guiding himself inside the blackness. That autogyro needs no power - the blades above it resist the air!"

"He's heading... here?" gasped Goldy. "You mean... you mean he's dropping straight toward us?"

"Yes!" screamed Chalvers. "We can't stop him now. He'll land - right here -"

As the engineer broke away from the side of the black-ray machine, a shape bulged out of the darkness. Wings and wheels smashed downward toward the roof. The body of the autogyro landed forcibly upon the black-faced projector.

The machine crackled beneath the impact. The black ray ended. Don Chalvers, too late in his leap for safety, was smashed beneath the right wheel of the gyro as it jounced away from the apparatus which it had shattered.

Goldy Tancred saw his companion fall. With an ugly snarl, he whipped out his revolver. He saw a form in black bounce from the right of the thudding autogyro. Goldy fired, knowing that he faced The Shadow.

The big shot missed the swaying body as it slouched back into the cockpit of the autogyro. Then, as the wheels joggled the ship back and forth, Goldy raised his gun to shoot again.

An automatic spoke before the big shot pressed the trigger. The Shadow, recovering from the bumpy landing, had fired in reply, to meet the menace of Goldy Tancred. With a snarling groan, Goldy staggered backward and sprawled upon the flat roof.

The Shadow, tall and sinister, alighted from the autogyro. He bent above the bodies of the men who had sought to resist him. Goldy Tancred had a bullet through his heart; Don Chalvers, crushed by the impact of both wheel and jouncing body, was coughing out his last breath.

Through the last gloom of early night, a clinging darkness that held to the ground despite the approach of dawn, The Shadow descended through an opening in the roof. In the room below, he found the bound form of Harry Vincent. Quickly, he released his agent and drew Harry up the stairs toward the roof.

Slumped in the cockpit of the autogyro, Harry Vincent could scarcely believe that the rescue had been so suddenly effected. He heard the motor hum; with spinning fan now motorized, the autogyro rolled across the roof and took off into the lightening sky.

High above, it seemed to hover. Beneath lay the whiteness of the roof, now visible in the growing light of day. Upon it were two blackened, sprawled-out shapes that lay beside the glistening shattered hulk of a broken-up apparatus.

The ray of darkness would never again be projected by the fiends who lay beside their shattered machine. The power of the black hush had been ended.

With the final stroke, The Shadow had brought doom to the last of those who had plotted amazing crime. Don Chalvers, the creator, and Goldy Tancred, the instigator, were dead.

The secret of the black hush had been solved, and its weird force had been ended through the mighty strength of The Shadow!

THE END