



# THE DEATH SLEEP

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## CHAPTER I. THE SLEEP

IT was nearly midnight when a taxicab stopped in front of the exclusive Vanderpool Apartments. Two persons alighted from the car. One was a gentleman attired in a full-dress suit; the other a lady who wore a magnificent leopard-skin coat. The door man bowed as they entered the lobby of the Vanderpool.

Clark Doring and his wife were frequent visitors to this apartment house. When they stepped into the elevator, the operator bowed and pressed the automatic stop for the fifth floor. He knew that these arrivals were coming to join the party in progress at the apartment of Seth Tanning.

Arrived at the fifth floor, Doring and his wife turned right and walked to the end of the single corridor. They stopped at the last door. Doring smiled. Sounds of hilarity were coming from within. Clinking glasses, voices of men and women were audible to the arrivals in the corridor.

"The game of bridge," chuckled Doring, "as they play it at the Tannings. Time out between hands for a round of drinks and a lot of chatter. Well, Mabel, I approve of the idea. I never could take bridge

seriously."

"Why bother to go in?" questioned Mabel Doring. "They won't be able to continue the game, with an odd pair of -"

"I promised Tanning we'd drop in after the theater," interposed Doring. "Only the Westcotts are there. Seth said they would be tired of bridge by the time we arrived."

With this remark, Doring rapped at the door. The sounds of merriment increased. The rap was not heard by those within. Doring waited a few moments; then pounded with increased vigor. Again, his summons passed unheard.

"It's a stout door," laughed Doring. "I don't think I shall smash it. So here goes."

Clenching his fist, he delivered three terrific smashes against the panel. The sound of the blows echoed along the corridor. Yet the laughter kept on.

Doring drew back to resume his pounding. He stopped with upraised fist. The hubbub from the apartment had come to a sudden finish.

"That did it," said Doring to his wife. "Seth must have heard those knocks. He will be here in a minute, to let us in."

THE visitors waited patiently. Doring's minute passed. Complete silence pervaded. Yet no one came to open the door. Doring glanced toward his wife in puzzled fashion.

"Perhaps, Clark," suggested Mrs. Doring, "they only thought they heard someone knocking. They may be waiting to hear you rap again."

Doring nodded in agreement. He delivered several sharp raps upon the panel; then paused for the answer. Silence persisted during another minute. Doring became impatient. He pounded.

"Curious," observed Mrs. Doring. "I wonder what can have made them behave in such odd fashion?"

Doring shook his head. He was puzzled. He decided to knock again, when an unexpected sound broke the silence that lay within. It was the ringing of a telephone bell, quite close at hand.

"The phone in the entry," stated Doring. "Someone will come to answer it from the living room. Then I shall rap again."

The dingle of the bell came with monotonous regularity. Like Doring's raps, it went unanswered. Doring looked at his wife, more puzzled than ever. One minute - then the ringing ceased.

"Ah!" said Doring, listening. Then, in an awed tone: "That's more curious than ever, Mabel!"

"What, Clark?"

"I heard no footsteps coming to the door. No one is speaking at the telephone -"

Doring broke off as the ringing of the telephone bell resumed. It continued for another minute; then stopped. Again, there was a short interval. After that, the bell sounded its mechanical call, ring after ring.

When the bell stopped for the third time, both Doring and his wife were breathless. They still expected some response, yet none came. Even the telephone bell had silenced this time. Two tense minutes passed. Doring pounded the door; then stopped and shrugged his shoulders.

"Something has happened, Mabel," he said, in a solemn tone. "Go to the elevator and speak to the operator when he arrives. I can't understand this."

As Mrs. Doring walked toward the elevator, the car arrived. A passenger stepped forth. Mrs. Doring stopped him and the operator. Breathlessly, she began to explain the mysterious happenings at Seth Tanning's apartment. The man who had come from the elevator walked over to join Doring. The operator followed.

"My name is Brooks," stated the passenger, speaking to Doring. "Just coming up to my apartment - at the other end of the hall. What's the trouble here, old man? Something that worries you?"

"Yes," nodded Doring. "Listen. That place is as silent as a tomb. When we arrived - about five minutes ago - there was plenty of noise. It stopped. I knocked. The telephone rang. Yet no response."

Brooks knocked at the door. He listened; then shrugged his shoulders. He drew a key from his pocket and motioned toward the other end of the hall.

"We'd better call the police," he said. "Come on, old man. We can use the phone in my apartment."

"Stay here, operator," ordered Doring, as he followed Brooks. "You wait here also, Mabel. Knock occasionally. If they give any signs of life, let us know."

"They couldn't possibly have gone out," put in Mrs. Doring. "They might have been leaving the living room -"

"Not a chance," insisted Doring. "It's only a one-room apartment - nothing but alcoves for dressing room and kitchenette. There is no exit other than the door to this corridor."

BROOKS hurriedly conducted Doring to his apartment. There Doring put in a call for detective headquarters. He held a short conversation while Brooks listened. Finally Doring hung up and prepared to make another call.

"Talked with an acting inspector," he explained to Brooks. "Chap named Cardona. He's coming up here. But he told me to put in a call to the precinct in the meantime."

Doring then called the precinct. He and Brooks left the latter's apartment. They relieved the operator and sent him down to inform the door man what had happened. Doring and Brooks lighted cigarettes and paced nervously back and forth in front of Tanning's door. At intervals, Doring stopped to knock upon the panel. As before - no response.

The clang of an elevator door announced the arrival of a tall, haggard man who introduced himself as the superintendent of the apartment building. He explained that there was no master key to Tanning's apartment. He rapped at the door; hearing no answer, he deliberated. While the superintendent was thus engaged, an elevator arrived and a bulky police sergeant stepped forth, followed by two bluecoats.

These men were from the precinct. The sergeant listened to Doring's story; then looked at the closed door. He heard the superintendent's statement that there was no master key. The sergeant hesitated.

"I don't like to break into the man's apartment," he declared. "You heard no unusual noise. Nothing to indicate violence -"

"This silence is worse!" protested Doring. "I am sure, sergeant, that there are four people in the apartment. All were laughing and talking. Then came silence."

"Perhaps they jumped out the window," suggested the superintendent, in a worried tone. "I don't see any other answer."

"We came through the alleyway," returned the sergeant. "I left an officer down there. If you were right about some people being in there, Mr. Doring, it's a sure bet they're still there."

"Then batter down the door," urged Doring.

Before the sergeant could reply, an elevator arrived and a swarthy, stocky man strode forth. This arrival needed no introduction. One glance showed that he was the man they all expected: Acting Inspector Joe Cardona.

It took Cardona less than one minute to render a decision. With blunt questions, he gained answers that added to the information Doring had given him over the telephone. Cardona turned to the police sergeant; then nudged his thumb toward the door of Tanning's apartment.

"Smash it," ordered Cardona.

The bulky sergeant launched himself shoulder forward. The door quivered. A husky bluecoat joined the attack. As the men struck the door together, the hinges crackled. This time, Cardona shot forward between the two officers and sent the barrier clear. Half sprawling, Cardona staggered into a little entry. Officers and witnesses crowded after him.

It was on the threshold of the living room that Joe Cardona came to an awed stop. Though amazed, he stared stolidly, despite the mumbles and gasps of those who had followed him.

THE only motion in this living room was that of window curtains that wavered slightly in the mild breeze from a half-opened window. But this meant nothing to Cardona for the moment. His eyes were upon the center of the room, viewing the strange sight that showed in the mellow light of a bridge lamp.

The illumination shone directly upon a card table in the center of the room. There were four persons at that table: Seth Tanning, his wife and two guests - the Wescotts. In all his experience as a member of the force, Cardona had never observed so startling a tableau.

The group still formed the participants in a convivial bridge game. Four tricks had been taken by Seth Tanning. The little heaps of cards lay beneath his right hand; the man was staring at a fan of cards that he held in his left.

Across the table lay the spread out cards of the dummy. Mrs. Tanning was resting back in her chair, holding a half-emptied ginger-ale glass in her right hand. Her gaze was toward her husband; her lips wore a slight smile.

The other players were looking intently at their friends. They were holding cards; but their expressions indicated that the play had ceased for a period of banter. They, too, were smiling. Had this group been active and in motion, there would have been no occasion for astonishment.

But every position was one of absolute rigidity. Each of the four was as stony as a statue. To Joe Cardona, the players looked like a group of figures chiseled by some madcap sculptor; or, even more, they resembled a bizarre exhibit in a waxwork museum.

No terror - no surprise - no expressions of excitement were reflected on those countenances. Yet something had chilled the entire group into their present state of being. Whatever the cause, the result had been simultaneous. It was this that made Cardona sense that danger had passed.

Boldly, the acting inspector advanced to the card table, while those who had followed him remained clustered at the entry. With furrowed brows, Cardona stared at the immobile faces of the group. He stepped back, more awed than ever. He heard an inquiry - in Clark Doring's voice - that came from the entry. The question was a hoarse one:

"Are - are they dead?"

"No." Cardona's response was oddly firm. "I do not think so. It can't be a state of paralysis - at least I don't believe so. It looks like death - but it can't be death. They look like they were asleep - yet no one could sleep like that and -"

"Then what is it?" gasped Doring. "Not dead - not asleep - what has struck them?"

Staring, the acting inspector pondered. Not dead - not asleep - yet both. Such was the thought that passed through his mind as he gazed upon the frozen victims of an unknown force. As Doring's hoarse question came again, Cardona - almost mechanically - formed the phrase that was to make tomorrow's headlines.

"What is it?" asked Doring. "What has struck them?"

"A death sleep," replied Joe Cardona.

## **CHAPTER II. A GENTLEMAN IN BLACK**

BRIDGE, as played at Seth Tanning's, was different from the game that was relished at the Cobalt Club. The members of that exclusive organization had no time for conviviality. They took their game seriously; and the struggle of wits invariably reached its height after the hour of midnight.

Yet on this particular night, a game had ended abruptly, shortly before one. Three players were seated about a table in a tobacco-laden card room, indulging in a post mortem. Suddenly deprived of a fourth player, they had been forced to end their game.

The door of the card room opened. The three men looked up to see a tall arrival dressed in evening clothes. They viewed a firm, steady-faced countenance that they all recognized. That hawkish visage was well-known at the Cobalt Club. The arrival was Lamont Cranston, the celebrated globe-trotter who frequented the club whenever he was in New York.

"Here's our fourth!" exclaimed a player. "Come on Cranston! Sit in the game. You'll be a worthy successor to the chap who just left."

"Who was that?" The question came evenly from Cranston's lips.

"Wainwright Barth," chuckled the player who had spoken. "Playing in good luck, too, but he had to quit."

"Very unusual," remarked Cranston. "Barth usually stays in to the end when he is winning."

"Not since he was appointed police commissioner," put in another player. "That job has put a crimp into his bridge game. He left here in a big hurry about fifteen minutes ago."

"A call from headquarters?" inquired Cranston, in a quiet tone.

"He didn't say," was the reply. "He just mentioned that he had received word of an important case. Needed his personal attention. So the big boss of the bluecoats beat it. Come on, Cranston. How about

taking Barth's place?"

"Sorry," was the response. "Early appointments tomorrow. I am just leaving for my home in New Jersey."

Lamont Cranston strolled from the club room. He crossed the quiet lobby and moved toward a telephone booth.

A SINGULAR phenomenon occurred during Cranston's progress. His tall form cast a blackened shadow on the tiled floor. A long, fantastic splotch of darkness, that shadow ended in a profiled silhouette that did not dwindle until Cranston had entered the telephone booth.

A long, thin finger dialed a number. A short pause; then came a quiet voice across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

The order came from the lips of Lamont Cranston; but it was not in the tone that others had heard the globetrotter use. The voice of Lamont Cranston had become a strange, sinister whisper that Burbank recognized.

"Report from Burke," acknowledged Burbank. "He is following a tip received at the Classic office. Cardona is investigating case at Apartment B 5, Vanderpool Apartments. Police commissioner summoned there. Burke promises further report later."

"Report received."

Lamont Cranston strolled from the telephone booth. He crossed the lobby and passed bowing attendants as he neared the outer door. The automobile starter saw him coming and signaled with a whistle. A magnificent foreign limousine drew up in response to the starter's call. A uniformed chauffeur alighted and opened the door for Lamont Cranston to enter.

As the car started along the street, Cranston raised the speaking tube that connected with the front seat. He spoke in a quiet, even tone to Stanley, the chauffeur. He instructed the driver to turn uptown and to park on a certain street just west of Seventh Avenue. That designated spot was within a block of the Vanderpool Apartments.

The limousine rolled onward. Its single passenger was shrouded in the darkness of the rear seat. The spark of a cigarette was glowing; at intervals, a soft laugh whispered from the tonneau. As the car neared its appointed parking place, long hands lifted a thick briefcase from the floor. Folds of dark cloth emerged. A cloak slid downward over shoulders. A slouch hat settled on a head. Black gloves were drawn on limber fingers.

When the limousine came to a stop, the rear door opened simultaneously. A blackened form glided free of the car. The door closed silently. The emerging figure blended with the darkness of an old house front. Stanley remained stolid behind the wheel. He would wait here until he received new instructions.

STANLEY had not heard the sound of his master's departure. That was not unusual. For Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow. From a leisurely, almost indolent club man, he had transformed himself to a quick, alert being of semi-invisibility. Blending with the night, The Shadow had fared forth to learn of the events that had brought Joe Cardona and Wainwright Barth to the Vanderpool Apartments.

Unseen - his very identity unknown - The Shadow was a master who battled crime. Through contact

with the underworld, he learned when evil was brewing. Frequently, his thrusts from the dark came before crooks had gained opportunity to begin their nefarious operations. There were times, however, when strange events occurred without The Shadow's ken. On such occasions, The Shadow was forced to follow the initial lead of the police.

Tonight, Joe Cardona had encountered a most amazing mystery. The acting inspector had notified Commissioner Wainwright Barth. Only by minutes had The Shadow missed learning of the mystery. Barth had left the Cobalt Club just before his arrival. But in the meantime, Clyde Burke, alert reporter of the New York Classic, had discovered that Cardona had set out on an important case.

It was Clyde's business to keep in touch with detective headquarters. He was more conscientious in that work than was any other police reporter in Manhattan. For Clyde served more than the New York Classic. He was a secret agent of The Shadow. Immediately upon learning of Cardona's destination, Clyde had communicated with Burbank, hidden contact man who also served The Shadow. Thus The Shadow, too, was arriving at the focal point.

Two courses lay open. To follow one, The Shadow could have entered the Vanderpool Apartments in his guise of Lamont Cranston. As a friend of the police commissioner, he could have listened in on Cardona's findings. But The Shadow had rejected that system for this night. Having missed Barth at the Cobalt Club, he did not care to stroll in on the police investigation. The guise of Cranston was one that he did not care to overstrain.

The second course was to arrive as The Shadow. That was the choice that he had taken. Hence the supposed Lamont Cranston had become a gentleman in black: The Shadow. His course was taking him toward the scene of mystery. If difficulties proved too great, The Shadow could rely upon Clyde Burke's report, for the newspaper man was on the job. But with The Shadow, difficulties seldom proved insurmountable.

A BLACKENED shape reached the paved alleyway beside the Vanderpool Apartments. Footsteps were clicking on cement. A policeman was pacing this area. The Shadow could trace the man's movements in the dark. On the right was the looming bulk of the Vanderpool Apartments, with its scattering of lighted windows. On the left was the brick wall of an old warehouse building. This was solid in its blackness.

The pacing officer neared the spot where The Shadow stood. A flashlight swept its beam along the wall. The rays passed by the tall form that stood motionless against the wall. The officer missed sight of the cloaked figure of The Shadow. His footsteps sounded down the alleyway.

The Shadow moved. His hands pressed against the wall. A squidgy sound - too soft for the policeman to hear - announced a vertical ascent. With suction cups attached to hands and feet, The Shadow was making upward progress, avoiding the windows where lights were showing. His phantom figure neared the third floor.

Here The Shadow paused. He had reached a small balcony - scarcely more than an ornamental railing - that projected from an apartment window. He needed the suction cups no longer. Similar rails showed dimly above. The Shadow's hands gained a hold above. One story - two - he settled upon the fifth-floor balcony, just outside an opened window. He was outside the apartment of Seth Tanning.

Straight across the alleyway was the roof of the warehouse, marked by a whitened parapet of moulding stone. Above that was the dull glow of the Manhattan sky. Crouched at the side of Tanning's window, The Shadow carefully avoided the background of the skyline, for it would have revealed his blackened shape. His keen ears caught the sound of voices, just within the window. Shifting slightly, The Shadow

gazed into the lighted room.

There The Shadow spied the figure of Wainwright Barth. The police commissioner was tall and slightly stooped; he carried his bald head thrust forward in eaglelike fashion. Upon his nose, Barth wore a pair of pince-nez spectacles. His eyes, gleaming through the lenses, were surveying the swarthy countenance of Detective Joe Cardona, here in capacity of acting inspector.

THERE were others in the room: a police sergeant and two officers; a gentleman and a lady whom The Shadow was later to identify as Mr. and Mrs. Clark Doring; also another man who proved to be Handley Brooks, the occupant of a front apartment on this floor. Clyde Burke was not in sight. Evidently Barth had decided that the reporter must wait outside until the investigation was complete.

"Tanning was seated here" - Cardona was indicating a chair at the bridge table - "and his wife was opposite. Wescott over here - his wife in this chair. They were rigid, commissioner, stiff as statues. For a moment, I thought they were dead."

"What made you decide otherwise?" inquired Barth.

"The way they were sitting," responded Cardona. "Holding cards - glasses - like they were in the middle of a game. Then it hit me that they were asleep - but that didn't answer, either. A death sleep - that's what it was."

"So you had them removed?"

"Yes. It's only one block over to the Talleyrand Hospital. I sent for an ambulance and took them there in a hurry. No report from the doctors yet; they're sending for a specialist - Doctor Seton Lagwood - who's connected there. Knows all about paralysis, sleeping sickness and all that."

"I should have liked to have viewed these subjects," decided Barth. "Nevertheless, Cardona, I must commend your action in sending them to the hospital even before you called me. Now that I have arrived, I shall sift this mystery. Let us proceed with those who first arrived."

With this assertion, the commissioner turned to Clark Doring and his wife. The two began to tell their story. Wainwright Barth adjusted his pince-nez and cocked his bald head to one side as he listened. When it came to fathoming mysterious events, the police commissioner imagined himself without an equal.

In this assumption, he was wrong. Within a dozen feet of the commissioner, another listener was stationed, silent and unseen. The Shadow, cloaked in darkness, was ready to catch statements that would pass unnoticed by Wainwright Barth.

For the police commissioner, despite his egotism, was a poor hand at solving crime. There were many in New York who could have beaten him at that game. But none could have equaled the master of deduction who lurked outside that open window.

The Shadow, himself a living enigma, was one to whom all mysteries - no matter how baffling - would be revealed once he had learned the details that accompanied them.

### **CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW DEDUCTS**

CLARK DORING and his wife proved to be an excellent pair of witnesses. Despite the fact that they had been beyond a closed door, their description of events within this apartment was both graphic and illuminating. It was Doring who told the story in accurate detail, while Mrs. Doring affirmed the truth of



her husband's statements.

"An odd fact about the commotion," remarked Doring, as he finished the preliminary details. "The noise stopped after I had pounded rather heavily. It ended with uncanny suddenness."

"So you believe someone heard you?" questioned Barth.

"That is what I thought at the time," replied Doring. "But afterward, I changed my opinion. The noise did not stop while I was hammering at the door. It finished just as I was about to beat away again."

"Ah!" interjected Barth.

"From then on there was silence," resumed Doring. "I rapped after an interval of about one minute; then I waited another minute and pounded. After another pause, I was about to knock again when the telephone commenced to ring."

"Then you waited?"

"Yes. To see if someone answered. I thought for a moment that someone had done so. There was an intermission in the ringing; but it resumed again."

"There's a point, commissioner," put in Cardona. "Someone could have answered that phone. Picked up the receiver and let it down again."

"But I would have heard footsteps," insisted Doring.

"How do you know?" demanded Cardona, sharply.

"There is no rug in the entry," explained Doring. "I have visited here before; whenever Tanning has answered the door, his approach has been quite audible. The telephone is almost at the door."

"Proceed," ordered Barth. "The pause in the ringing is not an important point, Cardona. It requires no explanation. What happened next, Mr. Doring?"

"The ringing continued," replied the witness.

"With another pause," added his wife. "Like the first one - quite brief."

"You see?" Barth turned to Cardona. "That proves my opinion. Proceed, Mr. Doring."

"When the ringing suddenly ceased," stated Doring, "I told Mabel - my wife - to summon the elevator operator. When the elevator arrived, Mr. Brooks stepped off. We told him and the operator about the mystery. I went to the front apartment with Mr. Brooks and called detective headquarters."

"Very well." Barth began to pace back and forth across the room. He paused to study the card table, cocking his head as he did so. He adjusted his spectacles and turned to Cardona.

"Everything is as you found it?" inquired the commissioner, sharply.

"Yes," replied Cardona, "except for the victims. The window was open, commissioner."

Barth turned in the direction indicated. He could see the outline of the balcony rail against the sky that showed above the parapet of the warehouse.

"A balcony," observed the commissioner. "Did you inspect there, Cardona?"

"Yes. No sign of anybody. We made an inspection up from the bottom - using a man that the sergeant posted down there - and we didn't find a trace of any intruder."

"Hm-m-m." Barth removed his spectacles and polished them, blinking owlishly as he did so. "Well, the evening has been quite warm for this season. An opened window would be expected. Have you searched the other apartments on this floor?"

"Yes," responded Cardona. "There are four, altogether. Two have no occupants; the superintendent has the keys and he let us in. Nothing wrong in any of them."

"This one and two others," observed Barth, wisely, as he put on his pince-nez. "That makes only three. What about the fourth?"

"Mr. Brooks lives there. We looked around thoroughly. Nobody hiding. I don't see how any outsider could have been in this, commissioner - and yet I -"

"Yet what?"

"The telephone. It must have been a dialed call, the way Mr. and Mrs. Doring describe it. I can't see why it made those two breaks. No one could have been responsible -"

"Preposterous!" interjected Barth. "Every iota of testimony points to the contrary, Cardona. Someone must have approached the telephone to touch it. Mr. Doring would have heard him."

"Someone could have been there to begin with."

"Then Mr. Doring would have heard him move away."

Cardona was silent. Barth's testy comment damaged the detective's theory.

CONVINCED that no one had been in the room - except, of course, the victims - Cardona began to realize that he was only complicating matters. Having squelched the detective, Barth raised his head imposingly.

"We are dealing," he declared, "with a remarkable mystery that must be solved by science; not by the law. We have encountered the phenomenon of four persons suddenly struck by an unknown ailment which Cardona has aptly described as a 'death sleep.' The victims of this amazing malady are receiving medical attention.

"We shall examine the contents of these glasses here upon the table. Possibly some toxic substance was surreptitiously introduced. A chemical analysis will answer that question. But I feel certain, in advance, that the liquids will show nothing extraordinary.

"I base this assumption upon the fact that the victims were overcome simultaneously. As you can observe, all were not drinking. There are only two glasses upon the table at present. Were this an ordinary case of foul play, the persons would have succumbed one by one. It remains a strange case; and we must depend upon the medical authorities for their answer."

Finished with his statements, Wainwright Barth reached for the notations that Cardona had prepared. The commissioner read them aloud. The notes consisted of statements by witnesses, in which the time of the peculiar occurrence had been established as precisely midnight. Barth checked on other details. The party had apparently been in progress since eight o'clock. Doring and his wife, leaving for the theater at that hour, had received a call from Tanning asking them to stop in when the show was over.

"The death sleep," commented Barth, as he dismissed the witnesses and prepared to leave. "An apt title, Cardona. I believe that I shall go to the Talleyrand Hospital and view the victims. Let me state again, however, that we are dealing with a malady. This mystery has naught to do with crime.

"Motive seems absent. This apartment is isolated; no one could have gained access and departed unobserved. The presence of persons in the hallway - people who heard sounds of life; then silence - is proof that crime has no connection."

A few minutes later, the apartment was deserted. The bridge lamp had been turned off. Darkness was broken only by the dull glow of the sky-line beyond the warehouse. It was then that blackness obscured a portion of the window. The form of The Shadow moved into the apartment.

THE SHADOW had heard all the statements. The probing ray of a tiny flashlight was his means of checking on the details. Gloved fingers touched the surface of the card table. They lifted; the cloth seemed to restrain them slightly.

The same effect resulted when The Shadow stooped to the floor and examined a rug just beyond the table. The bare floor, however, produced no such effect. It was only in the vicinity of the table that The Shadow discovered this slight trace of stickiness.

Yet as he traced, The Shadow discovered that the area formed a wide circle. Its center was not the table itself, but a spot just to one side and beyond. The wall at the right of the room, looking in from the window, was a trifle sticky to a point three feet above the floor.

When The Shadow stood at the center point of this odd circle, he found himself facing directly toward the window. The card table was a slight space away from that line. A soft laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. The cloaked form moved to the window, through the opening and to the balcony.

The patrol had been ended below. Yet The Shadow did not descend. Instead, he rose upon the rail, grasped the bottom of a balcony above and swung up to the next floor. Outside the window of a darkened apartment, he stared across the alleyway.

The roof of the warehouse was visible from here. The Shadow spied a trapdoor opening that showed beneath the glare from the sky. Again the laugh as The Shadow looked beyond the parapet. It was less than twenty feet from warehouse to apartment building.

The Shadow descended. He resorted to the suction cups after he had passed the third-floor balcony. He merged with the darkness of the paved space between the buildings. From then on, The Shadow's course was untraceable.

A CLICK in a darkened room. Bluish light shone upon a polished table. The Shadow was in his sanctum. A white hand began to move from the darkness; holding a pen, it inscribed words upon a sheet of paper. Written inscriptions faded as the blue ink dried. Such was the way with the special fluid that The Shadow used when putting his deductions on paper.

The first jotted words were notations of the testimony that The Shadow had heard. Then came agreement that no one had entered Tanning's apartment. After that, The Shadow marked down the result of his own findings.

Outside factor.

The Shadow was thinking of the warehouse roof. He was visualizing a lurker there. The opened window was an easy target for the projection of some substance from the parapet. The Shadow knew that this

alone could account for the simultaneous effect that had been produced upon the victims.

Gaseous substance.

This was a logical assumption. The stickiness had indicated a wide range. A disintegrating bomb, loaded with poisonous gas, could well have overpowered the people at the card table. The interval between that occurrence and the arrival of rescuers had given the atmosphere time to clear.

A soft laugh from The Shadow's lips. Visualizing the person upon the roof, The Shadow could see two reasons why he had chosen to attack from that range. First, because it made entry into the apartment unnecessary; second, because it kept the attacker free from the effects of the gas itself. The Shadow's next statement was a follow-up.

Choice of victims.

Nothing indicated any reason for an enemy to overpower the four persons who had been in the apartment. It followed, therefore, that the deed had been of an experimental nature. This fitted with The Shadow's deductions. No better spot could have been chosen for a test.

The attacker had evidently found it necessary to keep out of range of the gas. That meant the tossing of a bomb. Why had he picked this one apartment? The answer was simple - to The Shadow. Only apartments on the fifth floor of the Vanderpool were accessible to the bomb-tosser. Only two of those apartments were tenanted; and of the two, only Tanning's had been occupied this evening. Handley Brooks had not returned until after midnight.

The telephone calls.

Again, the whispered laugh. The Shadow had correctly analyzed the ringing that Doring had heard. Cardona had been right, the bell should not have made its pauses. But the detective had failed to guess the truth.

Those calls had been prearranged to follow the zero hour at which a lurker had tossed his projectile, namely, at midnight. There had been three calls - not one - but all by the same person. The man on the roof had not waited to see the effects of his work. Instead, he had relied upon some other worker.

That person had dialed Tanning's number, probably from a pay station. Receiving no response, he had hung up, waited a few seconds, then put in another call, perhaps from a different booth. He had again hung up; then repeated the procedure.

In this manner, he had assured himself that the victims had succumbed. He had used three calls to be positive that he was ringing the correct number. Thus the effect of the experiment had been learned. The Shadow laughed as he wrote down the name of Handley Brooks and crossed it out.

The arrival of Brooks might have meant complicity. Brooks could have come to see if the scheme had worked. But the telephone calls cleared him. They proved that a simpler and less dangerous system had been used to check up on results.

The location.

With these words, The Shadow linked his thoughts to his first written statement. Why had Tanning and his guests been overpowered? Why had these four been chosen? The accessibility of the apartment did not account entirely for it. There were many other places in New York where victims could have been found.

WAS it random choice; or did it have a meaning? The fact that the Vanderpool Apartments were located close to a hospital had resulted in a prompt and definite removal of the victims. This was a point that impressed The Shadow. His soft laugh indicated that he intended to observe events at the Talleyrand Hospital.

Motive. Crime.

There were the final words. They disagreed with the decision of Commissioner Wainwright Barth. The Shadow had found a motive where Barth had failed. For the commissioner had been considering the present; while The Shadow was looking toward the future.

The Shadow saw purpose behind the loosing of the death sleep. Some evildoer had gained possession of a formidable instrument that could mysteriously overpower those who might oppose him. Not only that: the method, itself, had baffling features.

Seth Tanning and his guests had been chosen as victims for various reasons. The accessibility of the apartment, its location were two points. The fact that the bridge players had been persons of some social consequence was another factor. The apparent absence of a criminal motive was a feeler to learn what the reaction of the law might be.

So far, the law was baffled. That would please the perpetrators of the outrage. Somewhere in New York, men of crime would be sitting back, watching and waiting. They knew that the appearance of the death sleep would crash the front pages of the newspapers. Posted, these evildoers would be ready for new action.

A grim laugh sounded in the sanctum. The Shadow was planning a counterstroke against impending events. He knew that the death sleep would be delivered to new victims. More than that, when it again appeared, crime would follow in its wake.

A tiny light appeared upon the wall beyond the table as The Shadow reached for a pair of earphones. Burbank's voice came over the wire. The Shadow's whisper sounded. Through Burbank, the master who battled crime was giving orders to his agents. Those relayed messages would reach capable operatives.

The Shadow, too, would be active. Foreseeing unparalleled crime, The Shadow was launching his campaign. Evil would be due. It might strike, despite The Shadow. But the perpetrators of crime would meet opposition other than that of the baffled police. Before their schemes were completed, they would face the power of The Shadow.

Whispered orders ended. The tiny light went out. The earphones clattered to the wall. Then came a click; the sanctum was plunged in darkness. From the Stygian gloom came a sardonic laugh that cleaved the blackness. Shuddering echoes answered.

When the last sounds had died, the sanctum was empty. Deductions ended, orders given, The Shadow had fared forth from his secret abode.

## **CHAPTER IV. THE BIG SHOT**

NOON in Manhattan. A short, stocky, ugly-faced rowdy was seated by the window of an apartment living room, chuckling over a newspaper. He was attired in a garish dressing gown with bright green trimmings that clashed with the dull maroon furnishings of the room.

The ugliness of the fellow's countenance was increased by the grin that he wore. Fanglike teeth showed between bloated lips. They gave the man an expression that an observer would easily remember. In the

parlance of the underworld, no one could have failed to "spot that mug." The man by the window was "Wolf" Barlan, notorious racketeer.

Seated a short distance away was a well-dressed, crafty-faced fellow whose shrewd eyes watched the expression on Wolf's face. This individual was also known in the bad lands. He was "Spud" Claxter, suave, persuasive mouthpiece who had served a dozen masters. His presence here had double indication: first, that Spud was working for Wolf; second, that no one knew that the pair had teamed.

For Spud had that marked ability of appearing to be on his own. He knew how to keep underlings in line, to make them think that he was planning action of his own accord. That was why Spud had profited by shady business. Actual big shots who wanted dirty work accomplished could always depend upon Spud Claxter. Yet he, like Wolf Barlan, had been inactive recently. This fact was to come out during their conversation.

"DEATH sleep strikes four," chuckled Wolf Barlan. "Say, Spud, the news hounds have got something to think about. This is just the sort of hooey we want. Physicians puzzled by the mysterious malady. They got that specialist on the job - Doctor Seton Lagwood. That's the way I figured it would work."

"Yeah?" questioned Spud. "Well, that's the part I don't like. That croaker is a smart guy, Wolf. Knows all about sleeping sickness and paralysis. The newspapers have been talking about the cures he's worked on. I'd have fixed it so those stiffies were shipped to some different hospital, instead of the Talleyrand. Then some dumb doc might have got hold of them - not this fellow Lagwood."

"Listen, Spud." Wolf's voice was a growl. "I'm running this racket - not you. It ain't your job to pass out advice. I'm leaving the strong-arm end to you."

"All right, Wolf."

"But I ain't saying you're not smart." Wolf paused cannily. "And it's not bad dope to get opinions from a guy like you. You take what I order; if there's any explanation coming, listen in and talk when I ask you. Get that?"

Spud nodded.

"Let's look the lay over," resumed Wolf, as he plucked a cigarette from a box on a table beside him. "I've been mighty careful with my plans. I brought you in because I needed some smooth workers and I wanted you to get them."

"Which I did," reminded Spud.

"Yeah," agreed Wolf. "First there was Skeet Wurrick. He lamped the lay down at Valdan's. Made sure the old boy went out of town yesterday afternoon. That gave Zug Poley the chance to go in and grab the stuff we wanted. He got it to the hide-out like he was supposed to.

"Meanwhile, Skeet picks that apartment of Tanning's. A cinch from the warehouse across the way. Near the Talleyrand Hospital. Skeet tips off Zug to heave the bomb at midnight. Zug does it. He beats it while Skeet is watching the time and making phone calls to see if the stuff worked.

"All goes great. Too late for the morning papers. When Valdan gets back to New York, he won't be wise until he picks up one of these afternoon sheets" - Wolf rustled the newspaper that he was holding - "and the chances are he won't get a chance to read one."

"On account of Zug being ready," chuckled Spud.

"That's it," agreed Wolf. "Skeet swiped Valdan's papers. Zug moved out the stuff. Even if Valdan does read an afternoon newspaper, he won't do nothing until he gets back to his joint. Then it's curtains."

Wolf leaned back and puffed his cigarette. He eyed Spud, who was nodding; but he caught a questioning glance in his henchman's eye. Wolf laughed.

"It's all clear to you," chuckled the big shot, "except the reason why I picked the Talleyrand Hospital. You can't see no reason for it. Well, I'm going to put you wise. What happens at any hospital when they get some kind of a case that they can't figure out?"

"They call in a specialist - some croaker who knows more than the rest of them."

"Sure. But where do they get him?"

"They pick the best bird who's hooked up with the hospital, don't they?"

"You guessed it. But suppose he don't get anywhere with the job. What happens then?"

"Well" - Spud paused speculatively - "I guess the croaker goes out and talks things over with some other big boys. Looks for advice."

"That's it," nodded Wolf. "A consultation. All the smartest croakers come in on the case. Do you get the point now?"

"Not yet."

"Here's the answer. Sooner or later, this Doctor Lagwood would get called on. See the idea? He's a hot-shot on this sleeping sickness, like you said. Runs a sanitarium out on Long Island. Comes into the Talleyrand Hospital certain days every week. Now if there's any croaker who might figure out this gag of ours - the death sleep, they've begun to call it - the one guy is Doctor Lagwood."

"That's what I said in the beginning."

"All right," Wolf leered. "Suppose other croakers got the victims first. They'd be stumped; then Lagwood would horn in to help them out. Since they called him in, he'd have to tell them any ideas he got, wouldn't he?"

"Sure."

"Then suppose he doped out something that would make trouble for us. A lot of croakers would be wise right away, wouldn't they?"

"Yeah."

"All right." Wolf tossed his cigarette stump into an ash stand. "That's why I wanted those four people to go to the Talleyrand Hospital. This wise croaker, Doctor Lagwood, will handle the cases all by himself. Without telling nobody, see?"

"Then if he makes trouble, we'll have a cinch. Rub Lagwood out and the other croakers will have to start in at the beginning. By shoving this under Lagwood's nose right away, we've fixed it so we've only got one bird to deal with."

WOLF reached for another cigarette, grinning with satisfaction. Spud's crafty eyes had opened in understanding. When the underling spoke, it was with profound admiration.

"Say, Wolf!" blurted Spud. "You've doped it out nifty. I get the whole idea now. That's why you've got Skeet hanging around, up there at the hospital. Watching to see how Lagwood makes out!"

"Sure," laughed Wolf. "But that ain't all. Look here; if the stuff works the way it's supposed to, those saps are going to wake up inside of forty-eight hours."

"Yeah."

"And who'll get the credit?"

"Lagwood."

"Sure. Then, when we put the death sleep on some new victims, what will the police do when they find the stiff?"

"Take them to some hospital."

"Yeah; but what hospital?"

"I get it!" exclaimed Spud. "They'll ship them to the Talleyrand, on account of this croaker Lagwood. He'll be the big noise - the one doc they'll leave in charge."

"That's it," affirmed Wolf. "We'll be playing the same alley all the way along. These croakers are smart boys, Spud. They don't tell each other all they know. They call in help when they're stuck; but when they're riding high, they keep mum and let the rest of the profession guess."

"So the more luck Lagwood has, the better. We've shoved the whole works his way. It'll be a cinch for Skeet to watch what's going on at the hospital. Maybe he can get one of those attendant jobs; he says some mugs were fired for hitting the booze last week. Well - if he manages that, he can keep mighty close to what Lagwood's doing."

"And if the croaker finds out too much," put in Spud, "we can have Zug rub him out."

"That's the ticket," assured Wolf, "but we're leaving Mr. Sawbones alone as long as we can. Skeet reports to you. From you, the word comes to me. Then I give the orders back to you."

Spud Claxter nodded as he arose. He knew his business. He was the go-between; and he was too wise to aspire to any higher office. Serving as leader of Wolf Barlan's minions was already a profitable job. Spud knew that he had been chosen because Wolf knew of his previous services to big shots. Spud was smiling wisely when he left the apartment.

WOLF BARLAN remained smoking by the window after Spud had gone. The big shot showed his fanglike smile. It increased the ugliness of his yellow, unshaven face. Wolf Barlan was pleased. He felt that he had accomplished something by his talk with Spud Claxter.

The ring of the telephone interrupted the big shot's reverie. Wolf reached for the instrument - it was on the table beside him - and held a short, grunted conversation over the wire. Laying the telephone aside, he resumed his smile as he stared toward the sky-line of Manhattan.

Wolf Barlan was in the money. His rackets had been shot; he had retired to obscurity waiting for better times. Then had come opportunity. Wolf Barlan was a big shot who had contacts. He had learned of a new instrument that could serve in crime. He had called in Spud Claxter; through the services of this lieutenant, he had gained what he required.



Last night had been the test. The death sleep had worked. The future lay open. New henchmen would be needed; Wolf could acquire them through Spud. Hidden, the big shot could launch a campaign of terror and profit that would be under constant control.

He could pick his victims. He would know where they were going for treatment. He could learn the results and act accordingly. Wolf had made money from his old rackets. So far as the law knew, he was extinct - retired from crooked games and living in luxury purely upon his previous profits.

Another ring of the telephone. Wolf answered it and held another abrupt conversation with the new speaker. His smile had increased when he hung up the receiver. Secret informants - men unknown to Spud Claxter - were giving Wolf the tips he needed.

Swift crime - effective strokes - these were the policies with which Wolf Barlan expected to defy the law. The big shot felt confident of sure success. He could foresee nothing that might obstruct his path.

Wolf Barlan, however, had not as yet given thought to powers that lay beyond the law. Elated by the result of last night's experiment, he believed that the death sleep would remain a perfect weapon for the commission of crime. There was no one, in the big shot's opinion, who could challenge the methods that he planned to use.

Such confidence had caused Wolf Barlan to neglect consideration of one important factor. In all his careful planning, the big shot had studied the methods of the law, alone. He had not considered the power of The Shadow.

## **CHAPTER V. DEATH AT DUSK**

LATE that same afternoon, a taxicab pulled up in front of an old house that fronted on a quiet street of the upper East Side. A gray-haired man alighted and brought out a satchel. He paid the driver and ascended the brownstone steps of the old house.

Urchins, at play on the opposite side of the street, had stopped their frolic to gawk at the old gentleman from the taxi. It was an event when a cab delivered a passenger in this street. The only respectable-looking house in the entire block was the one that the man was entering. All the other buildings were either empty or tenanted by clustered families that lived in tenement fashion.

A solemn-faced servant answered the gray-haired man's ring. He reached for the satchel, then stood aside while the arrival entered. The servant followed in obsequious fashion. No words were uttered until the gray-haired man had reached the inner hall and the servant was ready to go upstairs with the satchel.

"Anything unusual, Crowder?" inquired the old man, speaking for the first time.

"Nothing, Mr. Valdan," replied the servant.

"Where is Benzig?" asked Valdan.

"Below, sir," replied Crowder. "In the laboratory."

"Very well. I shall go there at once."

The gray-haired man descended a flight of stairs. When he reached the bottom, he arrived in a large room that was fitted with work tables and other items of equipment. Large beakers, Bunsen burners, racks of test tubes and shelves stocked with bottles announced the place as a chemical laboratory.

A wan-faced man was at one of the tables. He was pounding with a pestle, grinding powder in a mortar.

He stopped work as Valdan arrived. Removing a pair of rubber gloves, this assistant stood by, as though expecting orders.

"Good afternoon, Benzig," greeted Valdan, in a crackly tone. "What progress have you made during my absence?"

"Quite a bit, sir," responded Benzig. "I have completed the three compounds which you required. The quantity of the first seemed insufficient, so I am preparing more."

"Very good. Has all been well since yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have there been any visitors?"

"Only the delivery men, sir."

"What delivery men?"

"They brought three boxes, sir," explained Benzig. "Large cases, they were, with laboratory equipment. They were sure that the consignment was intended for you."

"I ordered no new equipment."

"That is what I told them. But they were argumentative. So I went upstairs and questioned Crowder to learn if he knew anything of the matter. I thought perhaps you had forgotten to tell me that a consignment was due. Crowder knew nothing about it, so I sent the delivery men away."

"With the boxes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hm-m-m." Valdan looked perplexed. He stared across the laboratory, toward a bolted door. "You have been careful to keep the outer door locked?"

"Yes," replied the assistant. "Of course I opened it for the delivery men; but I bolted it as soon as they had gone. Then, today, when they brought the guinea pigs -"

"The guinea pigs?"

"Yes, sir. The same men. They came back with a crate of guinea pigs. They said they had been mistaken about the shipments. The equipment was for another laboratory. The guinea pigs were consigned to you."

"I ordered no guinea pigs."

"No?" Benzig looked surprised. "There were only a few left, sir! I thought of course this second consignment must be a correct one."

"Where did you put the guinea pigs?"

"In your private laboratory, sir, where you always keep them."

VALDAN stalked across the big room. He reached an inner door and opened it. He stepped into a small laboratory where a confused array of boxes was strewn on a table. Benzig followed his employer.

He pointed to a crate of guinea pigs which lay in a corner at the right side of the room.

"Probably a duplicate assignment," crackled Valdan, in a querulous tone. "What did you do with the few covies that I still had here?"

"I put them in this crate with the new guinea pigs," replied Benzig. "I let the delivery men take the old box away with them."

Valdan nodded. He looked about the room while Benzig watched him. This small laboratory was a curious place. Its small amount of equipment was located in the center, directly opposite the door, at the spot where the box-strewn table stood.

There was a door to a closet at the left side of the room. At the right, just beyond the box of guinea pigs, the entire wall formed a huge file cabinet that went up to the ceiling. The drawers were marked with cards that listed numbers. A step-ladder was handy, as a means of reaching the higher files.

To Benzig, this small laboratory was a room of mystery. Like the outer door of the large laboratory, it was fitted with a bolt. Whenever Troxton Valdan used this room for experiments, he invariably entered and bolted the door behind him.

When Valdan was absent from the house, the door of the little laboratory remained unlocked, for it was fitted with bolt alone. On these occasions, Benzig was very careful about the outer door of the large laboratory, for it opened between this house and the next and might easily prove a lurking place for intruders bent on robbery.

Troxton Valdan registered annoyance as Benzig watched him. The gray-haired chemist seemed perplexed by these matters of delivery. When he spoke again, his tone was critical.

"I have confidence in you, Benzig," declared Valdan. "I chose you as an assistant chiefly because I was sure you would not pry into my private experiments."

"I have never done so," reminded Benzig.

"I am sure of that," agreed Valdan, "but I also had faith in your discretion, Benzig. I am disappointed. You must be more careful in the future. You must not permit delivery men to prowls about these laboratories."

"I am sure that they touched nothing, sir -"

"How can you be sure? You admitted that you went upstairs to speak to Crowder."

"That was yesterday, sir. But today, I remained in the outer laboratory while the men brought the crate in here."

"Stupid of you! You should have come in here with them."

"But they were only in here long enough to leave the crate of guinea pigs. I entered as they were leaving. That was when I transferred the extra guinea pigs and called the men back to take the old crate."

"That is sufficient." Valdan moved over toward the table. "Where is my afternoon newspaper, Benzig?"

"It should be on the table, sir. Crowder invariably brings it here."

"Did he do so today?"

"I think so, Mr. Valdan."

"Think!" cackled the chemist, in an irritated tone. "If you did any real thinking, Benzig, you would know whether or not Crowder placed the journal here. I hired you as an assistant, Benzig, not as a dummy."

Valdan was rummaging among the boxes on the table. He uncovered one that was partly obscured by others. He raised the lid and peered inside. The box contained two guinea pigs. Both of the covies were motionless. Valdan rapped at the side of the box, tapping with his fingers upon punctured air holes. The guinea pigs did not budge. Valdan replaced the cover of the box.

The chemist turned suddenly, expecting to see Benzig. The assistant was no longer in view. Valdan stared about suspiciously; then closed the door of the laboratory and shot the bolt. He stooped and peered below the table. There, an old piece of carpeting was draped over a wooden box. Valdan chuckled and began to rise. Then, to make sure, he stooped again and pulled away the old carpet.

A gasp came from the chemist's lips. Apparently, this was not the box that Valdan had expected to find. He was puzzled by its shape and its appearance. The lid was nailed in place. Seizing a hammer that lay upon the table, Valdan pried away a board. He stared into the box. Its only contents were some short lengths of rusted iron pipe.

THE chemist scrambled to his feet. He stared wildly at the door that he had bolted; then looked toward the file cabinets at the end of the room. Hurrying in that direction, Valdan seized the little ladder and mounted to the highest step. With quivering hands, he pulled open a drawer that bore the numbers: 96-115.

Large folders filled the drawer. Valdan rummaged through them, muttering numbers half aloud. His voice became a hoarse, anxious whisper:

"One hundred and nine - one hundred and ten - one hundred eleven -"

The chemist stopped short. The number that he had just named was missing. He gripped an envelope that bore the number 110. The next one in the drawer was 112.

"Benzig!" The chemist blurted the name, in a wild call for his missing assistant. "Benzig!"

Valdan had forgotten that he had bolted the door. A slight sound from behind him made him think that his assistant had returned. Scrambling downward from the ladder, Valdan began to turn. A click from the door; the little laboratory, windowless, was plunged in darkness. A form sprang forward; Valdan grappled with an unseen assailant.

The struggle was short-lived. Valdan toppled to the floor. Hands gripped his head and pounded it fiercely upon the stone flooring. Fierce panting sounded in the darkness. Then the vicious assailant held his breath and listened. No further sound came from Troxton Valdan.

The killer arose. Though he tiptoed, his footfalls clicked strangely in that darkened room. Then came the grate of the bolt as Valdan's attacker drew it back. Eyes peered into the deserted outer laboratory. The killer moved forth and closed the door behind him.

Deep stillness reigned in the inner room. Minutes passed; then the door opened and an astonished exclamation came in the voice of Benzig. The assistant seemed surprised to find the room in darkness.

"I - I thought Mr. Valdan was in here!" Benzig was speaking to Crowder, who had come with him. "But - but the light is out -"

Crowder's hand pressed the switch. Then came blurted exclamations from both servant and assistant. Standing just inside the doorway, they stared at the prone form of their employer. Troxton Valdan was lying face up on the floor, at the bottom of the ladder. His feet were beside the lowest step.

The chemist's head was resting in a pool of blood. His skull had been fractured by that smash against the floor. Crowder and Benzig staring, both had the same thought. The servant was the first to voice it, in an awed gasp.

"Dead!" whispered Crowder, tensely. "The master - Mr. Valdan - someone has killed him!"

## **CHAPTER VI. TWO GUINEA PIGS**

ONE hour after Crowder and Benzig had discovered the body of Troxton Valdan, Police Commissioner Wainwright Barth emerged from a telephone booth at the Cobalt Club. He hurried excitedly to the cloak room and thrust his head across the counter while he pointed out his coat and hat. He wanted the garments quickly.

Seizing his coat from the attendant, Barth began to put it on as he hastened toward the outer door. As he neared the exit, the commissioner bumped into another person who was entering. Grasping his spectacles just as they were about to drop from his nose, Barth found himself face to face with Lamont Cranston.

"Sorry, commissioner," remarked the millionaire, in his quiet manner. "What is the trouble?"

"An important police case," responded Barth, pausing long enough to explain his haste. "A strange death that requires my personal investigation."

"You have your car here?"

"No. I intend to take a cab."

"Not at all. My limousine is outside. At your service, Mr. Barth."

Turning, Cranston accompanied the commissioner to the sidewalk. Stanley caught the door man's signal. The limousine rolled over to the curb. Cranston motioned Stanley to remain at the wheel. While the Cobalt Club attendant was opening the door of the car, Cranston gave instructions.

"Drive Commissioner Barth wherever he orders," said Cranston, to Stanley. "Keep the car at his disposal. Simply telephone me, Stanley, so that I shall know where to reach you."

"This is fine of you, Cranston!" exclaimed Barth, as he was stepping into the limousine. "But I shall not accept the latter part of your offer. As soon as I have reached my destination, I shall send the car back here. That is" - the commissioner paused - "unless -"

"Unless what?" queried Cranston, quietly.

"Unless you should care to go along," completed Barth. "Perhaps" - the commissioner's tone was slightly condescending - "perhaps you might be interested in observing the law at work."

"Very well," responded Cranston, with the slightest trace of a smile upon his thin lips. "Suppose I accompany you, commissioner."

With that he entered the car and passed the speaking tube to Barth. The commissioner gave Stanley the address of Troxton Valdan's home. The limousine rolled northward, while Barth talked to Cranston.

"I WAS summoned last night," explained the commissioner, "to view the scene of an extraordinary mystery. Of course you have read about it in the newspaper, Cranston. I refer to the strange death sleep that overpowered four victims."

"I glanced at the headlines," responded Cranston, "but I did not read the details. Are the victims recovering?"

"Their condition had not changed at three o'clock this afternoon. I received a report from the physician in charge - Doctor Seton Lagwood."

"I have heard of him. A specialist in such maladies as sleeping sickness."

"Yes. Somewhat radical in his methods of treatment, I understand, and therefore the very man to handle these cases."

"Why so?"

"Because the victims were overcome by what appears to be a new malady. A more conservative physician would not give these cases the thorough attention that Lagwood has exhibited. I believe that the coincidence was most fortunate."

"To what coincidence do you refer?"

"The episode," explained Barth, "took place in an apartment building not far from the Talleyrand Hospital. Hence the victims were taken there for treatment. The Talleyrand chances to be the one Manhattan hospital that relies solely upon Doctor Lagwood in cases of this sort."

"Quite a coincidence," responded Cranston. "What of the case which now summons you, commissioner?"

"It concerns the death of a chemist named Troxton Valdan," stated Barth. "Nothing to do with last night's occurrence. We proved conclusively that crime was absent at the apartment of Seth Tanning. But there is evidence of crime at Troxton Valdan's."

"Detective Cardona - acting inspector for the present - is under instructions to notify me of any unusual cases that he encounters. He called me at the club to tell me of this one. It appears that Troxton Valdan was found dead in his laboratory; and the evidence balances between foul play and accidental death. The very type of case that requires my personal attention."

WHEN the limousine pulled up in front of Valdan's house, a policeman appeared and saluted the commissioner. The officer led the way up the brownstone steps and down the inner stairway into the large laboratory. Here Barth and Cranston were met by Joe Cardona, who led them into the smaller room. They viewed Valdan's body. Barth looked toward the police surgeon who had just completed an examination.

"Death was instantaneous, commissioner," reported the physician. "Caused by a fracture at the back of the skull. His head must have received a terrific blow."

"A fall from the ladder would have been sufficient?"

"Yes. The man looks like he was a healthy specimen; but he is certainly well along in his sixties. Vertigo would not be unexpected. The effort of climbing the ladder could have caused it."

"Then the evidence points to accidental death."

Barth made this statement in a tone of assurance. It brought a smile from Cardona, who was standing by. The detective invariably encountered a problem when he dealt with the police commissioner. Barth had a tendency to be over-critical of Cardona's judgment; to form conclusions that were designed to belittle the detective's theories. In this case, Cardona had waited for Barth to form a half-baked decision; and the commissioner had fallen for the ruse.

"Quite simple," amplified Barth, turning to Cranston. "One must avoid the usual tendency that is a common fault of police investigators. The average detective attempts to connect crime with every death that he views.

"Here we have a dead man - well advanced in years - lying with fractured skull at the foot of a ladder. It is obvious that he opened that high drawer" - Barth pointed toward the ceiling - "and lost his balance. The fall killed him. Of course, Cardona" - the commissioner smiled indulgently as he turned to the detective - "I must commend you for notifying me so promptly regarding this case. Even though my judgment merely supports the obvious conclusion, you showed wisdom in bringing me to this scene."

"Just a moment, commissioner," remarked the detective. "There is one point about this case that I didn't have a chance to explain. This room is not exactly as it was just after the death of Troxton Valdan."

"Ah!" Barth's countenance changed suddenly. "You mean that you have found some piece of evidence? Or that something has been removed?"

"Neither," replied Cardona. "I have touched nothing."

"But you have made some change since your arrival?"

"None. The room is exactly as I found it. But it is not as it was when these men" - Cardona indicated Benzig and Crowder - "when these employees of Valdan's entered."

"What!" exclaimed Barth. "You mean that they deliberately muddled matters?"

"Not at all," declared Cardona. "On the contrary, commissioner, they performed a very simple and necessary action immediately after they opened the door."

"What was that?" demanded Barth, perplexed.

"They turned on the light," responded Cardona, with a smile.

WAINWRIGHT BARTH stood staring. His bald head glistened, while his eyes blinked through the pince-nez spectacles. Caught off guard, the commissioner was still puzzled. While Barth stood silent, Cardona spoke.

"Taking the obvious, commissioner," the detective stated, "we can agree that Valdan was on that ladder, looking through the file. But it is not logical that he was doing it without any light. You can't go through a filing cabinet in a pitch dark room."

"You should have told me this when I arrived," snapped Barth. "This places a different aspect on the entire case. Come; let me hear what the witnesses have to say."

"Here are their statements."

"Let them repeat them, in brief."

Cardona beckoned Benzig forward. The assistant was nervous. Cardona introduced him, then ordered

the man to repeat his story.

"I was in here with Mr. Valdan," testified Benzig. "He had just returned from a trip out of town. He was annoyed because he did not find the evening newspaper on his table. So I took the opportunity to go and find Crowder."

"Why?" quizzed Barth.

"Because it was Crowder's duty to leave the newspaper here, I crossed the outer laboratory. Then I heard the door of this room close. I decided that Mr. Valdan wanted to be alone. In fact, I thought sir - but I can not be quite sure - that I heard Mr. Valdan slide the bolt after he had closed the door."

"Was that his custom?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"Because he had experiments of his own. I never ventured to inquire into their nature. My work was in the outer laboratory. Mere routine, sir."

"What did you do after the door closed?" inquired Barth.

"I continued upstairs," resumed Benzig. "I looked for Crowder. I called but he did not answer. So I went up to the second floor - that is, the third floor, if you count this as the first -"

"I understand. Proceed."

"When I came down, I found Crowder. He had come from the kitchen, sir. I mentioned the matter of the newspaper. He was quite surprised. He stated that he had placed it in this little laboratory. So he came along with me, to inform Mr. Valdan of the fact."

"Then you both returned together?"

"Yes, sir. We should have knocked at the door; but I opened it without thinking. I was surprised to note that the light was out. Crowder pressed the switch, sir. Then - then we saw the body."

BARTH cocked his head and studied the mild-faced assistant. Benzig seemed to shrink under the commissioner's eagle gaze. Barth waved Benzig aside and spoke to Crowder.

"Your story," ordered the commissioner.

"I was in the kitchen," stated the solemn servant. "I was preparing a light supper for Mr. Valdan. I chanced to come out into the hallway; I found Benzig there. He told me that he had been calling for me and that he had looked about on the upper floor.

"Then he mentioned the newspaper, sir. So I came down here with him. Benzig opened the door. I turned on the light. I saw Mr. Valdan's body."

Barth studied the servant in the same fashion as he had eyed the assistant. He paced back and forth beside Valdan's body. He swung suddenly to Benzig and snapped a question.

"You think that Valdan bolted the door?" questioned the commissioner.

"Yes," replied Benzig. "But it may have been my imagination. You see, sir, Mr. Valdan had spoken about



the outer door - the one in the large laboratory - the door that leads to the little alleyway between this house and the next -"

"What did he say about it?"

"He made sure that it was bolted, sir. That was before he came in here."

"Is that outer door bolted now?" demanded Barth, turning to Cardona.

"No," replied the detective. "The bolt is drawn."

"But I bolted it, sir!" exclaimed Benzig. "After the delivery men left the box of guinea pigs. I am sure I did so, for Mr. Valdan checked on it."

"Delivery men?" questioned Barth, of Cardona. "Who were they?"

"I have Benzig's complete statement here," declared the detective. "There was a wrong delivery of equipment yesterday; today the same men brought an unordered crate of guinea pigs. Shall I have Benzig repeat his statements?"

"No," snapped Barth, suddenly. "Remove these witnesses. We must examine this room at once."

POLICEMEN conducted Benzig and Crowder from the room. Barth closed the door and studied the bolt very closely. Cardona remarked that there were no finger prints. Barth shot the bolt and turned to the detective.

"Tell me about the delivery men," ordered Barth.

"Yesterday," stated the detective, referring to his notes, "several men showed up with three boxes that they said contained laboratory equipment. This is according to Benzig's testimony."

"I understand. Proceed."

"Benzig says he unbolted the outer door and let them in. Valdan had gone away; he had said nothing about the equipment. So Benzig went upstairs and asked Crowder. The servant knew nothing. Benzig returned and sent the men away with the boxes."

"I see. And they returned today?"

"Yes. With a crate of guinea pigs. Benzig let them put the crate in here. This is it - over here by the body."

"Why did Benzig accept the consignment of guinea pigs? Did he say?"

"Valdan used guinea pigs for some purpose. Had them around the laboratory. Benzig thought the shipment was O.K. - so he says."

Cardona expected another question from the commissioner. It did not come. With one of his abrupt changes of tack, Barth began to pace across the room. He stopped by the table. Cardona joined him, while Cranston remained quietly observant.

"Here's a box with two guinea pigs in it," declared the detective. "They're dead ones."

"Humph," grunted Barth, disinterested.

"And this big box drawn out from under the table," added Cardona. "Nothing in it but a lot of lead pipe."

"Humph," repeated Barth.

"Folders in the filing cabinet drawer," added Cardona. "They're arranged according to numbers. One of them is missing. Number one hundred and eleven."

"Ah!" exclaimed Barth. "Did you question Benzig on that matter?"

"Yes," replied Cardona. "He said that Valdan had him arrange folders according to their numbers. That was about a month ago. The only trouble - and I checked on this by examining other drawers - is that a lot of numbers are missing."

"Why?"

"Benzig says they represented old experiments, formulas and so on. Valdan chucked a lot of them that were no use any more and left the spaces blank."

"Then we can assume that number one hundred and eleven was destroyed with the others. That is, unless we can positively assure ourselves that something has been taken from this room. Did you question Benzig on that score?"

"Yes. He looked around while I was watching him. But he couldn't figure anything missing."

Lamont Cranston had strolled over to the table. He lifted the cover of the box that contained the two guinea pigs. Barth saw him and smiled indulgently. The commissioner was concerned with matters more important than dead guinea pigs.

"We must quiz Benzig and Crowder," decided Barth. "However, Cardona, we need a starting point. We must find it. If we could prove that something is missing from this little laboratory - something that we know should be here but -"

"You have already gained such proof," interposed Cranston, quietly, as he leaned above the box that held the two guinea pigs.

"What?" questioned Barth excitedly. "You say that something is missing, Cranston? What makes you believe so?"

"The testimony of the witnesses."

"But they knew of nothing that has been removed."

"On the contrary," remarked Cranston, turning toward the commissioner, "they were very specific in their statements. In fact, their arrival at this room was prompted by the disappearance of an object that should most certainly have been here."

"You mean -"

"The copy of the afternoon newspaper."

THE commissioner laughed. He seemed to take Cranston's remark as a jest. Then, recalling the importance of the case, he became serious.

"This is no time for trifles, Cranston," rebuked Barth. "Why should a murder have been committed over an afternoon newspaper? Assuming that some unknown person did remove the journal, how could that

act have aided him in his attack on Troxton Valdan?"

"The answer is quite simple," responded Cranston. "It is possible that Valdan, had he seen the newspaper, might have had some occasion for immediate alarm."

"What could that have been?"

"The headlines."

"You mean -"

"I mean," asserted Cranston, firmly, "that the phrase 'death sleep' might have caught the eye of Troxton Valdan. That seeing it, the chemist might have instantly placed himself on guard."

"Absurd," interjected Barth. "Your imagination is tricking you, Cranston. There is no connection between that episode at Seth Tanning's apartment and this death of Troxton Valdan."

"No connection?" Cranston's lips formed a thin smile. "I must disagree with you, commissioner. I have just been examining the evidence that proves the very connection of which I have spoken."

"Where is it?" cried Barth, in excitement.

"Here," responded Cranston, tapping the cardboard box.

"Two dead guinea pigs?" barked Barth. "What is this, Cranston - a hoax? Two guinea pigs - dead ones - have nothing to do with murder."

"Two guinea pigs," repeated Cranston, "but not dead ones. Examine them more closely, commissioner. Tell me, did you ever before observe dead animals that were on their feet - in a state that resembles suspended motion?"

Barth stared into the box. Cardona joined him and stared also. Cranston's even tones came in quiet regularity, while his companions studied the cavies in the box.

"The two guinea pigs," remarked the firm-faced millionaire, "are not dead. On the contrary" - the tone was unchanged, but the words came more slowly, drilling home the thought that they expressed - "on the contrary, those guinea pigs are paralyzed -"

As Cranston's voice paused, Joe Cardona came bobbing up from the cardboard box. His usually stolid face betrayed sudden excitement. The detective needed no more to complete the idea that Cranston had begun.

"He's right, commissioner!" exclaimed Joe. "The guinea pigs are paralyzed. Like those people were last night! It's the death sleep again!"

## **CHAPTER VII. FURTHER DEDUCTIONS**

ONE hour after Lamont Cranston's startling discovery, a taxicab pulled up in front of Troxton Valdan's home. A tall, long-faced man alighted, carrying a small bag. He was immediately accosted by the policeman on duty.

"Doctor Lagwood?" questioned the bluecoat.

"Yes," replied the arrival. "Where is the police commissioner?"

"In the basement laboratory," said the officer. "I'll take you there, sir."

Three men were in the little laboratory when Doctor Seton Lagwood arrived. Police Commissioner Barth, Detective Joe Cardona and Lamont Cranston were still upon the scene of the crime. Troxton Valdan's body remained in the spot where it had been discovered.

"I received your message, commissioner," stated Lagwood. "It was at the hospital when I arrived there. I was told that you had discovered new developments."

"We have," assured Barth.

"Is this another victim?" queried Lagwood, indicating Valdan's body.

"We are not sure," returned Barth. "Our examination has centered upon this cardboard box. Could you give us your opinion on these two guinea pigs, doctor?"

Lagwood brought the box into the light. He frowned in a quizzical manner. He lifted one of the guinea pigs and shifted the stiffened creature from hand to hand. At last, he replaced the guinea pig in the box.

"The condition of this rodent," declared the specialist, "bears a marked resemblance to that of my patients at the Talleyrand Hospital. These covies certainly appear to be in a state of suspended animation. I cannot, however, state positively that they have succumbed to the same malady until after I have made a blood test."

"Ah!" exclaimed Barth. "You have found an unusual blood condition in the victims at the hospital?"

"I have discovered such traces," assured the physician. "I have also applied various methods of treatment. But as yet, there has been no result. The victims are alive; their state of rigidity appears to be lessening. I hope for their recovery, that is all.

"So far, I have been unable to diagnose the exact nature of the malady. To some extent, it resembles Trypanosomiasis, the African sleeping sickness; or it might be an acute form of epidemic encepholitis, to which the term sleeping sickness is also applied. These diseases, however, show manifestations of lethargy or torpor, more than complete coma.

"Seth Tanning and the other three patients are in a marked state of catalepsy; they have assumed that unusual trance condition which, in past years, frequently led to burials of living persons, under the impression that they were dead.

"Most perplexing is the fact that this action was simultaneous. At first, I was inclined to believe that they were victims of general anaesthesia, a condition from which they should by now have recovered.

"This, commissioner, should give you a brief idea of the complications which I have encountered. I have hesitated to apply any one method of treatment in unlimited fashion. In fact, I am still experimenting with pharmaceutical preparations, in hopes that a mild dosage of one prescription may give indications of success.

"These covies" - Lagwood smiled as he surveyed the two inert guinea pigs - "may prove to be the very subjects that I require for experiment. I can take risks with them that I would not consider in the case of my human patients. First, the tests. If they coincide with my findings in the hospital, I may be able to find the solution to the problem."

IT was plain to the listeners that Doctor Lagwood was forgetful of crime in his hope of medical progress. He viewed the guinea pigs as an important discovery because they might aid his work at the hospital. It

was Commissioner Barth who brought the physician's attention back to the important question of the present.

"We have a dead man here," stated Barth, pointing to Valdan's body. "Apparently, he had climbed up that ladder when something overcame him. Do you believe, doctor, that he could have succumbed to this same mysterious malady that has affected those two guinea pigs?"

"Certainly," responded Lagwood, promptly. "There is every indication of it. The fact, however, would be difficult to prove."

"Why so?"

"Because the victim is dead. We may assume, however, that he was overcome simultaneously with the guinea pigs. My belief is based upon last night's occurrence. Had any of those victims at Tanning's been upon a ladder, they would have fallen in the same manner as this man."

"Then you believe that the death was accidental?"

"In a sense yes. In a sense no." The physician's long face showed a furrowed smile at his own paradoxical statement. "I should say that the fall from the ladder was accidental. But I cannot speak for the condition which induced that fall. You are faced by the same problem that you found at Tanning's."

"That's right," asserted Joe Cardona. "Commissioner, I've got a theory about last night. Four people going out all at once. It must have been some gas that knocked them out." He turned to Lagwood. "What's your opinion on that, doctor?"

"I had the same idea," responded Lagwood, seriously. "In fact, I had planned to try vapor treatments in an endeavor to neutralize the blood conditions of the patients. But my observations in this laboratory lead me to believe that we may be concerned with some amazingly virulent bacillus, not with a noxious gas."

"That sounds incredible!" exclaimed Barth. "Last night, four persons were overcome simultaneously. Here we have the evidence of the guinea pigs, to indicate that Valdan was overcome by the same cause. Cardona may be right, doctor. A gas -"

"What of these guinea pigs?" interposed Lagwood, indicating the crate upon the floor.

A SMILE showed upon Lamont Cranston's lips as Barth and Cardona turned toward the crate. Commissioner and detective had forgotten all about the shipment that had been delivered. The guinea pigs in the crate were all alive.

"The hypothesis of a poison gas," stated Lagwood, "is one that I now find it necessary to reject. I shall, however, make experiments upon one of these rigid guinea pigs, utilizing a vapor as a neutralizer."

"But it is evident that a poison gas, loosed in this closed room, would have had effect upon all life simultaneously. None of the rodents in this crate show any signs of lethargy. Besides that, commissioner, there is another point to be considered. How soon after death was the body discovered?"

"Almost immediately," replied Barth.

"Was the door of this room opened or closed?" questioned Lagwood.

"Closed," stated Barth. "Valdan's assistant opened it and entered with the servant."

"Did either of them experience any dizziness?"

"They made no statements of that sort."

"Which proves," concluded Lagwood, "that no noxious gas was present. In this small room - with no open windows - the atmosphere could not have cleared before those persons arrived."

"That is true," agreed Barth. "Tell us, doctor, what would you propose as the next step?"

"For my own part," responded Lagwood, emphatically, "I should like to return to the hospital and begin experiments upon these guinea pigs at once. This dead man is a problem for the police. My duty is to consider the welfare of four who are still alive."

"You are right," said the commissioner. "Cardona, call a cab for Doctor Lagwood. Tie up that box with the two guinea pigs. Human lives are still at stake."

The specialist departed with the guinea pigs boxed beneath his arm. The commissioner seated himself at Valdan's table and began to strum upon the woodwork while Cranston looked quietly about the room.

"A new quiz may bring the answer," speculated the commissioner. "Either Benzig or Crowder could have been in this room. Their meeting upstairs did not take place until some time after Benzig claims to have left here.

"Benzig might have remained; or Crowder might have been hidden in that closet. Benzig could have taken the newspaper; or Crowder could have failed to place it here. The hidden man could have attacked Valdan; then unbolted this door and left. Do you follow me, Cranston?"

"Yes," came the quiet reply.

"Leaving, the murderer could have unbolted the outer door to make it appear that someone had fled." Barth was picturing a scene involving one of Valdan's employees. "The delivery men could hardly have had anything to do with Valdan's death. Why should they have made two trips here?"

This time, Cranston had no reply. He glanced at his watch and appeared surprised at the lateness of the hour. Barth sensed that his friend was anxious to leave. He arose from his chair.

"I can come back to the club by cab," declared Barth. "I doubt that the coming quiz would be of but little interest to you, Cranston. Should you care to learn about them, I can tell you of our findings when I see you at the club."

"Very well," agreed Cranston. "I believe that it would be best for me to leave, commissioner."

FIVE minutes later, Lamont Cranston's limousine rolled away from the home of Troxton Valdan. After a southward trip, it turned into a secluded side street. Stanley parked at his master's bidding. A blackened form emerged silently from the rear door.

The light clicked in The Shadow's sanctum. Hands appeared beneath the bluish glow. A soft laugh sounded as deft fingers began to inscribe written thoughts that faded in mysterious fashion. The Shadow was considering facts that he had noted at Troxton Valdan's.

Valdan. Guinea pigs.

To Commissioner Wainwright Barth, this written statement would have meant the connection that had been discussed with Doctor Seton Lagwood: namely, the simultaneous overpowering of the chemist and the rodents in the box upon the table. To The Shadow, however, it inspired a new deduction.

Why had Troxton Valdan kept guinea pigs in his little laboratory? Obviously for experimental purposes. Benzig had not been surprised at the delivery of a fresh supply. Therefore, The Shadow knew that Valdan must have been gradually eliminating the covies that he kept on hand.

This indicated that Valdan himself had applied the paralytic treatment to the two guinea pigs in the cardboard box. The chemist was not a victim of the death sleep. The living guinea pigs proved that fact. Instead, Valdan, with his secret experiments, was logically the discoverer of the gas that produced a rigid slumber!

Delivery men.

Two visits. Again, The Shadow laughed softly. He could see the purpose. Yesterday, men had come with boxes. Benzig had gone upstairs while they were in the laboratory. The men had taken the boxes away. But they had left one of the three and taken another in its place. They had stolen the complete supply of gas containers that Troxton Valdan had concealed beneath the table in his little laboratory!

Cardona had found a box with pieces of pipe inside it. Beside the box, a carpeting that had served to hide it from view. The box with its useless contents had meant nothing to Cardona; but it had meant much to Troxton Valdan. Opening the box, the returned chemist had learned that his precious chemicals had been stolen!

The newspaper.

The Shadow combined this new thought with an unfinished one - the matter of the second appearance of the delivery men. The first visit had been to accomplish theft. The second, to offset Valdan's discovery. Last night, Valdan's gas had been tested. Seth Tanning and three others were the victims.

Today, Valdan was due to return. There was only one course open to men of crime. Valdan had to be silenced - forever. The second delivery - the crate of guinea pigs - had been a blind to enable a killer to conceal himself in the closet of the inner laboratory, there to await the return of Troxton Valdan.

Someone - either the killer or a member of the crew - had seen the newspaper upon Valdan's table. That journal had been removed. This was proof that someone in the crew - probably the killer - knew the contents of the box that had been stolen on the previous day. That same man might have been the one who had precipitated a gas bomb into Seth Tanning's apartment.

The murderer.

The Shadow was analyzing the final situation. He was picturing the attack upon Troxton Valdan. The chemist had returned. No newspaper had been there to give him an inkling that his stolen discovery had been used for crime. Yet he must have suspected trouble because of Benzig's report concerning the delivery men.

Valdan had brought out the hidden box. He had found it to be a substitute for the one that he had left. He had climbed the ladder, to see if his files were intact. He had learned that one - number 111 - was missing. Then the killer had attacked.

The murderer had chosen darkness. His work done, he had fled, probably fearing the prompt return of Benzig.

He had probably not seen the two guinea pigs in the cardboard box. He had made no attempt to turn on the light again.

That oversight marked him as a man of brute strength who lacked craft.

The Shadow could see the scheming of a master brain; but he knew that the actual murder of Troxton Valdan had been left to an underling. The big shot was out of sight, trusting to crooks of gangster type to do his bidding.

THE bluish light clicked out. The Shadow had gone far in his analysis of crime. He knew that some crafty superfiend had learned of Troxton Valdan's experiments; that this schemer had called in the aid of ordinary criminals to gain the weapon that he wanted.

There had been strategy in last night's test. Had it failed, the stolen box might have been replaced. Troxton Valdan would have been left in ignorance, to proceed with his experiments. But the test had succeeded; the result had been Valdan's death warrant.

A fading laugh trailed through the sanctum. That sinister taunt marked the departure of the black-garbed investigator. But its ominous challenge carried a thought as well. The Shadow, ready to wage war with men of evil, had considered the strength of his foe.

As yet, there had been no indication that those who had gained Valdan's secret possessed a means of protecting themselves against its power. Though their test had succeeded, crime must wait until they could guard against the boomerang effects which made others succumb.

Did friends of crime possess this second secret that they needed? If they did, The Shadow must act swiftly to offset their coming thrusts. If they did not, there would be time for The Shadow to prepare a well-formed counterstroke.

The Shadow's deductions had carried him to this final point. All else had yielded to his keen reasoning. While investigators of the law remained perplexed by baffling mysteries, The Shadow had reached the period of action.

Crime was coming. Crime with a purpose. Preliminary strokes had involved men of the underworld. Such minions would be used in the thrusts that were to come. With this conviction, The Shadow had mapped his campaign. As yet, the odds lay with those who defied the law. But The Shadow, unseen, unsuspected, was swinging the balance to his favor.

## **CHAPTER VIII. PLANS FOR CRIME**

"LOUSY business."

Wolf Barlan growled this assertion as he glowered at Spud Claxter. The big shot was seated by the window of his living room, holding a morning newspaper on his lap. Spud, his shrewd face dejected, was eyeing his chief. Spud ventured a remark.

"The bulls ain't wise, Wolf," protested the lieutenant. "Zug got away with it. That's what you wanted, wasn't it? He croaked Valdan, didn't he?"

"Sure he did," returned Wolf, "but it's a wonder everybody else don't know it, along with us. Zug got the breaks - but he didn't make them for himself."

"He was smart when he swiped the newspaper."

"And dumb after that. He had every chance to make the whole job look like it was an accident. But he flivved it when he turned the lights out."

"Zug wasn't so dumb doing that," put in Spud. "Suppose something had gone wrong. Suppose Valdan had got away from him. If the lights had been on, the old geezer would have spotted Zug - and



remembered him, maybe."

"Yeah?" questioned Wolf. "So Zug was kind of weak in the knees, eh? Thought maybe he was going to slip? I didn't figure he was yellow."

"Zug ain't yellow. He just played it safe. Putting out the lights left Valdan in a mess. He didn't make no trouble after Zug grabbed him."

"No. But Zug made trouble for himself. Why didn't he shoot the lights on again?"

"You'll be asking me next why he didn't walk off with the two doped guinea pigs that the papers are talking about. Who made the slip-up on them?"

"I didn't," growled Wolf. He paused suddenly as he saw a quizzical look on Spud's face. "What I mean is, I didn't figure that they were in the place. Listen, Spud. This wasn't the first trip Valdan made out of town. Every other time he went, he took his guinea pigs along with him. The ones that he'd gassed. You understand?"

"Well, if he didn't have them this trip -"

"He did have them. That's the catch to it. But he must have doped a couple more before he left. That was something we didn't figure on - something I didn't know about."

"All right," grinned Spud. "Zug didn't figure on the light either. And what's more, Wolf, it wouldn't have made so much difference. He couldn't have bolted that outer door in back of him. Maybe Zug ought to have croaked this fellow Benzig, along with Valdan."

"The police are holding Benzig," observed Wolf, somewhat mollified. "Material witness, the papers say, but I'll bet they've got the guy under suspicion. It would have been better though, if the lights had been on."

"Anyway, we got a break. It was a bad set-up, the way Zug left it. Lights off, bolts loose, two doped guinea pigs. Say - it's lucky we shipped that crate of live guineas in there instead of the glass beakers I thought about sending.

"They've hooked up Valdan's death with those people we knocked out the night before. But they're off the track of gas. That was on account of the live guinea pigs. Did you read this statement by Doctor Lagwood?"

"Yeah," Spud chuckled. "The croaker pulled a bull, didn't he? You couldn't blame him though. He thought he was pretty smart, I guess, when he said any gas would have doped the whole lot of guinea pigs instead of just two."

"It worked out nice for us," asserted Wolf. "Gave Lagwood a big boost, which means there won't be a lot more medicos horning in on the case."

"Only the one guy to watch," added Spud. "Well - when you want the croaker rubbed out, pass the word."

"I'm not worrying about Lagwood," observed Wolf, narrowly, as he lighted a cigarette. "The guy is going to be worth more to us than your whole gang. Say - he'll rate ace high when those saps wake up around midnight. Everybody will think he brought them out of the trance. They won't know that the crowd was due to wake up in forty-eight hours. That's the way the gas works."

"But suppose Lagwood figures it out?"

"What difference does that make? Do you think any croaker would go around refusing credit? You bet none of them would. That sawbones will hog all the medals he can get."

"That's right, Wolf. He'll probably figure he woke up the dummies anyway. But just the same - I can't see where Lagwood is going to help the game. Skeet slipped me the word that he's been working heavy on these mugs that we put under."

"Yeah?" Wolf's inquiry came with a puff of cigarette smoke. "I was just going to ask you about Skeet. He's got more brains than that guy Zug. What's Skeet got to say?"

"He landed that job up at the hospital. Pushing wheel chairs in and out of a store room. Bringing up packages. Running errands. Sort of a general handy man. Got a look in on Doctor Lagwood's experimental room, but didn't have a chance to snoop around it. I told him to lay off."

"That's right. Has he seen his nibs?"

"Yeah." Spud pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket. "Lagwood sent him down to a drug store to bring back some prescriptions. Here's a list of the stuff."

WOLF received the sheet of paper. Instead of being listed as prescriptions, in the usual pharmaceutical fashion, the items bore special names that were apparently of Doctor Lagwood's devising. These were odd abbreviations and each bore a number.

"That's funny," observed Wolf. "Wonder why the medico made up a list like this?"

"He explained it to Skeet," stated Spud. "Told him that if Hoffer - that's the old druggist - wasn't in the shop, to give it to anybody there. Said he always had his preparations marked so that a dumb clerk could locate them."

"Not a bad idea."

"That ain't all. Skeet got talking to one of them men nurses - a trained seal, Skeet called him - and asked him about this drug-store guy, Hoffer. Skeet found out that Lagwood and a couple of other fussy croakers won't have nobody else mix their prescriptions except that old timer. All the stuff that Lagwood gets comes from there."

Wolf began to eye the list. He noted that a line had been drawn through one item. He read the abbreviation "Neut-Number 6." He pointed it out to Spud.

"Skeet have anything to say about this?" questioned Wolf.

"Yeah," responded Spud. "Lagwood crossed it off. Told Skeet to tell Hoffer that he wouldn't need no more of it. Not for a while, anyway. Wanted the old boy to tuck it off in some safe place."

"Did Skeet see Hoffer?"

"Yeah. Old wizened guy about eighty years old. Skeet told him about this line that Lagwood crossed off. Showed him the list."

"What did Hoffer do about it?"

"Dug under a counter and pulled out a gallon jug of some green stuff. When Skeet went out, the old boy was taking it down into the cellar. Going to put it with the cobwebs, I guess."

To Spud, the matter was of little consequence. Wolf, however, had another impression. The big shot studied the list; then stared from the window and a smile appeared upon his bloated lips. He picked up the newspaper and began to turn the pages. Spud wondered what was up when he heard Wolf chuckle.

"A couple of dumb clucks, you and Skeet," affirmed the big shot. "Say - what time does Skeet get off duty up there at the hospital?"

"Eight o'clock tonight," answered Spud. "Why? Got something for him to do?"

"You bet I have. It means he chucks that job. Get hold of him and have him do something dumb enough to get fired. Crack up a wheel chair - anything - just so he can fade out in a neat way."

"But then he won't be watching Lagwood?"

"I don't want him to watch Lagwood," Wolf glowered savagely. "He's done enough of that. Look here. Did you read this statement that the medico made?"

"About sleeping sickness and all that With all them long words, in letters that lay over on one side?"

"That's it."

"I passed it up," admitted Spud. "Couldn't figure out that it meant anything."

"It means plenty," growled Wolf. "Here's where Lagwood says he has abandoned the theory of a gas causing this death sleep. Says that he had been working on a vapor treatment, using a neutralizer that he doped out after making blood tests."

"Yeah? What's a neutralizer?"

"It's stuff that would kill the gas fumes if you had it ready. They used neutralizers in gas masks over in France. A gas mask ain't just a bag that you put over your head. It's got a nozzle that you put chemical in; but you've got to have the right stuff."

"You mean that Lagwood may have doped out the stuff we want?"

"You bet I do. For his vapor treatment. But he's quit that. Here it is - this thing that he crossed off the list. Neut. That's short for neutralizer. There's a gallon of it down in the cellar of that drug store."

"And you've got a lot of funny looking gas masks over in the hideout!"

"Yeah, just waiting for the right stuff to go in them. Listen. Here's Skeet's job. He's got to crack that drug store, see? It's a one man job. Nobody'll get him if he hits a cellar window. Tell him to find that gallon jug with the green stuff. Bring it to the hideout. Then we're set. That is, if the stuff works."

"You mean that we'll be able to follow in after we heave the gas bombs that we swiped from old Valdan?"

"You guessed it. But we're not going to work it too strong at first. I've got two jobs in mind. Not heavy, but plenty of swag if they're worked right. And after that - well" - Wolf chuckled as he reached for a cigarette - "it's anything, bo, up to the United States Mint."

Spud Claxter sat staring from his chair. His shrewd brain was visioning the possibilities that the big shot had suggested. Wolf Barlan was leering, with his yellowish teeth displayed to their full. Then the big shot's countenance changed. Wolf snarled an order.

"Scram," he said to Spud. "Get to Skeet and give him the lay. Then start out and pick that mob you've been talking about. You know the gorillas you want. You've already got an inside crew. But we need some tough mugs for the outside."

Spud lost no time. He was rising as he nodded his understanding. He turned toward the door and was halfway there before Wolf stopped him.

"Don't get too cocky," reminded the big shot. "Remember, this stuff is more important than those gas bombs. With that formula the boys swiped out of Valdan's place, I can get more bombs made up after we've used the supply. But this neutralizer stuff is precious.

"It ought to work on account of a smart croaker like Lagwood figuring it out. But don't forget, those masks will have to be loaded each time. Remember, the bottle's made out of glass, and a clumsy guy can spill stuff when he's pouring.

"Those masks don't take much and a gallon will be plenty if we don't waste it. But if it runs out, we can't go around to the Talleyrand Hospital and send in our cards to Lagwood. We can't say 'Hello, doc. Got any more of that green neutralizer? We used up all we swiped.' Do you get me, Spud?"

"I get you," nodded the lieutenant.

"Well," added Wolf, "tell Skeet it'll be curtains for him if he busts the bottle. I've had guys put on the spot for a lot less."

SPUD departed promptly after the final admonition. Wolf Barlan remained leering by the window. Then, with a chuckle, he reached for the telephone. The big shot was ready to proceed with crime.

Spud Claxter was the head of the strong-arm crew. But Wolf had other associates upon whom he depended. The big shot was wary when it came to mixing his affairs. He had already picked places for crime. He had been waiting only for the opportunity.

Confident, Wolf dialed a number. He chuckled as he heard the bell ring across the wire. This call was his first step. He was passing the news where it would be well received. He knew that this first recipient would be pleased to learn that Doctor Lagwood's neutralizing preparation would be gained tonight by men of crime.

## **CHAPTER IX. AIDS OF THE SHADOW**

SHORTLY before eight o'clock that evening, a young man of marked professional appearance made his exit from the portals of the Talleyrand Hospital. As he was descending the stone steps, he encountered an elderly man coming upward. The arrival paused and thrust out his hand to the young man.

"Rupert Sayre!" exclaimed the old man. "What are you doing in this bailiwick? Don't tell me that you have joined the staff of the Talleyrand Hospital!"

"Hello, Doctor Derry," responded the younger man. "I haven't seen you since the year I graduated from medical school. No, I'm not on the Talleyrand staff. Just happened to drop in to see Freddy Lawson."

"A fine physician, that young man," nodded Doctor Derry. "I believe that Lawson will become the finest dermatologist that we have ever had in this institution. Well, well, Rupert. It is a pleasure to see you. Still engaged in general practice."

"Yes, sir."

The two men parted. Rupert Sayre walked along the street to an obscure spot and entered the driver's side of a parked coupe. A low voice spoke from the darkness:

"Did you learn anything, Doc?"

"Yes," replied Sayre. "I don't know how important it is, Vincent; but it may be exactly what you are looking for. I had a long talk with Lawson; he spent an hour showing me around the place."

"You saw the death sleep patients?"

"Yes. I did not meet Doctor Lagwood, however. But I remembered your request - to catch the details of any unusual incident. I learned of one that has reference to a new attendant."

"What was it?"

"A fellow named Charles Dowther - at least that was the name he gave for himself - was given a job only a few days ago. It appears that several attendants were discharged for drunkenness quite recently. This man managed to gain employment without giving details of previous experience. Being short-handed, the institution was ready to take on almost anyone who applied."

"I see."

"Dowther was put to work moving wheel chairs and running errands. He worked on the floor where Doctor Lagwood's laboratory is located and I believe that he must have been in a position to observe what was going on there. Well, Dowther held his job fine until this afternoon."

"What happened then?"

"He let a wheel chair get away from him coming down a flight of stairs. First of all, he had no right with it there; he should have taken it down by elevator. As luck had it, the wheel chair bounced across the hallway and bowled over a plaster statue of Hermes - a life-sized object. To make matters worse, the statue fell upon a glass case that contained an architect's model of the hospital building and smashed that beyond repair."

"Was Dowther discharged?"

"No. That is the odd part about it. Since the matter appeared to be an accident, he was severely reprimanded for not obeying rules regarding wheel chairs in the elevator. But he apparently thought that he would be dismissed, for he returned late after going out to supper. He arrived only twenty minutes ago and he was creating a great scene. That was how Lawson happened to tell me all about him."

"What was the matter with him?"

"Drunk. He came in through the attendants' entrance and began to argue with everyone in sight. 'Fire me will you? Who's going to fire me? I'll resign.' That was the burden of his theme. So they were firing him when I left."

"You mean he was still putting up an argument?"

"Yes. Refusing to take the pay that they were giving him. Said they could keep the money and buy another statue of a guy with wings on his derby hat."

"It must have been funny, Doc."

"It was, Vincent. Particularly because the man was faking intoxication."

"You are sure?"

"Positively," affirmed Sayre. "But I was the only person who detected it. Vincent, that fellow wanted to be fired" - the doctor paused to catch his companion's arm - "watch there! By that lighted entrance. Here comes the chap now."

A HUNCHED figure was staggering from the side of the hospital. In one hand the man held several dollar bills; in the other, he waved a derby hat. He paused to turn back toward the entrance, where attendants were watching his departure. Then, with a final gesture of contempt, the man staggered to the street.

He passed the parked coupe, muttering to himself and balking in his gait. He stopped suddenly; turned about and looked back. Satisfied that no one was still watching him, he steadied suddenly and laughed. He moved off into the darkness, shuffling out of sight.

"I told you that he was faking, Vincent -"

"So long Doc. I'm following him. Thanks."

Sayre's companion opened the door and stepped to the sidewalk. Sayre waited until he had passed from view; then started the motor and drove off in his coupe.

To Doctor Rupert Sayre this episode had been both unusual and important. He had come to the Talleyrand Hospital in response to a telephone request from a friend named Lamont Cranston. On the way, Sayre had stopped at the Metrolite Hotel to bring along a man named Harry Vincent. This had been in accord with Cranston's request.

Once - it seemed long ago - Rupert Sayre had been saved from death by a mysterious personage cloaked in black. He had never guessed the exact identity of that being; but he connected his mysterious benefactor with a friend whom he had gained at the same period: Lamont Cranston.

Ever since then, the young physician had been ready to conform to any course that Cranston might suggest. He had served this important friend more than once. Thus Doctor Rupert Sayre had become an aid of The Shadow.

HARRY VINCENT, trailing the attendant dismissed from the Talleyrand Hospital, was a young man who had played a much more active part in The Shadow's enterprises. Harry had been assigned to the task of watching events at the Talleyrand Hospital. Handicapped, he had reported his difficulties to Burbank. His meeting with Rupert Sayre had been the answer.

As Harry moved easily but rapidly along the streets not far from the hospital, he realized that he was trailing a product of the underworld. This was a correct assumption; for Harry was in pursuit of none other than "Skeet" Wurrick. This underling of crime had used the name of Dowther when he had gained the job at the Talleyrand Hospital.

It had required two offenses for Skeet to be fired. His smashing of the statue had been deliberate. Skeet had made it look like an accident. Reprimanded but not dismissed, he had feigned drunkenness in order to carry out Spud Claxter's orders. Skeet was now bound for the little drug store that bore the name of Hoffer's Pharmacy.

Skeet made a shifty detour that brought him to the entrance of a blind alley. He ducked out of sight. Harry Vincent, coming from the corner that Skeet had just turned, was deceived by the ruse. The Shadow's agent kept along the block.

Skeet had not suspected that someone was following him. At the end of the alley, he found a basement window at the back of the pharmacy. He pried it loose, slid his wiry body into the opening and found himself in Hoffer's cellar. Skeet inspected with a flashlight.

Luck favored the gangster. He found the door of a closet, opened it, and spotted the gallon bottle on a shelf. Skeet recognized the greenish liquid and examined the label. Extinguishing his flashlight, he grabbed the prize that he sought and made his way back to the window. Three minutes later, he sneaked from the blind alley and hastened across the street.

It was then that Harry Vincent spotted him. The Shadow's agent was returning from the opposite direction. He caught sight of Skeet's shifty form passing beneath an isolated street lamp. He saw the bottle that the fellow was carrying. Then Skeet reached the corner.

Harry pursued, swiftly, but with caution. He reached the corner and spied Skeet nearly a block away, just about to turn another corner. Harry hurried forward. He was too late. He reached the corner just in time to see a car shoot away from halfway down the block.

The Shadow's agent was chagrined at his failure. There was only one course left to him. That was a report to Burbank. Harry walked along until he found a cigar store near a corner. He put in a call to the contact man, made his report, and received orders to return to the Metrolite Hotel.

WHILE Harry Vincent was encountering this failure, another agent of The Shadow was at work within the confines of the underworld. Seated at a table in a dive called the Black Ship, a sturdy chap with a chiseled countenance was listening to the boastful talk of a husky mobster sitting opposite.

The firm-faced man was Cliff Marsland, The Shadow's agent in the underworld. Cliff had gained a name for himself in the badlands. It commanded the respect of tough gorillas. The fellow opposite him - Luke Gonrey - was the type of gangster whom Cliff could make talk freely.

"I'm sayin' nothin' to nobody," Luke was confiding, in a low growl. "But that don't mean you, Cliff. You're somebody. I know when an' how to keep mum; but I know the few gazebos it don't hurt nobody to talk to - an' you're one of 'em."

Cliff shrugged his shoulders. A bottle was beside him; he shoved it across the table and watched Luke fill his glass. Cliff knew that something was in the wind. He had been watching for gorillas who were spending money. He had spotted Luke, begun a chat with the fellow and let Luke do the talking.

"I got a good break, Cliff," asserted Luke. "That's why I'm tellin' you about it. Real dough in it. Got some mazuma slipped to me in advance. That means there's more comin'."

"It generally does," observed Cliff. "Sometimes it means a catch."

"Not this trip," retorted Luke. "I'll tell you why. The guy that slipped me the cash" - he leaned across the table and reduced his voice to a whisper - "was Spud Claxter."

"Thought he was out of town," responded Cliff.

"Spud?" chuckled Luke. "Guess again. This wad of dough" - he exhibited a bankroll - "means that Spud's in the city. An' this green ain't all fins an' sawbucks, neither. Say, Cliff - I'm goin' to wise up Spud. He ought to have you in the outfit."

"Yeah? What's the game, Luke?"

Luke grinned.

"Might as well spill it," he decided. "Spud's givin' me half a grand. Two centuries in advance - that's the wad I just showed you. Well - Spud picked me because I know how to use a smokewagon. No Boy Scouts in his crew. No argument about the dough. He coughed up what I asked for."

"Not bad."

"You bet it ain't. Say - there's plenty of gazebos would bump off their whole family for half a grand. But that ain't the point. What I'm drivin' at is this. If Spud wanted me, he'll want you. Savvy?"

"For half a grand?"

"Naw. That's where I was dumb. Thought I was shootin' high, but found I was low. Say - Spud won't find no better guy with a rod than you. I'm goin' to tell him that. Savvy?"

"And what then?"

"You'll get a bid from Spud. Hold out for a grand. He'll come through. Then" - Luke's tone was wary - "you an' me make a divvy."

"On the grand?"

"Half of it," responded Luke, eyeing Cliff warily. "Half a grand is yours. The other half goes two ways. You an' me, fifty-fifty. Worth it, ain't it, for the tip?"

"Maybe," said Cliff.

"Say," argued Luke, "if Spud come to you straight an' wanted to talk turkey, you'd hook up with his outfit for half a grand, wouldn't you? Well - I'm tellin' you how we can both split half a grand besides."

"When are you going to see Spud?" questioned Cliff.

"That's the tough part," growled Luke. "There ain't no chance of your hookin' in on this first job, because we're goin' out tomorrow night an' the outfit's all set. But there's more jobs comin'.

"Same dough for each job. All right. Tomorrow night I buzz in Spud's ear. Fix it for you. You'll be in the outfit next trip - an' I figure Spud'll have plenty more dough by then. You get the grand. We split half of it \_"

"On the first job I'm in on? Only that one?"

"All right," agreed Luke, reluctantly, seeing he could get no further. "Are you in?"

"Yes," replied Cliff, "if you tell Spud that I won't work for less than a grand."

"I'll fix that. Listen. Spud wants me to be here tomorrow night. This is where I'll get word where to meet him. See? I'm to be here every night, because this is the joint where I hang out most of the time.

"Tomorrow, I go out with Spud's crew. The next night, I'll chew the fat with you. Right here, at this table."

Cliff nodded. He made a warning gesture; then arose and strolled from the Black Ship.

Luke smiled approvingly. Good business, not to be seen with Cliff any longer. The gorilla crinkled his roll of bills. He was looking forward to the rest of his five hundred; then another payment, plus a cut from Cliff Marsland.



Outside, Cliff sauntered along until he reached a dilapidated store some distance from the Black Ship. He entered, found a battered telephone booth and put in a call to Burbank.

LATER, The Shadow entered his sanctum to find the tiny bulb glowing on the far wall. His invisible hands lifted the earphones. He heard the prompt voice across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report," ordered The Shadow.

The word came through. The earphones moved to the wall. The Shadow did not turn on the blue light after the call was finished. Instead, he uttered a whispered laugh; the token that brought the silence of his departure.

Two reports. Harry Vincent had admitted failure; Cliff Marsland was counting on prospects only. Yet The Shadow's laugh denoted satisfaction. His keen brain had divined the reason for the theft made by Skeet Wurrick. The information gained from Cliff Marsland was sufficient for his plan of campaign.

The Shadow knew that crime was due. It would strike tomorrow night. When crime arrived, The Shadow would be present at the scene of action.

## **CHAPTER X. OUT OF THE DARK**

EARLY the next evening. Newsboys were shouting the merits of the final editions when Lamont Cranston sauntered from the entrance of the Cobalt Club. The millionaire purchased a newspaper. He entered his limousine, gave an order to Stanley, then turned on the dome light and began to peruse the journal.

The big feature of the day's news was the recovery of the four patients at the Talleyrand Hospital. Doctor Seton Lagwood had gained an unprecedented triumph. He had varied his treatments during the preceding evening and results had followed.

Shortly before midnight, one of the death sleep victims - Mrs. Tanning - had shown definite signs of life. Her cataleptic condition had relaxed. Respiration had become normal. The trance had changed to peaceful slumber.

At intervals of less than half an hour, the other patients had shown similar response. Then they had awakened, one by one, to stare in bewildered fashion at their surroundings. Doctor Lagwood had remained in attendance. At nine o'clock in the morning, he had allowed Seth Tanning to make a brief statement. The others had also spoken before noon.

Though the recovered victims showed but little ill effect from their experience, none of them could shed light upon the strange event that had overpowered them. They could only remember that they had been playing bridge. It seemed evident that they had lost all recollection of the time period just prior to the fall of the death sleep.

Doctor Lagwood's statement was a brief one. He declined to discuss the cases until later. He was fatigued and ready for sleep himself. He left instructions to be called if any of the patients showed signs of relapse. Otherwise, he was not to be aroused until eight o'clock in the evening. According to the final newspapers, no call had been necessary. The patients had improved constantly during the day.

Lamont Cranston turned off the dome light as the limousine neared a glittering East Side thoroughfare. When the car rolled beneath the steel structure of an elevated, black cloth came tumbling from a

briefcase in the back seat. When Stanley pulled up beside a secluded curb, Cranston's voice gave new instructions.

THEN a rear door opened silently; a phantom shape emerged and glided off into darkness. Stanley was holding a watch. Two minutes passed. The chauffeur started the car and headed back toward the Cobalt Club.

Narrow alleys; grimy street lamps; fronts of buildings where streaks of light issued through cracked window shades - such were the surroundings that The Shadow had chosen. Skulking forms were moving through the gloom. Pasty, ratlike faces showed at every corner. Yet none of these furtive passers spied the cloaked figure that moved with the stealth of night.

The Shadow had reached the heart of the underworld, that district where every person was his enemy. Yet he remained unseen in the midst of this hostile terrain, moving stealthily toward a desired destination.

Had any pair of beady eyes glimpsed that shrouded passing shape, the alarm cry would have risen on the instant. Rats of the underworld dreaded The Shadow; yet the cowards felt security within their own domain. It was in these parts that The Shadow had been hunted; where he had been forced to use every possible measure to escape the hordes that sought him. A soft laugh, whispered in the darkness of a secluded alley, formed The Shadow's mirthful recollection of those desperate adventures.

For The Shadow, his presence unknown, expected no molestation. Only when shrewd crooks had scented his approach had he been forced to combat in this region. Tonight, he was on a mission of stealth. Though ready, on the instant, to match any challenge that the underworld might offer, The Shadow was deliberately keeping clear of all encounters. Those would come later - else where.

The Black Ship. The Shadow paused in darkness opposite the notorious dive. His keen eyes, closed to narrow slits, kept tabs on those who entered and left the joint. At last a bulky figure appeared upon the steps. The Shadow recognized Luke Gonrey. Someone had slipped the word to the gorilla. He was on his way to join Spud Claxter's crew.

Luke was cautious. He looked over his shoulder as he stalked along the street. But he did not spy the black-garbed form that followed him. The Shadow, stealthy as ever, was lost in the surrounding blackness. Even when he glided past lighted corners, The Shadow remained unseen. The only manifestation of his presence was a splotch of blackness that moved across the lighted sidewalk.

The Shadow was working alone tonight. He had left Cliff Marsland out of the game. The agent's turn would come later. It would have been impossible to bring Cliff along the course that The Shadow - no one else - could follow.

Luke Gonrey reached the back of an old garage. The place was supposedly empty; its sliding doors had long since been ripped away and used as firewood. But the garage was not empty tonight. Luke seemed to know that fact, for he entered through a blackened door.

Edging from a brick wall, The Shadow followed. This course was to his liking. Mobsters had chosen pitch-darkness for their rendezvous. Unknowingly, they had formed ideal conditions for The Shadow.

LUKE blundered into the back of a touring car. A gruff voice challenged him. Luke made reply and was recognized. A group of men clustered close together. Silently, The Shadow approached and stood within five feet of the assembled mob.

"We're goin' out in two cars," announced one mobster. "Louie's drivin' the first. Gabby follows with the second. Four in each boat. Louie's goin' to pick up Spud. We follow where he leads."

Growls of approval. Then came a final admonition from the spokesman:

"No lights 'til we get out of this joint. Get that, Louie? An' you, Gabby?"

Grunts of understanding. Mobsters entered the touring cars. Louie's automobile coasted down an incline of planks; the motor did not start until the car had reached the street. Gabby's car followed with its crew.

As motors roared in the street, lights came on. The two cars filed through narrow thoroughfares, with cautious mobsters slouched deep in the seats. The back of Louie's car was revealed by Gabby's headlights. But the rear of the second automobile was visible to none.

Hence not one of the armed mobsters knew that a stranger was accompanying them. The Shadow had chosen his course. His cloaked form was resting upon the rear bumper of the second car, huddled motionless over the spare tire, unrevealed by the tiny glare of the tail light.

The Shadow had chosen this perch with the assurance that the gangster cars would keep away from thoroughfares where traffic was heavy. This proved correct at first. While the two machines were rolling along an isolated street, a coupe suddenly appeared in front of them. Blinks of the tail light told Louie that this was Spud Claxter's car.

The touring cars fell in line. A half mile more along the almost deserted street. Then came the contretemps that forced a change in The Shadow's mode of travel. The three cars were nearing the approach of a huge bridge across the East River.

As the touring car slowed for a traffic light, The Shadow dropped to the street. He quickly glided toward the curb. He saw that the three cars were about to make the turn on to the lighted suspension bridge, where rows of cars were thick in both directions.

A taxicab was parked near the corner. The Shadow entered it. The driver, half-asleep, was surprised by the quiet voice of an unexpected passenger. The Shadow ordered the jehu to drive across the bridge to Long Island.

The driver shrugged his shoulders. He started the cab and obeyed the unusual instructions. The taxicab fell automatically into line behind the gangster cars. When the far end of the bridge was reached, The Shadow ordered the taximan to keep on.

After a journey of about two miles, the gangster cars swung from the main highway. They followed a street where traffic was lighter than on the boulevard. Peering from the cab, The Shadow saw Spud's coupe pull up in preparation for a left turn. He hissed an order to the driver. The taximan stopped at the curb, thirty feet behind the last of the two touring cars.

A ten-dollar bill fluttered into the driver's hand. While he was examining it, the door opened silently on the street side of the taxi. Traffic had cleared; Spud's coupe was waiting only for a swift car that was approaching from the opposite direction, beyond the intersection. Quickly, The Shadow glided across the street and merged with the darkness of signboards on an unbuilt corner.

Spud's coupe swung left. The touring cars followed. As the last one swung past the corner signboards, a bolt of blackness sprang from its lurking place. With swift strides, The Shadow gained his former perch - the rear bumper of the final car.

From then on, The Shadow's position was secure. Spud was leading the way along secluded roads. When the cars finally came to a stop, they were on a dirt lane beside a hedge that marked someone's

estate. It was here that gangsters dropped to the ground to hear their leader's orders.

"Through the hedge," growled Spud. "Keep clear of the house. We're going to cover the bunch that's going in. Let 'em get away an' don't use no rods unless you have to."

Mobsters responded their understanding. They scrambled through the hedge and gained positions as Spud had ordered. Louie and "Gabby" remained in the touring cars, watchful, while Spud went with the crew. It was shortly afterward that The Shadow followed.

Unseen, unheard by either Louie or Gabby, The Shadow glided through the hedge. He paused in a darkened spot to view the bulk of a huge, square stone house that occupied the tract of ground inside the hedge.

DIM lights from lower windows indicated hallways. Upstairs, blocks of light showed an occupied room. That spot, The Shadow knew, must be the point of attack. Moving forward, slipping past the forming cordon of mobsters, The Shadow reached the side of the looming house.

He knew that he must reach that lighted room. He decided that the best mode of entry would be from the back of the house. Moving along the wall, The Shadow reached a secluded spot where a darkened window showed above. Clinging vines of ivy offered a rapid means of ascent.

The Shadow knew Spud Claxter's scheme of action. Chosen workers were due to enter this house and perform some crime. Meanwhile, the squad of gorillas that included Luke Gonrey were posted as an emergency crew. They would cover the escape of the actual raiders.

The Shadow's plan was to enter; to surprise the raiders on their arrival. Working from the inside, he could throw terror into the ranks of mobsters. After driving the raiders back, he could resist any invasion by the outer cordon.

The Shadow had started up the wall. He paused suddenly. From within the house, he caught the dull sound of a slamming door, the scuffle of feet upon a stairway. The Shadow recognized the noise. It meant that men were going down - not coming up.

Instantly, The Shadow dropped from the wall. Instinctively, he swung along the ground, heading for the far side of the house. As he gained the corner, he heard a crash near the front of the building. Swinging doors were hurled open from a sun porch. Out from the house leaped four ruffians, masked and carrying boxes.

These were the raiders. They had come ahead of the cordon. There had been some mistake in timing. Spud Claxter and his gorillas had arrived after crime had been consummated - not before. The Shadow's scheme of defense was balked.

As the scurrying raiders landed on the ground, they swung toward the front of the house and turned a stone corner. This course was a lucky one. Had they cut across the side lawn; had they headed toward the back of the house, they would have been targets for The Shadow's aim. As it was, they gained an immediate protection.

An automatic barked. The last of the four raiders staggered but dodged on beyond the front wall. The Shadow's quick shot had wounded the raider but had not dropped him. Thus it was due to cause new complications. The flash of the automatic had been seen by two of Spud's outside crew; the report of the gun had been heard by all.

As The Shadow sprang forward to pursue the raiders who had rounded the front of the house, revolvers

barked from all about. Powerful flashlights glimmered toward the stone walls of the house. Shouts arose as mobsters sprang inward across the lawn. Half a score of gorillas were ready to trap the enemy who had delivered the surprise shot.

The Shadow, balked in his plan to frustrate crime, was enmeshed within the sharpshooting cordon that Spud Claxter had summoned from the underworld.

## **CHAPTER XI. THE SILENT HOUSE**

HAD The Shadow paused to fire from a spot along the side wall of the house, his predicament would have been magnified. The revealing flash of an automatic would have betrayed his exact position. Had he dashed on in pursuit of the fleeing raiders, he would also have become a target for the closing cordon.

Mobsters were everywhere, acting with skillful promptness. Those who had seen the flare of The Shadow's first shot were shouting the news to their comrades. Bullets were flattening against the side wall. A barrage was forming; mere seconds alone promised safety to The Shadow.

Ducking as he passed the dull light of the sun porch, The Shadow gained the front corner of the house. Here an open porch extended, with a stone parapet. It was the bulwark that The Shadow needed. With a quick spring, The Shadow gained the top of the wall. There, his temporary flight changed to challenge.

Upon the parapet, The Shadow paused. At that spot, he delivered a mocking laugh. The taunt rose high above the scattered gunfire of the sniping cordon. Stout gorillas paused as they heard the gibing tones. They knew that laugh - the mirth of The Shadow!

Wild, eerie mockery, clear through the night air. Notes of sinister merriment that brought shuddering echoes from the gray walls of the house. From about came snarled curses, the responses of aroused mobsters who knew the mettle of their hidden foe.

The fleeing raiders had gained the front of the lawn; they were diving into a clump of trees, carrying their swag and aiding their wounded comrade. The Shadow had no thought for them. He was concerned with the surrounding foemen who had placed him in a trap.

A flash of the automatic would have revealed The Shadow's position. Hence he had delivered his sardonic laugh instead. Its tones did more than spur the escaping raiders to swifter flight. It brought Spud Claxter's crew out toward the front of the house. Their flashlights spun toward The Shadow.

The laugh had given them an idea of The Shadow's position. It had also made them stay their shots for the moment. They wanted to locate this dread enemy. Individual mobsters who would have cowered at the sound of The Shadow's taunt were relying upon mass strength. They knew that they had put The Shadow on the run. This burst of defiant mirth incited them to solid attack.

"Hold it!" came Spud Claxter's cry. "Hold it until you spot him. It's The Shadow -"

At that instant, a swinging flashlight found the corner of the front porch parapet. There, half crouched, was The Shadow. A laugh came from his hidden lips as wild revolvers barked. Then The Shadow dropped suddenly behind the parapet; and upon that instant, his weird mirth lost its crescendo. Silence followed the laugh.

MOBSTERS came piling forward toward the corner of the porch. Their object was to scale the wall, to pounce upon their common enemy. Suddenly, their shouts of triumph changed to snarled oaths. From the corner of the parapet came tongues of flame, accompanied by the echoed roar of automatics. Dropping flashlights marked the spots where cursing gorillas crumpled.

They had learned The Shadow's strategy too late. The Shadow had known that the first shots would be wild. He had deliberately been waiting for a chance light to reveal him on the parapet. With the first shot, he had dropped. Other bullets had whistled above, after he was safe behind the wall.

The Shadow worked in split seconds. His fall had been with the shots; not after them. The breaking of his laugh had been the final touch. The end of the strident mirth had given the mobsters the impression that they had clipped The Shadow.

All had chosen the shortest route to the front porch parapet. They had scurried in from the open. Then The Shadow had changed his method. He had lured the enemy into a frontal attack. All but a few late gorillas were in the spot he wanted them.

The Shadow's position had become a stronghold. It was a perfect redan, where two parapets met in a salient angle at the front corner of the porch. The Shadow covered an area equal to three quarters of a circle.

Mobsters dropped to the ground. Heaving their betraying flashlights, they opened vicious fire. Bullets chipped chunks of stone from the walls that formed The Shadow's bulwark. Shifting, gaining new vantage points, The Shadow returned the fire, choosing the spots where revolver flashes showed.

Gorillas groaned. Their fire lessened. Half of the crew was silent. The others faltered. One of the men leaped to his feet and fled. Others copied the example. The Shadow's laugh rose high as his head and shoulders came up from the wall. His automatics thundered as they sent slugs after the scattering crooks.

Mobsters turned in flight, to deliver wild shots in response. Whenever a revolver barked, The Shadow's probing aim chose the flash for a new target. Ensconced in his chosen stronghold, The Shadow had won the fray. From the moment that he had coaxed the mobsters out into the open, the victory had been his.

Yet The Shadow sensed other danger. He had ended the frontal attack. Some of the gorillas lay motionless; others were crawling, wounded, for cover. The Shadow wheeled to face the unprotected area of the long porch. He was expecting an attack from the parapet at the other end.

THE SHADOW'S action was well timed. During the fray, two fighters had escaped the frontal attack. They had circled the house, knowing that a rear attack was the one method of entering The Shadow's improvised redan. As The Shadow swung, a revolver barked from the distant end of the porch. A bullet singed the flowing side of The Shadow's cloak.

Luke Gonrey was the mobster who had fired that shot. He had come up the parapet, boosted there by Spud Claxter. The gorilla had taken quick aim, just as The Shadow whirled. Had The Shadow merely spun about, Luke might have dropped him. But The Shadow, ever alert, had swung toward the front parapet as he turned.

Before Luke could deliver a second bullet, The Shadow pressed the trigger of an automatic. His aim was hastier than Luke's; it was also better. The slug clipped the gorilla's shoulder and sent Luke groaning from the parapet, into the arms of Spud Claxter.

The Shadow's laugh resounded. Spud did not wait for more. Shoving Luke to his feet, the mobleader started for the hedge, dragging his henchman with him. Meanwhile, The Shadow was weaving swiftly along the porch, firing shots at the blackness above the parapet, to stop any new attackers.

The Shadow had exhausted one brace of automatics. He had drawn a second set and still had slugs remaining. As he neared the end of the porch, he dropped to the new shelter that the wall afforded; then suddenly arose and peered into the darkness below. He sensed that the last attackers had fled. Then, as

proof of The Shadow's belief came the roar of starting motors from beyond the hedge.

The Shadow fired through the darkness. Had the path been clear, he might have stopped the final flight. A cluster of big trees stood between this end of the porch and the hedge. Bullets lodged in massive trunks; those that sped clear were not sufficient to halt the cars in which Spud and others were escaping.

The Shadow knew that the raiders were beyond reach; the men with the swag had probably gained a car parked in the road below the house. Staring though the darkness, The Shadow saw lights glaring from a house three hundred yards away. He knew that the gunfire had caused an alarm. The police would soon be here.

The Shadow tried the front door of the house. He found it open. He crossed a gloomy hall and ascended a flight of stairs. He found an open door; a light from an inner room beyond it. The Shadow entered. Close by the inner door, he stumbled across the body of a servant. The man was rigid.

Peering into the inner room, The Shadow saw four other figures. One was that of a second servant, sprawled upon the floor. The man held a gun. There was a desk in the center of the room; there The Shadow observed the other three.

One was a man some sixty years of age. He was seated behind a mahogany desk. His hands were resting upon the woodwork. His dignified face, embellished with a white mustache, was straight toward a younger man who sat opposite. This fellow, too, had been caught in the midst of conversation.

The third man was at the side of the table. He was middle-aged, with a thick-set, hard-boiled countenance. His position was the most unusual of all. The man had half risen from his chair. He was leaning heavily upon the desk, his weight supported by his left hand.

The man's right hand was just above his pocket. It clutched the butt of a gun; The Shadow could see the glimmer of the half-drawn revolver. Like the others, this man was stiffened in the stupor of the death sleep.

THE SHADOW did not enter the room. His keen eyes could see tiny drops of moisture upon the surface of the mahogany desk. These were rapidly evaporating. They were the last traces of the condensed gas that had produced this strange scene.

There was still a chance that fumes remained; if so, they would be gone when the final drops had dried. The Shadow did not need to enter. He looked across the room and saw the closed door of a safe. That told the final story.

The swag had come from this room. The raiders had entered after delivering the knock-out bombs. The Shadow's laugh was soft but grim. He knew the reason for the handkerchiefs that had been upon the faces of the fleeing raiders.

Those had not been necessary so far as the victims were concerned. They had been used to hide something that chance, distant witnesses might otherwise have observed. Beneath the covering of large bandanna handkerchiefs, the successful raiders had worn small gas masks to cover their nostrils. Goggles, perhaps, in addition, to protect their eyes beneath the handkerchiefs.

Shouts from in front of the house. Police had been summoned by the neighbors. The Shadow took a last glance at the desk in this silent room. The final drops of moisture had dried. The Shadow moved into the outer room, found an unlocked window and emerged. He descended by the heavy ivy on the stone wall. As he reached the ground, he could hear thumping footsteps pounding up the inner stairway.

The arriving rescuers had made straight for the house. They had not yet begun to search the grounds. Ghostlike, The Shadow moved off through the hedge. His hidden shape followed the side lane. The Shadow had found no need to linger.

The raiders had escaped; the surrounding mobsters had been overpowered. The Shadow had seen the new victims of the death sleep. He had learned the motive of crime - the robbery of that safe in the second story room.

Though he had not frustrated crime, The Shadow had wreaked vengeance upon a horde of mobsters. He had broken up the forces which opposed him. He had forced a change in coming plans; he had made it necessary for Spud Claxter to produce a new crew before further crime would be possible.

But most important of all, The Shadow had verified a fact which he had suspected. The scene of the crime had told him the definite truth. The raiders had been equipped with more than the gas bombs that had been used as Seth Tanning's. They had worn masks that had proven an efficient protection against the fumes that they had loosed.

The crooks had gained the neutralizer that they needed. How? Where? The Shadow knew; and that knowledge inspired the whispered laugh that sounded in the darkness of the little lane. The Shadow was thinking of Harry Vincent's report.

He knew that the false hospital attendant had been a crook. He knew why Skeet Wurrick had visited the blind alley in back of Hoffer's Pharmacy. Crooks had profited through the experiments made by Doctor Seton Lagwood.

A preparation had been stolen; it had served as an effective neutralizer. Men of crime were ready for new endeavor. The law was in ignorance of their methods. But not The Shadow. When crime again rode high, The Shadow would be prepared to meet it with an unexpected thrust.

## **CHAPTER XII. THE BIG SHOT PLANS**

ONE hour after the fray at the house on Long Island, Spud Claxter arrived at Wolf Barlan's apartment. Spud's face was glum. When Wolf received him in the lighted living room, he knew at once that disaster had been encountered.

"Well?" snarled the big shot. "Did you fliv the job? What happened out at Currian's?"

"They got the swag," returned Spud. "Skeet and Zug - the two guys with them - knocked out Currian and the others who were in the house. What happened after that was the trouble."

"Let's hear it," growled Wolf.

"Well," reported Spud, "there was a lucky break to begin with, Skeet must have got the glim before I showed up with the outside crew. Any way, he and the bunch were in before we got there."

"Skeet got the signal all right," acknowledged Wolf. "I told you I had a good guy planted in there. It don't hurt if you know his name now. His part of the job is done. It was Tully Newel, working in Currian's as a servant. He scrambled as soon as he flashed the glim. Gave me a call and hopped a rattler to Buffalo. Well - that's that. Go on with your story."

"We covered the house," related Spud. "Seen the inside crew come out. Then somebody fires a shot alongside the house. Wings one of the bunch with Skeet. That started us."

"It ought to have. What did you do? Close in?"



"Yeah. We knew the guy was by the house. We was out to get him, Wolf. Then all of a sudden we hear a laugh. Handed me the shivers, that laugh did. Somebody spots the front porch with a flashlight - and there he was."

"Who?"

"The Shadow."

Wolf Barlan had paused to pluck a cigarette from the box on the table. His fingers relaxed when he heard Spud's statement. The cigarette struck the table and bounced to the floor.

"The Shadow!" exclaimed Wolf.

"Big as life," responded Spud. "Up on the stone rail of the porch, giving us the ha-ha."

"And I suppose you dummies took it on the lam, eh?"

"No. That's where we made our big mistake. Those gorillas I picked wouldn't run from nobody. They began to open up with their smoke-wagons. The Shadow did a nose dive."

"Clipped him!"

"That's what they thought" - Spud's tone was rueful - "until they barged in on that porch. Then the boys got theirs. The Shadow had pulled a stall - that was his trick. Up he comes and gives the outfit the works."

"Yeah?" barked Wolf. "What was the mob doing? Standing by and giving him a college cheer? Where was their gats? Did they throw them away?"

"They used their rods," retorted Spud. "But they couldn't do no more than knock off hunks of rock from that porch wall. The Shadow was behind it, picking off every gazebo that fired at him. I saw what was happening. I ducked around the house with a gorilla named Luke Gonrey. Tried to plug The Shadow from in back. Luke took a pot shot at him and missed. Then The Shadow crippled Luke."

"So you scrambled?"

"Yeah, dragging Luke with me. There was one other gorilla managed to get back to the cars. We beat it in a hurry."

WOLF grunted. The big shot's face was troubled. Wolf was picturing the events that Spud had related. He realized that Spud's mob had at least covered the get-away of the raiders who had the swag. Spud caught the thought.

"I came in to the hideout," he stated. "Found Skeet and the others there. They had the guy that The Shadow wounded. He ain't bad off. But Luke Gonrey and that other gorilla - well - we got to get them somewhere."

"Where'd you leave them?"

"The other side of the bridge. Lucky I did, too. There's cops on the bridges looking over all the cars that are coming in. Guess The Shadow scrambled and after that the bulls showed up at Currian's."

Wolf Barlan paced back and forth across the floor. He was worried; but his mental state seemed to spur his planning. A fierce leer showed on his ugly face.

"Figuring on something, Wolf?" queried Spud.

"Yeah," returned the big shot.

"Don't forget them two guys," reminded the mobleader. "You ought to know some place where I could lug them. There's a sawbones I know down on the Bowery; I don't think the bulls have been watching him."

"Leave that to me," assured Wolf. "I got a couple of places where I could send them. Used to have plenty of gorillas get in trouble when I was handling that night-club racket. I'm just thinking of the best place."

"But I'm thinking of a lot besides. I'm thinking of The Shadow. He's trying to crimp the game. That means we've got to shift our plans. Sit down, Spud, while I go over this. I'm working it out."

Spud seated himself in an easy-chair and watched Wolf pace back and forth. At times the big shot's expression denoted worry; at intervals it cleared, finally it showed a triumphant grin. Wolf took a chair opposite his henchman.

"Listen, Spud," announced the big shot. "When you deal with The Shadow, you've got to be smart. That's why I'm making new plans. First of all, I'm trying to figure out how he got wise about tonight's job. There's only one way he could have."

"Trailing my mob?"

"Yeah. It's a cinch he don't know about the hideout; but he probably knows you're in the game. That worries you, eh? Well, it worries me just as much; but I see an out for both of us. I know a way that'll fix everything."

SPUD managed a sickly grin. Wolf's words had actually worried him; the assurance that the big shot had some scheme began to give him restored confidence.

"The Shadow don't know you're hooked up with me," stated Wolf, in positive fashion. "That's something that he's not going to know. I was wise when I picked you" - Wolf paused to chuckle - "on account of your having worked for a lot of guys that were running rackets. How's The Shadow going to know which one you're with? Get that idea?"

"But if he trails me here, Wolf -"

"He won't. You're not coming here. You're not going round the hideout, either. Leave that to Skeet and Zug. Say" - something important occurred to the big shot - "did you look over the swag?"

"Yeah. A couple of hundred grand, mostly in securities."

"Including the bonds that Throckmorton brought with him?"

"Yeah. Skeet grabbed them first."

"All right. We'll leave them lay at the hideout. You stowed them in that hidden safe, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

"Either of us can get them when we want them. They're hot right now; we'll let them cool. When I say you're not going round to the hideout, I mean not unless there's something special that's got to be done. Don't chance it unless you're sure The Shadow's not on your trail."

"I get it."

"We're going ahead with the next job," assured Wolf. "Skeet and Zug work from the hideout. They're safe enough. But you keep on the move; never let nobody track you."

"I got to get a new mob," reminded Spud.

"Yeah," agreed Wolf, "to do the cover up on the outside. But you can do that on the quiet. Be careful of the gorillas you pick. Don't get any more than you have to. Send messages to them, like you did before. And pull that stunt of having them start out from the garage and come across you on the way."

"I did it tonight, Wolf. But The Shadow wised -"

"Maybe he'll wise again. All the better. You and the mob will be watching for him. If we've got to blot out The Shadow, we'll do it. Anyway, the big point is that no matter what he does, he can't find the hideout through you and he can't trace me.

"You're safe, too" - Wolf was prompt in adding this assurance - "if you use your noodle. Let the gorillas do the heavy work. Stand back and keep the old skull working. You used good judgment tonight. Say, Spud, maybe you'll get The Shadow."

The thought seemed to please the mobleader. Wolf grinned, satisfied that he had aroused his chief henchman's eagerness for new combat. The big shot arose from his chair. He walked over to the door. Spud arose and followed.

"Scram," advised Wolf. "Phone me, but don't come around. Be careful, all the time."

"What about Luke?"

"I'm thinking of him. Give me a call when you get back to where he is. I'll tell you where to take him and that other gorilla."

"We may have to dodge the cops at the bridges."

"Don't worry about that until you hear from me."

As soon as Spud had gone, Wolf went to the telephone. He put in a call and held a short, cryptic conversation. That completed, he settled in his chair, to await telephoned word from Spud.

THE mobleader had been wary when he left the apartment house where Wolf lived. Spud had parked his coupe half a block away. He reached the car and drove eastward. He crossed a suspension bridge and noted bluecoats still on duty, inspecting westbound cars that looked suspicious.

Spud reached a small cluster of stores that fringed a portion of the boulevard. He stopped the coupe and alighted. He entered a store and put in a call to Wolf's apartment, hoping that by this time the big shot had decided what to do with the wounded gorillas.

"That you, Wolf?" queried Spud, speaking into the mouthpiece. "Yeah... This is Spud... Over on Long Island. Say, about those two fellows. Yeah, they're right near here..."

Spud paused. He was listening to the orders that clicked through the receiver. His eyes began to blink; his mouth opened as he heard the unexpected instructions which came from the big shot. When Wolf was through, Spud could not find his voice for the moment. Then he blurted his understanding.

"I get it, Wolf," were Spud's words. "Say. That makes it soft... Sure... I'll have Louie and Gabby boost

the two of them in my coupe... Yeah, I'll send Louie and Gabby in with the empty touring cars... That's right, they won't have no trouble passing the bulls at the bridge...

"That's right. I won't have no trouble either... This makes it a cinch... Luke and the other mug? Say - they won't have no idea what I'm going to do with them... No. They won't know where I'm taking them... Sure. I'll tell Louie and Gabby that I'm looking after the two gazebos... Yeah. That's all Louie and Gabby need to know."

Spud hung up the receiver. He left the store, chuckling as he went. He drove his coupe from the boulevard and took a side road that led to the spot where he had left Louie and Gabby with the wounded men in the touring cars.

From now on, Spud would look after Luke Gonrey and the second gorilla who had been dropped by one of The Shadow's slugs. Spud was elated by the cleverness of Wolf Barlan's orders. He had gained new confidence in the big shot's craft. For of one thing, Spud was sure.

The mobleader felt positive that when he had followed Wolf Barlan's instructions, the two wounded gorillas would be safely stowed in a spot where not even The Shadow would think of finding them.

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

AT noon the next day, Police Commissioner Wainwright Barth encountered Lamont Cranston in the lobby of the Cobalt Club. Barth had come there for lunch. By mutual consent, he and Cranston went to the grill room and there took a secluded corner.

Barth needed the quieting calm of a chat with Cranston. For the police commissioner had been on the go ever since midnight. Crime on Long Island had kept him busy. The new appearance of the death sleep had made him anxious.

"Think of it, Cranston!" exclaimed the commissioner. "Five men overpowered. Helpless victims left in the grip of a terrible paralysis. There is only one consolation. Only one."

"The recovery of the previous group?"

"Yes. We removed the five new victims to the Talleyrand Hospital where they are under the personal supervision of Doctor Seton Lagwood. He believes that he can restore them to consciousness."

"What was the motive of the crime?"

"We do not know as yet. We know that crime was involved, because of the terrific gunfight that took place outside the home of Felix Currian. Half a dozen dead mobsters there - all, apparently, members of the same band.

"We believe that they tried to interfere with the activities of those who actually entered the house. Therefore we estimate that there must have been at least one dozen of the original raiders."

"Why one dozen?" inquired Cranston.

"It would have required that many," assured Barth, staring upward, through his spectacles, "to have eliminated so many enemies. That is my opinion."

"Does Detective Cardona share it?"

"He seemed rather doubtful at first. He was rather reluctant, but he finally agreed with me."

A thin smile showed on Cranston's lips. Joe Cardona would naturally have been reluctant to state his own theory. For Joe Cardona was one member of the Manhattan force who had previously viewed the results of The Shadow's work. Well did Joe know of The Shadow's power.

Commissioner Barth, however, had branded The Shadow as a myth. Barth's term of office had been short. It would probably end when Ralph Weston, the previous commissioner, returned from the Republic of Garauca, where he was restoring order as head of the National Police.

Barth, as yet, had not learned what experience had taught Weston: namely, that The Shadow actually existed and was active in the eradication of crime. All of Barth's success as commissioner had been due to the regime that Weston had so effectively established in New York. Weston's success, in turn, had been made possible through the hidden service of The Shadow. Though Weston was gone, The Shadow still remained.

"FELIX CURRIAN is a millionaire," explained Barth, unwittingly giving facts to The Shadow, "and his guest last night was a man named Gerald Throckmorton. We believe that they were discussing financial matters and that certain sums of money may have been in view.

"Throckmorton is from Boston. A third man present was from the same city. His name is Parker Howland, and he is in the employ of a private detective agency in Massachusetts. A wire from Boston has informed us that Howland was assigned by the agency to accompany Throckmorton on his trip to New York."

"What about the others?" questioned Cranston.

"Two servants," replied Barth. "We have learned their names from Mrs. Currian, who returned from Washington when informed of the case. There was a third servant, however, whom we have not yet located. He was employed there under the name of Thomas Devin; but we believe that he was a crook, working for the ones who made the raid."

"I see. What about the victims, commissioner?"

"You mean their condition?"

"Yes."

"It is unchanged. When Detective Cardona reached Currian's, he ordered them to be taken to the Talleyrand Hospital. Then he put in a call for Doctor Lagwood. He was just too late; Lagwood had left the hospital after sleeping there all day. He was on his way to his sanitarium on the Sound.

"The hospital called the sanitarium. Word was left for Doctor Lagwood to call back. After Cardona reached the hospital with the new batch of victims, the return call came in from the doctor. He gave orders concerning the new patients; then he came back to New York. He has been with the new victims since midnight. I am going up to the hospital immediately after lunch."

The topic ended for the time being.

When the two club members were finishing their dessert, Cranston put a quiet question to Barth.

"You learned no more about the dead man, Troxton Valdan?"

"Not a great deal," replied Barth. "He had made a trip to Providence, Rhode Island, and stayed there in a hotel over night. It was not the first time that he went to that city. We believe that he may have held a conference with someone there,"

"On what subject?"

"Chemical inventions. Valdan was a queer sort. His field of investigation seemed unlimited. He was living on royalties gained from formulas that had shown commercial value. Paper bleaching, elimination of carbon monoxide in garages, other ideas of various description.

"We cross-examined Benzig and Crowder to assure ourselves that neither of the men knew more than they had said. We have made no further progress with the case. It still remains a mystery. We have been utterly unable to trace the delivery men of whom Benzig spoke."

With this statement, Commissioner Barth arose and glanced at his watch. He remarked that he must hurry to the hospital, as he wished to be there when Doctor Lagwood examined the patients. He added that the only other physicians whom Lagwood had allowed to be present were members of the hospital staff. With that, Barth departed.

LAMONT CRANSTON finished a cigarette. In deliberate fashion, he arose and strolled upstairs to the lobby. He put in a telephone call and spoke in the quiet tones that were Lamont Cranston's accustomed voice. But when the receiver dropped in place, a soft, whispered laugh came from those thin lips. It was the laugh of The Shadow.

There was a reason for the quiet mirth. The Shadow knew that it would require Commissioner Barth fully thirty minutes to reach the Talleyrand Hospital. But the man whom The Shadow had called would be there in fifteen. The Shadow - using the tones of Cranston - had spoken to Doctor Rupert Sayre.

TWENTY MINUTES after he had received Cranston's call, Rupert Sayre was seated in the little office which formed the headquarters of his college friend, Freddy Lawson. The two men were engaged in brief conversation.

"Speaking of these death sleep victims," Lawson was saying, "the rule is that only staff physicians can view them. Then, of course, only when Doctor Lagwood permits it. They are in his charge. There have been times, though, when the rule has been stretched.

"Some of the staff are going up there now; and I think that it would be all right if you came along with me. After all, half the members of the staff hardly know each other. Simply act as if you were accustomed to the place and I don't think you will be challenged by anyone."

They went upstairs. They found a small group of doctors studying the patients. Doctor Lagwood, tall and dignified, was making a few remarks. Sayre listened while the specialist briefly dealt with different modes of treatment that he had applied. A few minutes after Sayre's arrival, Commissioner Barth appeared.

Lagwood completed his discussion. The staff physicians left. Sayre, however, plucked Lawson's sleeve and held his friend in the hallway just as Lagwood appeared with Barth. The specialist was nodding; he crossed the hall to his experimental room and made a beckoning gesture. Barth followed. Sayre also stepped forward, drawing Lawson with him.

Lagwood seemed a bit surprised when he saw the two doctors who had followed the commissioner. Then, recognizing Lawson as a staff physician, he made no objection to their presence. The question which Barth was putting referred only to matters which Lagwood had already discussed. The specialist was merely pointing out items of equipment with which Barth was not familiar.

"I used this for the vapor treatment," explained Lagwood, indicating a little tentlike object. "I tried a special compound" - he picked up a small, empty bottle - "that I prepared after making blood tests. A neutralizer. I used it but sparingly. It produced no noticeable results.

"That, of course, was when I still believed that the effects of some gas might have been experienced by the victims. I knew that the use of a neutralizer was entirely experimental; but it was worthwhile if only as a test. I abandoned it, however, when the Valdan case proved so conclusively that noxious gas was not the cause of the death sleep."

Sayre had edged forward. He was looking at the bottle. Lagwood saw his interest and handed it to him. Sayre noted that the label merely bore the word "Neutralizer" and the number 6. These were typed beneath the printed title: "Hoffer, Pharmacist."

"Does Hoffer prepare your prescriptions also?" questioned Lagwood, still accepting Sayre as a staff physician.

"Yes, indeed," responded Sayre promptly.

"A remarkable pharmacist," commented Lagwood, receiving the bottle and replacing it on the shelf. "Exacting in his methods, thoroughly reliable. His one fault is the fact that he will allow no other pharmacist to work with him."

"That is why I use my own titles for his compounds. For instance, I have called this particular prescription 'Neutralizer Number Six!' Should I require more of it while Hoffer is absent from his place, any one of his inexperienced clerks could find the large bottle and pour out the quantity desired."

"I use that method with all of my prescriptions. It saves me a great deal of delay. When experimenting, I frequently need fresh supplies. Well, commissioner" - Lagwood paused to turn to Barth - "I can only say that I hold the same hopes for these patients that I did for the others. I doubt that we shall have results within forty-eight hours; after that, we can look for prompt recoveries."

Sayre strolled out while Barth was following. Lawson followed. He smiled as he spoke to his friend.

"I'll bet Lagwood would have hit the ceiling if he'd realized you weren't on the staff," remarked Lawson. "He's a great stickler for rules. I nearly fell over when he handed you that bottle. You fixed it, though, when you chimed in about Hoffer."

"How?"

"Lagwood thinks that Hoffer is the only real pharmacist in New York. So that made it fine when you agreed with him. No one ever argues about Hoffer when they talk with Lagwood. After all, Hoffer does know his business."

"Where is his place?"

"Two blocks over. Very conveniently located."

WHEN Rupert Sayre drove away from the Talleyrand Hospital, he drove past Hoffer's Pharmacy. When he reached his office, he put in a telephone call and talked with Lamont Cranston. Sayre's face, usually serious, wore a smile. The young physician knew that his millionaire friend was pleased.

For Cranston had particularly requested Sayre to learn if Lagwood had tried any vapor treatments; and if so, to find out regarding the particular compound used and the quantity that had been prepared. Sayre had learned that Hoffer had made up such a prescription; and that only a small quantity of it had been sent to the hospital. He told Cranston that Lagwood had none left; but that Hoffer probably had a large amount available.

AT the Cobalt Club, The Shadow made another telephone call promptly after he had talked with Rupert

Sayre. A thick voice came over the wire. The Shadow spoke; but he used neither his own whisper nor the quiet tones of Lamont Cranston. Instead, he talked in a voice that was a remarkable imitation of Doctor Seton Lagwood's. The Shadow remembered the physician's accents, as he had heard them at Troxton Valdan's.

"Hello. Mr. Hoffer?" There was a slight upward inflection in the pretended voice of Lagwood. "Yes... This is Doctor Lagwood... Ah. You recognized my voice..."

"Tell me this, Mr. Hoffer. The neutralizer... Yes, number six. I wish to be sure of its exact quantity... Yes... You are sure? I see... Ah, yes, I had forgotten that I told you to store it away... I think it would be best to make certain. Yes, I shall hold the wire..."

Thin lips framed a smile as minutes passed. The Shadow knew that Hoffer was searching the cellar for the stolen neutralizer. He prepared for the conversation that was to follow Hoffer's return. The thick voice suddenly recurred, in apologetic fashion. Feigning Lagwood's tone, The Shadow became indignant.

"What! You cannot find it..." The Shadow paused to hear Hoffer's sputtered excuses. "I cannot understand your negligence... No. No... I do not need it today, but it should be available... What is that? Ah - you still have the formula... Of course... I see. You will make up a new supply... The same amount... Very good, Mr. Hoffer... Yes, store it until I require it... This time, be sure of where you place it..."

Afternoon passed. The Shadow remained at the Cobalt Club. No calls came from Burbank. The efforts of the agents were in temporary abeyance. Yet The Shadow, calm in his guise of Cranston, was quietly at ease.

He had learned data regarding Troxton Valdan, but he saw no reason to trace the dead chemist's previous actions. If Valdan's visits to Providence concerned the gas that induced the death sleep, the schemer who had met the chemist in the Rhode Island metropolis would certainly have covered up his tracks.

The Shadow had also learned details regarding Felix Currian and those who had been at the house on Long Island. Those facts merely backed up The Shadow's knowledge that crime had been perpetrated. The battle at Currian's was now no more than a past episode.

THE SHADOW was looking toward the future. He was planning his own actions; he was counting on the aid of one agent, Cliff Marsland. Through Cliff, The Shadow had already gained information that had led to a thrust against crime. He was positive that Cliff would play an even more important part in the next epoch.

Dusk arrived. Lamont Cranston left the Cobalt Club. He became a cloaked being of blackness. As The Shadow, he emerged from his limousine and arrived in the vicinity of Hoffer's Pharmacy. He entered the blind alley that Harry Vincent had described. He used the same method as Skeet when it came to dropping into Hoffer's cellar.

A tiny flashlight blinked. The Shadow, as readily as Skeet, discovered the closet shelf. A new jug had replaced the stolen one. The Shadow noted its label. His flashlight went out. Silently, The Shadow left the place and returned to the limousine, parked a few squares away.

Stanley drove to a new destination when he heard the bidding of his master's voice through the speaking tube. Again, the chauffeur parked and waited while a shrouded form glided from the car.



Stanley knew his master for an adventurer. He was accustomed to these peculiar trips in the limousine. He also was used to the extended periods of absence - months at a time - that marked Lamont Cranston's globe-trotting tours. Stanley, like Cranston's other servants, had been trained to obey orders and to avoid all speculation regarding his master's affairs.

Stanley had never once suspected that there were two Lamont Cranstons. The real one and another who frequently took his place while the genuine Cranston was abroad. At present, Lamont Cranston was actually journeying in the vicinity of Timbuktu. The master whom Stanley was serving was dwelling as an impostor at Cranston's New Jersey home.

Knowing nothing of this, it was not surprising that Stanley had never identified these limousine trips in Manhattan with the activities of The Shadow. Blissfully ignorant, Stanley was parked within half a block of the most carefully hidden spot in all New York - the entrance to The Shadow's sanctum.

One hour passed. Stanley was dozing. Again came the quiet voice of Lamont Cranston, ordering Stanley to return to the uptown street near Hoffer's Pharmacy. The chauffeur obeyed in his accustomed fashion. Once more, he was oblivious when the figure of The Shadow left the car.

The tiny flashlight glimmered through the cellar of the drug store. It approached the closet. Then came darkness. A pause; a trifling noise; a final glimmer. The rays revealed the big bottle on the shelf, exactly as The Shadow had found it. The green liquid glistened while the flashlight blinked.

The Shadow departed. He laughed softly as he moved through the blind alley. The Shadow had completed his task. He had discovered the new supply of neutralizer. He had gone to the black-walled laboratory that adjoined his sanctum, there to make the tests that he desired.

The bottle was back upon the shelf, where it could be found when again required. Nothing in its position or appearance could reveal the fact that a mysterious intruder had temporarily removed the bottle and replaced it.

Out in the limousine, Stanley sat up promptly as he heard the voice of Lamont Cranston ordering him to drive the car to the Cobalt Club.

## **CHAPTER XIV. THE NEW MOB**

"HELLO, Cliff."

Cliff Marsland looked up from a table at the Black Ship. He recognized the hard-faced rowdy who was sliding into an opposite chair. The fellow was known as "Muggsy" McGilly. He was another gorilla of Luke Gonrey's ilk.

"Hello, Muggsy. What's new?"

The rowdy looked about. Seeing no one close by, he leaned across the table. His tone was both cautious and confidential. Cliff sensed that serious business was afoot.

"Luke Gonrey was talkin' to you two nights ago," informed Muggsy. "Right here at this table. Supposed to meet you last night, wasn't he?"

Cliff made no reply. Muggsy laughed.

"It's O.K., Cliff," he assured. "Spud Claxter sent me here."

"Spud Claxter?" Cliff acted as if he had never heard the name.

"Sure," chuckled Muggsy. "Luke was workin' for him. You know all about it."

"Yeah?" Cliff was still quizzical. "Say - where's Luke? Have you seen him?"

"Luke got crippled in that fight out at Currian's," stated Muggsy. "Him an' a lot of other guys. He told Spud about you. Spud needs a new mob. I'm in it. So are you."

"For when?"

"Tonight. Listen. There's real dough in it. One grand. Are you on?"

Cliff nodded.

"Up in Soklow's old garage," stated Muggsy. "Half an hour. The mob's goin' out. Be there."

Muggsy started to rise. Cliff stopped him. He had one question - a natural one.

"Say," he inquired. "What's come of Luke?"

"I don't know," answered Muggsy. "Spud says he's been taken care of. But I ain't seen him. Maybe he's in a badder way than Spud wanted to say."

"When did you see Spud?"

"Half an hour ago. I've been sort of hidin' out, lately, an' he knew where I was. Snook in there an' slipped me the word. Told me to see you."

Cliff sat silent after Muggsy had left. He had figured that Luke Gonrey had been dropped in the battle with The Shadow. But Cliff, following his chief's instructions, had made the Black Ship his habitat in hopes that the missing mobster might show up. This news from Muggsy explained why Luke had not arrived. It also gave Cliff the very break he wanted.

HALF an hour from now; at Soklow's garage. Cliff knew what his task would be. He was to serve as one of the outside crew, just as Luke had served in the raid on Currian's. This was better than before. It would be to The Shadow's liking. Cliff got up and strolled from the dive. He reached the store with the battered phone booth and put in a call to Burbank.

The contact man ordered him to remain. Five minutes passed. The bell rang in the phone booth. Cliff snatched the receiver from the hook. He spoke. Burbank responded. The contact agent had communicated with The Shadow; the orders were for Cliff to go along with the mob.

It had been after nine o'clock when Muggsy had dropped into the Black Ship. It was nearly ten when Cliff entered the old garage and growled his name to the first mobster who challenged him. He was being initiated into Spud Claxter's methods. Louie and Gabby were again assigned to the wheels of the touring cars. They were to pick up Spud's trail somewhere along a certain street.

The cars started from the garage. Tonight, however, the second touring car had no excess passenger upon its rear bumper. One block from the old garage, a small sedan took up the trail of the touring cars. It followed slowly, nearly a block behind. It was still trailing when Spud Claxter's coupe appeared up ahead.

"Say" - a voice growled beside Cliff, in the rear seat of the second touring car - "there's a rattletrap sedan tailing us. What about it, Gabby?"

"Watch it," ordered the driver.

The touring car turned a corner. Back in the sedan, a tail light blinked. A trim coupe, one block behind, came speeding forward. It followed close as the sedan turned the corner. The mobsters were turning another corner up ahead. Again the tail light blinked as the sedan swung to the curb.

The coupe pulled up alongside. A man leaped from the driver's seat, out into the seat. At the same instant, blackness arose from behind the wheel of the sedan. The Shadow shifted swiftly to the coupe. The trim car shot forward. Harry took charge of the sedan.

The Shadow's new car swerved the corner. It gained rapidly upon the mobster cars, but did not approach too closely. The effect was apparent in the car wherein Cliff was riding.

"See anything more of that mug in back?" queried Gabby.

"There's a car coming along," informed the fellow beside Cliff. "A coupe. Good-looking buggy, what I can see of it."

"I thought you said an old sedan was tailing us."

"That's what was. But it ain't anywhere around."

"Then it wasn't tailing us," decided Gabby, with a short laugh. "That's that."

The other mobster agreed. Nevertheless, he cast wary glances toward the coupe as it still kept along in back. The mobster cars had reached a lighted thoroughfare; they shot forward in procession just as a traffic light changed. The coupe was lost on the other side of the crossing. It pulled up to the curb, just behind a taxicab.

WHEN traffic changed, the cab sped forward. The driver had a passenger. The Shadow had abandoned his coupe and taken the taxi instead. Within a few blocks, his keen eyes spied the last touring car as it swerved a corner to the right.

"Take that street," ordered The Shadow, in a quiet tone. The driver obeyed.

Up in the touring car, Gabby was still thinking about sedan and coupe. Chuckling, he shot a remark to the silent gunman who was seated beside Cliff.

"Hey, Goofy," laughed Gabby. "What's following us now? A delivery truck?"

"There's a taxi coming along in back," growled the disgruntled mobster.

"About twelve thousand of them in New York," snorted Gabby. "Say you can't go anywhere in this burg without a taxi being on your trail. What kind of a cab is it?"

"I'll look. No" - the gangster paused as he stared from the rear window - "I can't make it out. What did you want to know for?"

"Thought maybe it was one of them with a radio in it," chuckled Gabby. "If it was, I'd slow up so it could come alongside. Get a little free music."

The mobster growled an oath from the rear seat. Gabby laughed and turned another corner on to a wide avenue. Here a medley of cabs came into the picture; the mobster in the rear seat could not have identified The Shadow's if he had tried.

Cliff Marsland felt sure that the cars were nearing their destination. Spud's coupe had led a shifty course, northward and westward. At last the front car swung toward the blackness of a side street, negotiating a

left turn that gave difficulty to the touring cars. While Gabby was maneuvering, a taxi cut left with a wild swing and headed over toward the far curb of the side street.

"Right here," came a quiet order.

The driver stopped short in front of a gloomy, old-fashioned apartment building. He did not know what it was all about. His passenger had given one new order after another. On the last avenue, he had called for a sudden left turn, in a hurry. Now it was stop. The driver turned to express an opinion. A hand thrust him a green bill.

"Keep the change," said the quiet voice.

The first touring car had swung past the cab; the second, freeing itself from traffic, negotiated the turn. As it coasted close by the cab, the street door of the taxi opened. While the taxi driver was still fondling the money that he had received, the figure of The Shadow performed a series of swift leaps.

The cloaked shape gained the touring car just as Gabby gave it the gas. Once more, The Shadow was riding with the mob. Like Cliff, he had sensed that the end of the journey was close. Along this darkened street, he could risk another trip on the rear bumper.

THE three cars swung right. They came to a stop upon a short, wide street - one of those peculiar, little-used thoroughfares that run parallel with the upper avenues in Manhattan. Mobsters came to the sidewalk. They followed Spud's lead through a passageway between two old apartment buildings.

It was here that Spud gave his instructions as he pointed ahead. He was explaining the location of an old-fashioned apartment building, the corner of which was just visible from this spot. Spud was terse.

"We've got to cover it all around," said the mobleader. "Muggsy and Marsland pick the fire tower. The rest keep farther off. Two of you opposite the front door. Louie and Gabby will do. We don't need you in the cars tonight."

Mobsters moved toward the designated positions. Cliff found himself with "Muggsy," in a short, blind alley that was by the bottom of the fire tower. Muggsy moved forward to inspect the darkness. Cliff was about to follow when a soft hiss restrained him. Cliff caught a whispered command. It was from The Shadow, unseen in the darkness.

Muggsy returned, passing the lighted entrance to the tower. Cliff put a prompt question, one that The Shadow had inspired by his whispered command.

"Say, Muggsy," suggested Cliff. "Get out to Spud and ask him what floor the job is on. We ought to be posted. Somebody might start a fool racket upstairs. If we don't know the floor, we won't know what to do about it."

"Guess you're right, Cliff."

Muggsy sidled out from the alley. Cliff caught sight of a blackened shape that moved swiftly into the fire tower, unseen by the departing gangster. Once inside, The Shadow's form became unseen. Muggsy returned. He had found Spud across the street.

"Fourth floor," informed Muggsy. "Side toward this street. Number 4G, Spud says."

Within the fire tower, The Shadow moved into the blackness of the stairs. Silently, his form was gliding upward. His keen ears had caught Muggsy's words. The Shadow was moving to his post.

## CHAPTER XV. CARDONA FINDS LUCK

WHILE The Shadow was trailing mobsters bent on new crime, Commissioner Wainwright Barth and Detective Joe Cardona were concerning themselves with old events. The two representatives of the law were at the Talleyrand Hospital, in conference with Doctor Seton Lagwood.

The first of the death-sleep patients had recovered. The others were showing signs of life. Doctor Lagwood's hopes had been realized. As with the first group of victims, the time element of forty-eight hours had done its helpful work.

"My former patients" - Doctor Lagwood was speaking from his chair in the experimental room - "recovered at midnight. We allowed them until morning before they were questioned regarding their experience."

"Would you advise the same in this case?" asked Barth.

"I would," nodded Lagwood. "Unquestionably their minds will be clearer then. Of course, if it is imperative, we could allow one or two of them to speak. But I advise the utmost caution for the present."

"Very well," decided Barth. "Come, Cardona, let us leave."

"Just a minute, commissioner," insisted the detective. "I want to find out which one of that bunch woke up first. Which one was it, doctor?"

Doctor Lagwood picked up a chart from the table. He consulted it carefully, then made his reply.

"Gerald Throckmorton," stated the physician. "Let me see - he is the man from Boston, is he not?"

"Yes." Cardona turned to Barth. "Commissioner, I'd like to ask that fellow just one question. Why he came down here with a private detective."

"Could we allow that?" Barth asked Lagwood.

The physician pondered. At first, he seemed on the point of refusing the request. Then, after giving more thought, he decided that it would be allowable. He conducted Barth and Cardona along a hallway and into a private room. There they saw Gerald Throckmorton propped, white-faced, upon the pillows of a cot.

Despite his pallor, Throckmorton seemed very much awake. His eyes were clear as they saw the visitors. His lips opened and he smiled as he put a greeting to Lagwood.

"Hello, Doc," said the young man, "you're back again, eh? Who are your friends?"

"Commissioner Barth," introduced Lagwood, "and Detective Cardona. The latter has a question which he would like answered. You were accompanied to New York by a private detective. Why was he with you?"

"That's a long story," smiled Throckmorton.

"Just give the primary reason," urged Lagwood. "Did you fear robbery? Did you have valuables with you?"

"Yes," responded the young man, half closing his eyes. "Securities to deliver to Currian."

DOCTOR LAGWOOD turned to Cardona. The detective nodded. This gave him the start he wanted. Throckmorton had been robbed, but apparently did not know it. Lagwood's gesture indicated that it would be unwise to worry him with the news.

Barth turned toward the door. Cardona was about to follow when Throckmorton opened his eyes and again smiled. He spoke, half in a tone of surprise.

"You're leaving?" he queried. "I wanted to talk longer -"

"Wait until the morning," interposed Lagwood. "Detective Cardona will be back then."

"All right," agreed Throckmorton. "Tomorrow morning will be all right. Just so long as I can talk before Wednesday night."

Joe Cardona stopped abruptly. Almost involuntarily, he spoke aloud, responding to the statement that Throckmorton had made.

"Wednesday night?" he queried. "This is Wednesday night."

Throckmorton swung in the bed and propped his head on one elbow. He was completely aroused from his lethargy. His tone, though bewildered, was clear.

"Wednesday night?" he echoed. "It - it can't be. Why I was at Currian's last night - Monday night. I - I - have been asleep for two days? I thought it was only one."

Doctor Lagwood stepped forward anxiously. Commissioner Barth was also apprehensive. Joe Cardona remained stolid, as Throckmorton blurted objections to the two men who tried to quiet him.

"I've got to talk!" he cried. "I know that crooks must have grabbed my securities. Currian's safe was open. They could have rifled it, too. But that's nothing! Tonight - Wednesday night - you can't stop me! I'm going to talk!"

"The result might be serious," warned Lagwood, turning to Barth. "He can speak if you order it; but the consequences will be your own. I speak as a physician."

"Quiet him," agreed Barth. "His life may be at stake."

"Perhaps," broke in Cardona, thrusting forward between the physician and the commissioner, "but maybe other lives are already at stake. I'll stand for the consequences, commissioner. I want to hear this man's statement."

For an instant, Barth boiled with indignation. He glared at Cardona while Doctor Lagwood stood by, shaking his head in troubled fashion. Angered at Cardona's insubordination, the commissioner was ready to use forcible measures. It was Throckmorton who changed the situation. Already the recovered patient was gripping Cardona's coat, pouring out his story to the detective.

"Somebody knew I was coming to Currian's," blurted Throckmorton. "A servant there - one Currian was suspicious about - that's why he had armed the others. I had the dick along with me. He was armed, too."

"But nobody - not even the dick - knew why I was bringing those securities to Currian. Even Currian didn't know. He knew I wanted to borrow as much as I could get on them; he was giving me a check. But he didn't know why I wanted the money."

"I'll tell you why. Did you ever hear of Rufus Galder? Big millionaire who collects rare jewels? Well, he's selling some of them tonight. Going to have the whole lot at his apartment. Here in New York - Wednesday night - Rufus Galder."

THROCKMORTON paused for breath. He was defiant as he looked toward Barth and Lagwood. They could not stop him now. He spoke again to Cardona.

"Nobody knew I was borrowing money from Currian so I could show up at Galder's and bid for some of those gems. A friend up in Boston told me about the sale. Big banker there, Tony Sharman. He couldn't make it. Said to use his name when I called on Galder.

"Sharman seemed worried. Said Galder had been pulling these private sales too often." Throckmorton was talking in syllabic utterances. "Told me to hire a dick. Said to call Galder. Advise him to have police there. Sharman's advice to Galder. As a friend.

"I never called Galder. Went to Currian's. Woke up here. When you came in, the whole thing came back. Idea hit me. Crooks must have got us at Currian's. If they knew there was money loose at his place, they ought to know there would be jewels at Galder's. Get it? Only a few people at Currian's - two of us, detective, servants. Lot of people at Galder's maybe. Crooks found out about Currian's -"

"And you figure," interrupted Cardona, "that there's a bigger chance they'd know about Galder's."

"That's it!" exclaimed Throckmorton, dropping back on the pillows.

"It's what I figure, too," asserted Cardona, turning to Commissioner Barth. "We're up against hot crime. The crooks are moving fast to keep ahead of us. There was an inside man at Currian's, a servant, and you can bet there'll be an inside man at Galder's."

Cardona turned to Doctor Lagwood. He indicated Throckmorton, propped in the bed.

"The patient's yours, Doc," declared the detective. "Hope he didn't overtax himself, but he looks better now he's got that worry off his chest."

Without further hesitation, Cardona strode toward the door. Commissioner Barth, excited, stalked after him. Barth had forgotten the insubordination. He was willing to follow Cardona's lead even further, in face of this possible crisis.

"You're calling headquarters?" questioned Barth, as they reached the hall together. "Getting some men up there?"

"You're the boss, commissioner," replied Cardona, stopping short. "But if you want a suggestion, I've got it. The first person to call is Rufus Galder. If you do that, to put him on guard - he'd listen quick to you - I can be on another phone starting the ball rolling."

"The radio patrol," nodded Barth, "all the available police in the vicinity, squad of plain-clothes men. Form a cordon around -"

The commissioner had reached a room where a telephone showed on a table. Cardona kept on while Barth went in to send his call to Rufus Galder. Seizing a telephone book, the commissioner found the number that he wanted. Rufus Galder was listed as living at the Castellan Apartments. His phone number was Drury 8-3155. Barth picked up the telephone.

GERALD THROCKMORTON'S story was bringing prompt results. It was no shot in the dark. For the Castellan Apartments were located in the building that Spud Claxter's mob had already surrounded; and

the number of Rufus Galder's apartment was 4G.

Joe Cardona had found luck. The detective's insistence was bringing the forces of the law to a combat with Wolf Barlan's minions. Cardona had heard Throckmorton out. Following the Bostonian's hunch, Joe was getting somewhere.

Commissioner Barth had caught the contagious excitement of the ace detective. Instinctively, he was following the hunch. Like Cardona, Barth believed that crime was due at Rufus Galder's. The commissioner was out to stop it.

So was The Shadow. Whereas the law was springing to belated action, on the supposition that evil was impending, The Shadow had already learned the truth and was present on the scene.

## **CHAPTER XVI. THE RAID**

THE SHADOW had reached the fourth floor of the fire tower. Here he had found a steel door that opened outward. Its outer knob would not turn. It was latched. Yet it had not troubled The Shadow.

Using blackened tools, he had removed the knob, then probed within. The latch had yielded; The Shadow had ended its usefulness. Yet The Shadow, after entering, had paid but a short trip to the hallway.

He had satisfied himself that all was well in apartment 4G. He had heard muffled voices from within. Then he had returned beyond the steel door. It was opened only to a narrow slit. The Shadow, through this crevice, commanded a view of the hall.

The Shadow had deduced facts concerning the raid at Currian's. He was sure that the masked crooks had entered the millionaire's house ahead of the time appointed. That was why The Shadow had been too late. Tonight, The Shadow was sure that the cordon of outside mobsters had arrived in advance.

How did the crooks intend to enter? Not by the fire tower. Cliff would have been tipped to that fact; besides, the steel doors were too formidable. They must be coming either by the front door, where Spud could tip off Louie and Gabby of their arrival; or else they were already in the building.

This last supposition was a logical one; for apartments in this district were only partly tenanted. The squad of raiders could easily find a hiding place until the zero hour. That, however, did not matter. All that concerned The Shadow was the fact that the crooks attack through the hallway that he was guarding.

INSIDE Rufus Galder's apartment, nearly a dozen guests were enjoying a collation. Two servants were producing trays from a buffet, serving hors d'oeuvres and fancy liquors to the visitors. Most of those present were men; only three ladies were in the throng.

Rufus Galder, tall, portly and genial, was talking to two guests when a servant approached and spoke in a low tone. The millionaire put a question; receiving a cautious reply, he walked hurriedly from the living room and entered his study.

"Did you hear that, Huring?" questioned one of the two men to whom Galder had been talking.

"What?" inquired Huring, a tall, dark-browed fellow whose coarse face seemed out of place in this group.

"What the servant said," repeated the speaker.



"I didn't catch it, Pelman."

"He said" - Pelman's tone was a whisper - "that the call was very urgent. From the police commissioner, Mr. Wainwright Barth."

"Odd, wasn't it?" questioned Huring.

With that he walked away. Pelman, a pudgy, lethargic individual, showed sudden keenness. He watched Huring stroll toward the little entry that led from the living room to the outer door. A moment later, he noted a slight darkening from the entry, as though someone had extinguished the light. The glow came on again. Huring came back into the living room.

Pelman grew suddenly suspicious. He did not like Huring. The man looked like an interloper, despite his smooth fitting full-dress suit. He wondered how the fellow had crashed into this high social gathering. Then he recalled that Huring was reputed to be a man of considerable wealth.

Several persons here were interested in the jewels which Galder shortly intended to display. The millionaire was anxious to dispose of part of his collection. That was the real purpose for the gathering. Had Huring been invited here as a potential buyer? Probably. Was that a blind on Huring's part?

While Pelman was still pondering on this question, he kept his eyes toward Huring. Hence he did not see the cause of the sudden gasp that came from nearly everyone present. Pelman turned. Rufus Galder had stepped from his study, followed by a servant. Both the millionaire and the menial were holding leveled revolvers.

"No one is to move," ordered Galder sternly. "I am acting with authority of the police commissioner. My instructions are to hold everyone in place; and I have full right to take any measures that I believe necessary."

A hush fell over the group. Galder looked from man to man. The millionaire had grit. So had the servant beside him. Satisfied that he had full control, Galder resumed.

"Fortunately," he said, "I have not displayed my jewels. Hence the moment of danger has not yet arrived. The commissioner has warned me that someone present may be the agent of criminals who plan an attack upon this apartment. The police are already on their way to offset such a raid.

"My servants are trustworthy. I can vouch for their honesty. I can do the same for certain of my guests. But there are others whom I might suspect. I am looking for one man, some person who plans to make an escape when the crooks attack. If anyone can aid me in that search, I should be greatly obliged."

Pelman looked toward Huring. The heavy-browed fellow was calmly lighting a cigarette. In that very attempt to show poise, Pelman saw new suspicion.

"There's the man!" he exclaimed. "Huring! He heard the servant say the commissioner was on the wire."

Huring raised his head to stare at the accuser. His forehead furrowed. He was momentarily nervous; then he retorted quickly.

"I heard nothing," he growled. "You were the man who heard what the servant said. You heard him, Pelman, and you mentioned it to me -"

Huring broke off, suddenly realizing that this statement was a boomerang. He had admitted that he knew who was on the telephone. He shifted nervously.

"And then," asserted Pelman, stepping forward, "you went out into the entry. You turned the light off and turned it on again. I saw the reflection against the wall. It was like a signal."

"Enough!" exclaimed Galder. "Huring is the man we want. Cover him, Rinehart" - this to the servant - "and shoot to kill if he makes a move. Come, Huring. Let us hear you talk. Who are the others behind this game?"

OUTSIDE, in the hallway, a door had opened on the side opposite to Galder's apartment. From it came three roughly clad men, wearing bandanna handkerchiefs about their faces. The Shadow could detect the bulge of gas masks beneath. Each raider was armed with gun and small bomb shaped like a pineapple.

The trio came forward with a suddenness. They were making for the door of Galder's apartment when a sudden hiss brought them to a pause. From the door to the fire tower came a figure cloaked in black. Crooks stared as they saw The Shadow.

A fourth man was coming from the door of the empty apartment. His left hand held a revolver, his right a pineapple bomb. He did not hesitate for an instant. He threw the bomb. Its interior came lobbing down the hall and struck the floor three feet in front of The Shadow. A soft shell burst; a thick cloud of green vapor rose about the shrouded figure. Pungent fumes filled the end of the hallway as the cloud disintegrated.

The figure of The Shadow, back against the steel door, was standing as rigid as a statue. The crooks were silent; to have uttered a laugh might have meant inhalation of those paralyzing fumes. But elation seized them as they stared at the motionless automatic muzzles that projected from The Shadow's black-gloved fists.

These fiends knew the stiling power of the gas that one had loosed. They realized its shortcomings also. There had been no occasion to deliver death to previous victims; but there was cause to slay The Shadow.

Almost with one accord, the three crooks in the hallway swung their guns, intent to riddle The Shadow with bullets that would spell his certain doom. The raid was forgotten in that moment. Death to The Shadow! The desire of every gorilla was about to be achieved. The password of the underworld could be made a reality!

As guns swung, the incredible happened. The Shadow's form moved forward. The automatics broke the silence before a single finger pressed trigger of revolver. As crooks staggered in the gas-filled room, the collar of The Shadow's cloak fell loose. The light revealed what lay beneath; but it did not show the face of The Shadow. Instead, it enabled the staggering mobsters to glimpse a gas mask that The Shadow wore. He, too, had prepared himself against the deadly fumes that he knew would play a part in tonight's raid.

As three wounded mobsmen went sprawling away from the door to Galder's apartment, the man at the opposite door managed to fire one quick shot in behalf of his overpowered companions. The bullets whistled past The Shadow's shoulder. An automatic spoke; the crook came tumbling head foremost into the hallway. Then came a slam of the door behind him. The Shadow stood triumphant. Two of the first three crooks had staggered to the far end of the hall. They had collapsed. The third lay moving weakly close by Galder's door.

THE SHADOW'S shots had meant destruction to the masked raiders. But to the crook within Galder's apartment, it had given inspiration. Hearing the shots in the hall, Huring made a sudden leap in that direction, yanking a revolver from his pocket as he fled. Rinehart fired. His shot went wide. Huring reached the door, yanked it open and staggered back.

He was face to face with The Shadow. The master fighter had heard the shot from within. Cloak collar raised, he held an automatic straight between Huring's eyes. The crook moved backward; then dropped his gun. Rinehart and Galder pounced upon him.

The Shadow had reached the edge of the living room. He wanted to make sure that Galder's jewels were safe. He saw that the situation was in control. At that instant, he whirled as he heard a sound behind him.

The last wounded raider had risen and was staggering in dizzy, hopeless fashion. His hands were clutched to his body. He could not have aimed his revolver even had he held it. But as The Shadow wheeled, the crook performed a last, hopeless action. Sprawling forward, he launched one arm and sent a gas bomb hurtling into Galder's living room.

The missile sped low past The Shadow's forward sweeping form. It struck squarely at the feet of a milling group, where Huring had wrested free and men were trying vainly to clutch him. One second later, the shouts of the strugglers had died, with the screams of excited women. The Shadow stared.

Every person had stiffened. The few who were seated or who were close to the wall remained balanced, in the very poise wherein the gas had captured them. But the others could no longer stand. Bodies thudded to the floor and rolled into grotesque positions. The place looked like an overturned wax museum, with exhibits strewn willy-nilly.

Crime had failed; but the death sleep had struck. Though The Shadow knew these victims would recover as had the others, the episode gripped him and held him, unmoving. Even to The Shadow, master of the impossible, the prompt and irresistible lull of the incredible death sleep was a sight that crowded out all other thoughts.

OUT in the hall, the mobster who had made the final thrust was crawling on hands and knees away from Galder's door. He reached the nearest of the other silent raiders and sprawled dead on the floor. The gas had cleared from the hallway; its action seemed as short as it was certain.

The door of the opposite apartment opened. A crouched figure emerged. This man, like the other raiders, was wearing a bandanna handkerchief about his eyes. His gait told his identity. The man was Skeet. There had been five raiders tonight. Skeet, canny and cautious, had sent the others ahead.

Skeet stared toward the far end of the hall. It was from there that he had heard the shots that had laid low his crew. He saw the closed steel door. He formed an opinion that was only partially correct. He was sure that The Shadow had stopped the raiders, but he believed that the master fighter must have done his shooting from the edge of the door in order to avoid the gas fumes. Skeet had no inkling that The Shadow, too, had worn a mask.

The raid was off. Flight was the only course. But Skeet had a quick task to perform. Stooping, he loosed the gas masks from his dead comrades. He seized their unused bombs. The work was quick. Within a half minute, Skeet had gained these objects. He scudded along the hall, heading for the stairway inside the building.

The Shadow broke suddenly away from the strange sight which his eyes commanded. He swung out into the hall. He saw the unmasked raiders, their bandannas tumbled above their heads. Swiftly, he started in pursuit, knowing that someone must have escaped. Skeet had reached the stairs before The Shadow arrived. His pursuer heard his footsteps pounding downward. The Shadow followed.

Whistles were shrilling round about the apartment building. Barking revolvers; shots outside. Spud's outfit had spotted the arrival of the police. They were taking it on the run. As Skeet came plunging down into the gloomy lobby of the apartment building, the front doors swung open and half a dozen policemen

arrived face to face with the fleeing mobster.

Revolvers spat. Skeet ducked back. The gas masks went bouncing down the steps. An officer sprang for them, recognizing what they were. The others fired wildly. Then Skeet chucked a bomb. It burst in the center of the lobby.

Bluecoats became rigid. The stooping man held his position; the others toppled, all save one who was just within the door. He wavered sideways and stood leaning in crazy fashion, revolver leveled, finger on trigger.

Skeet scudded forward. He grabbed the gas masks and sprang toward the door, just as The Shadow arrived at the head of the stairway. An automatic barked. Its shots, clipping downward from an angle, was deflected by a brass bar just above the door. That bit of luck saved Skeet's life.

A taxicab was standing in the street. Skeet pounced into it and rammed a revolver against the driver's neck. The cab shot away as The Shadow reached the door. A radio patrol car was rounding the corner. The Shadow waited as it swung in between him and the cab. Revolvers barked from the patrol car; then came a burst of greenish smoke.

The car went skidding across the street and smashed against the wall, just as the cab rounded the corner. Skeet had tossed another bomb. The men in the patrol car had passed out instantly. They were seated rigid in their wrecked car.

Skeet had eliminated the police squad. He had stopped the patrol car. For the moment, no other forces of the law were near. The Shadow took that opportunity to make his own departure. Swiftly, he glided across the street and chose a darkened spot between two buildings.

A SINISTER laugh sounded through the gloom. It carried no mirth. The Shadow had held the winning hand tonight; yet his efforts had not brought the full success he should have gained.

Men of crime were still at large. Shattered hordes would rise again. More grim work lay in The Shadow's path. The fading laugh, however, carried a foreboding note.

Strategy had served The Shadow well. He had used the unexpected to defy the gas bombs and strike down the raiders. His methods of surprise were not yet ended. The Shadow could foresee new ways with which to quell the rising foe.

He would not wait for men of crime to strike. The next thrust would be The Shadow's own. After that would come the settlement. With underlings eliminated, The Shadow would force the hand of the master who had designed this evil game.

## **CHAPTER XVII. THE BIG SHOT DECIDES**

ON the following morning, Wolf Barlan was seated by the window of his living room reading the torrid details of last night's raid. An involuntary snarl came from the big shot's lips. Wolf knew that crime had failed; he could not, however, understand all that had happened.

The latch of the door clicked softly. Wolf looked up and gripped a short-nosed revolver that he carried in the pocket of his dressing gown. The door opened. It was Spud Claxter. The mob leader had a duplicate key to the apartment.

"What's the idea?" quizzed Wolf, as soon as Spud had closed the door behind him. "I told you to stay away from here, didn't I? Say -"

"It's all right, Wolf," interposed Spud. "I used my bean. Nobody followed me here. Listen, Wolf - I couldn't give you all the low down over the phone. I had to get here, to tell you about last night."

"Yeah? Well, what's the dope?"

"The Shadow again."

"The Shadow? Where did he horn in?"

"That fight up in the hall. The news hounds got it from the police that some of the guests must have put up a battle. But that wasn't the lay at all."

"Shoot it, quick."

"Here's what happened," explained Spud. "Skeet and the five guys with him were over in the empty apartment. They got the signal all right. From the inside man. It meant to come in five minutes, if there wasn't no other sign. That was it, wasn't it?"

"Yeah. That was the dope I had you pass to Skeet. Go on."

"Skeet sends the boys out ahead. Back in the empty apartment, he knows there's something wrong. The last of the crew chucks one of the bombs."

"In the hall?"

"Yeah. He heaves it from the door of the empty apartment. Then comes shots. This guy uses his rod. It was Zug. Skeet seen him fire. Then comes another shot. Zug pitches flat. Out in the hall. So Skeet slams the door."

"Yellow, eh?"

"Yellow nothing. Didn't he see Zug toss the bomb? Skeet knowed it was some sniper out there, shooting from where the gas couldn't get him. He figures The Shadow, so he waits. When he does sneak out, the gas is done. The four guys are lying in the hall. Door of the apartment is open. Skeet knows they must have heaved a bomb in there, because there's no noise."

"He sees the steel door of the fire tower and figures it was from in back of that The Shadow does the sharpshooting. No sign of The Shadow no longer. So Skeet moves quick. He snatches the masks off them dead gorillas and takes the couple of bombs they got left. He heads down the stairs in a hurry."

"Where were you all this time?"

"Outside, laying back, with gorillas all around the apartment house. I spotted the bulls coming up. I knowed there was going to be trouble. Some tip-off. So I busted loose with my gat. Give the boys the alarm. I beat it over to the coupe and made a getaway."

"The others?"

"They was quick. Put up a running fight and took it on the lam. Nobody scratched. But wait'll I tell you the rest about Skeet. He heaved another bomb in the lobby, square into the middle of a lot of cops. Knocked them out. Grabbed a cab; plugged a bomb into a patrol car. Made his getaway."

"Did anybody see him work?" quizzed Wolf.

"Only the taxi driver," replied Spud, with a grin, "and Skeet fixed him right. Picked a place to drop off

and told the guy to slow down. Just as Skeet slid from the cab, he laid another bomb in the front seat.

"Boy! That cab goes right through a traffic light, hits the curb, and busts through a plate-glass window. Traffic cop goes piling over to give the driver blazes. Finds him sitting at the wheel, stiff as a board."

"That meant another mug for the hospital. The taxi driver was the only one that saw Skeet use the bomb. It gave Skeet a chance for an easy getaway besides. I met him over at the hideout. He slipped me the whole story."

WOLF had risen. He was pacing back and forth, recalling all that Spud had related. The big shot was tabulating losses, considering consequences. Spud watched him hopefully. He started to speak once or twice, but caught himself each time. When Wolf spoke, his tone was analytical.

"First off," declared the big shot, "you're out a raiding crew. The only guy left is Skeet. He looks to be the best of the lot. You're right about him using brains last night. We can count on him to lead the next raid. You'll have to pick the four best gorillas you've got in the outside crew. Who are they?"

"Louie and Gabby, to begin with," returned Spud, promptly. "Then there's two other guys. Muggsy McGilly and the fellow that came with him - Cliff Marsland."

"Marsland, eh? I've heard of him. Did time up in the big house. He's been doing good since he got out of stir. Say - how'd you land him for the outfit?"

"Luke Gonrey knew him. Luke fixed it."

"Well, he's worth a couple of ordinary gorillas. Get hold of those four bimboes tonight. Send them up to the hideout. Skeet can break them in."

"For a job tonight?"

"Yeah. Listen, Spud, we're going to pull something that'll turn this town upside down. Something I just got wind of from a smart guy I know. Did you ever hear tell of Teladron?"

"Who is he? One of them Greeks that owns a chain of restaurants?"

"The name's Greek all right," snorted Wolf, "but it don't refer to a person. Teladron is the name of a play. What they call a modernized version of a classic tragedy. Here's the dope on it. In the newspaper."

Wolf fumbled through the pages of the journal that he had been reading. He noted an advertisement and a column article. He chuckled.

"This play opened in Philadelphia," he stated. "They tried it down there and it clicked like wildfire. All the ritzy folks were making week-end trips to Philly just to see that show. Well, Teladron closed in Philadelphia, and it's opening here tonight.

"The promoters have opened the old Galloway Theater. Seats fifteen hundred people, and you know what the prices are going to be? Five bucks up to twenty bucks top; and there won't be a seat empty."

"How come?" questioned Spud, amazed.

"The censors weren't going to let it open," explained Wolf. "The box seats were sold; before the regular advance sale started, the censors put the ban on it. They'd seen the show down in Philly. They said nix. Then the promoters pulled a smart one. They got an injunction against the censors on the grounds that they couldn't pass decision on a show that hadn't appeared in New York."

"So it's opening?"

"Yeah. Teladron tonight at the Galloway. Maybe it'll be toned down; maybe it won't. The whole cast may be pinched. But the show runs this one night, at least. That's why the prices skyrocketed. The promoters aren't going to deal with agencies. Ticket sale starts at five o'clock, at the theater."

"Where do we come in?"

"First of all on the box office receipts. I figure they'll take between ten and fifteen grand. That goes up to the manager's office. One guy with a gas bomb can take care of that. But that's chicken feed."

"I told you the boxes have been sold. I've learned who's got them. This show is going to be as big as the opening of an opera season, except that it'll be flashy as well as ritzy. You've heard of Peter Caldoon, haven't you?"

"Yeah. The South African diamond king. Has a couple of Pinkertons with him for a bodyguard."

"That's the guy. The rocks he wears are worth fifty grand, and he never carries less than that amount of dough with him. Well, he's got one box, with the dicks there with him. In another box we'll find Halwood, the banker. His wife's due to show up with a big layout of sparklers. That ain't all; but there's no use in going through the whole list. The point is, we're going to get all the swag in sight."

"By gassing the boxes, eh? But what about the rest of the folks in the theater? What about the actors?"

"Listen, Spud. You know what those bombs will do. Their action is terrific. The gas goes everywhere; then drops. Valdan invented it for war purposes. Claimed that a big-sized bomb could cover the area of half a city block.

"Maybe he exaggerated; but it's a bet that if your outfit chucks a half dozen, there won't be nobody left to squawk. The newspapers say that the audiences in Philly were paralyzed with laughter when they saw Teladron. Well, we'll give this New York crowd a taste of real paralysis. Actors along with the audience.

"You've got five men. One comes in from back stage. One goes up to the manager's office, while another covers the lobby. The other two cut down in by the boxes. The first guy busts a bomb square on the stage. Changes the action into a still picture. That's the cue.

"The guy that's after the box office dough is watching from the balcony. The mug from the lobby is lamping the stage from downstairs. The fellows by the boxes are looking in too. Masks ready; on they go. Out come the bombs."

SPUD was staring open-mouthed. The tremendous scope of this scheme stunned him. His lips moved, but made no utterance. Wolf watched him, chuckling, while Spud finally found his voice.

"You - you mean" - the mobleader stuttered - "we're going to hand the death sleep to everybody in that theater? Fifteen hundred of them -"

"That's it," returned Wolf, leering. "Customers for a lot of hospitals this trip; not just the Talleyrand. When the gas hits, the fellow upstairs hops for the manager's office and drops another bomb. He grabs the dough and comes downstairs. Meanwhile the two by the boxes are making grabs for bank rolls and jewelry.

"There's two ways out. Across the stage and through the back alley; or out by the lobby. Remember - both those ways are covered. The fellows there have extra bombs. The pineapples will work in the open

if they're needed.

"You be around, but not too close to the theater. The crew heads for the hideout with the swag. That's where you meet them. Remember, the bulls don't know yet that we're using gas. They won't be thinking about the death sleep hitting in a whole theater. If they got the gas idea at all, they'll figure it's limited. Not big enough to paralyze fifteen hundred people all at once."

"What about an outside crew?" inquired Spud.

"Get one," ordered Wolf, "but do it cagey. A big bunch of cheap gorillas; have them report in different places near the theater and stay there. They won't know what job we're pulling. Tell them if they see any guys with masks making a getaway, they're to help out. Get it?"

"I've got it," nodded Spud. "Even if The Shadow does get on the trail of some small fry, he won't be able to figure out what's happening until it's over."

Wolf motioned with his thumb. Spud arose and moved slowly toward the door. It was the signal to scam. On the way, he paused to put a question on a different matter.

"Say, Wolf," he remarked. "There's one guy in that bunch of victims from last night - lying up there at the hospital - one guy who might blab -"

"The taxi driver?"

"Well, him, too. But he wasn't the one I was thinking about. I mean the inside man you had at Galder's. He didn't have no chance for a getaway. Suppose Cardona picks him out and begins to quiz him after he wakes up. It may lead back to you -"

"Don't worry," interrupted Wolf, with an evil leer. "He's not the only bird I know. The fellow you mean is Bud Jardell; he was at Galder's under the name of Huring. He's being watched by another fellow - an inside man - that I've got planted at the hospital."

"But Skeet ain't up at the place no longer -"

"I know that. I was only using Skeet to keep tabs on Doc Lagwood. This other guy I refer to is watching the patients. I've tipped him to see that Huring doesn't pull anything. We didn't know about this guy Throckmorton being wise to the Galder set-up, or we'd have handled Throckmorton like we're going to do with Huring."

"And the taxi driver?"

"I'll pass the word about him. If Cardona is still dumb enough not to know we're using gas, the taxi man won't get a chance to squawk. But after tonight, there won't be much doubt about the bomb business. Fifteen hundred dummies in a theater will tell their own story."

"Maybe Cardona knows it already. There was a dozen people at Galder's the -"

"What if he does? He won't figure the big scale job that's coming tonight. If he knows already - if he finds out tonight - well, then we won't have to worry about the taxi fellow. But Bud Jardell, that Cardona knows as Huring, well - it's going to be too bad for him."

"After tonight?" queried Spud, his hand on the door knob.

"We're leaving New York," chuckled Wolf. "Remember what I said about the United States Mint? Well



- that wouldn't work; but there's a job that will, even though it ain't in this country.

"We're going abroad, Spud. You and me and - well, others that we'll need. To London. Take it easy for a while; then we'll tackle the Bank of England. That crib can be cracked when we've made up a new supply of bombs. We'll pick a new crew over there."

Spud grinned. Then he delivered one more parting remark, based upon Wolf's previous statements.

"Say," mentioned the mobleader. "About this inside man up at the hospital. You mean that when Lagwood was -"

"Scram," ordered Wolf. "I'm taking care of things up there. Lay low until dark, Spud. Then round up your new raiding squad and get them to the hideout. After that, grab any bum gorillas for the outside mob."

Spud departed. Wolf picked up the telephone. Chuckling, the big shot settled back in his chair, satisfied that all was well. Tonight, so Wolf pictured it, crime without parallel would strike in Manhattan.

## **CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW'S THRUST**

DUSK. Cliff Marsland was standing by a table in a tawdry room. This was a place that The Shadow's agent used for temporary living quarters in the underworld. The door was locked; Cliff was holding a small package that he had brought in his pocket.

An hour ago, Cliff had left the confines of the badlands. Respectably garbed, he had visited the office of an investment broker named Rutledge Mann. There, Cliff had received the package with instructions not to open it until he was safely alone.

Mann served as a contact agent of The Shadow. When Cliff opened the package, he was, therefore, not surprised to find a folded envelope accompanying the small cardboard box that lay within.

Last night, Cliff knew, a crew of selected raiders had met their Waterloo in the service of Spud Claxter. Shock troops eliminated, it was obvious that Spud would have to draft new raiders from his outside crowd. Cliff knew that he was eligible. He had reported that fact to The Shadow.

This was The Shadow's answer. Cliff placed the little box upon the table. He opened the envelope. He read coded lines that had been inscribed in ink of a vivid blue. Cliff was familiar with the code. He read the message easily, then watched the writing vanish. That was the way with orders from The Shadow. Cliff tore the sheet of paper, tossed the blank pieces into a cracked wastebasket and stood in thought.

The Shadow had planned a clever thrust. The delivery depended upon Cliff Marsland. The agent was picturing the work that lay ahead. He fancied that he would encounter no great difficulty, provided, of course, that Spud chose him to act as a raider. Would that be tonight or later? Cliff considered.

Spud knew where Cliff was located. But Cliff had no idea where Spud could be reached. The mobleader's orders were to stay either here or at the Black Ship. One thing had bothered Cliff. He imagined that contact with The Shadow might be difficult should he receive a sudden summons from Spud. But that worry was ended.

The Shadow's instructions had placed Cliff on his own. Should Spud require him for the new band of raiders, The Shadow would know that Cliff had accepted the job. Lack of a call to Burbank would establish the fact. Once with the inner group of mobsters, Cliff could follow The Shadow's orders.

The task might be easy. If so, Cliff would be able to report after he had accomplished what The Shadow

required. The one hitch would be an emergency. Work done, the thrust made, Cliff might find himself in a position from which there was no immediate escape. If that difficulty arose, there would be an out. Cliff smiled as he picked up the cardboard box. Within this container - according to The Shadow's note - lay an instrument which Cliff could use in emergency. The Shadow had provided for whatever might occur.

Cliff opened the box. Inside was a tiny leather bag. From the bag, Cliff drew a cylinder of metal. It was a hypodermic syringe, fully loaded. Cliff examined it carefully, then replaced it in the bag. He put the bag in his coat pocket.

A cautious knock sounded at the door. Cliff tossed the little box in the wastebasket. He went to the door and growled a challenge. A whispered voice gave a password. Cliff unbolted. A scrawny, pasty-faced gangster entered.

CLIFF knew the fellow. Skeet Wurrick. He realized instantly that Skeet must be a member of the selected raiding squad. Spud had not informed him that Skeet was in the game; but Spud had told Cliff to follow anyone who gave the password.

Skeet beckoned. Cliff followed. They went down the stairs of the rickety building that Cliff had chosen for a rooming place. Skeet glanced cautiously about as he stepped into the darkened street. Then he whispered to Cliff to follow. The little mobster led the way through an alley.

Cliff wondered if The Shadow were nearby. He doubted it. The Shadow probably had other work to do. He had left this task to Cliff alone. The odds were that Cliff could report back. If something went wrong, Cliff could take care of himself, thanks to the completeness of The Shadow's plan.

Cliff and Skeet reached a touring car parked on the next street. They climbed in and the vehicle set out. Growled voices told Cliff the identity of his companions. Louie, Gabby and Muggsy were the other three who had been chosen to work with Skeet.

Louie was at the wheel. He followed the twisting course that Skeet ordered. When the car came to a stop, it was north and west of Times Square. Louie pulled into a wide, blind alleyway in back of an old garage.

The wall of the building had no windows. No one could have seen the crew that alighted. Skeet used a flashlight. He led the way to a grating and raised the bars of metal. He ordered the others to drop in and push their way through the open window beneath. Skeet followed last.

They were in a portion of the cellar. This part of the garage had evidently been abandoned. Skeet's flashlight showed where archways had been walled on the right. They followed a narrow passage and came to an iron door that Skeet unlocked. The passage continued on the other side, but at the left were small doors, also of iron. All were closed.

Skeet turned on a light that hung from the ceiling. Its rays could not be seen, for Skeet had closed and locked the outer door. The scrawny mobster led the way to the final door on the left of the passage. He unlocked it, turned on a light and introduced the new crew to a small, stone-walled room, where a table stood in the corner.

Upon the table was a heavy wooden box. Skeet lifted the lid and showed the interior. It was divided into sections like an egg crate. Half of the compartments were empty; the rest contained small objects shaped like pineapples.

"Bombs," explained Skeet. "Loaded wid stuff dat'll knock you cuckoo in a jiff. One of dese'll put you under for two days. Worser dan a sniff of snow. Dat's wot's been de matter wid all dem mugs up in de

hospital.

"Dere ain't no trick to usin' dem. Just give a heave; de end pops off an' goes blooey." He picked up one of the pineapples. "Like dis. Only let de ting go. Don't hang on to it like I did. Get me?"

The others nodded. They formed a tense group in this little room behind the iron door that Skeet had locked as an additional precaution. Skeet dived under the table and fetched up a stack of gas masks. They were provided with goggles that projected above a small cylinder that was made to cover the nose.

"Dese take the stuff dat queers de gas," explained Skeet. "We wear dem under big handkerchiefs so no guy gets no chanct to lamp dem, see? Now dese masks ain't no good if dey don't have de stuff in dem."

"You got to empty dem after each trip. De stuff keeps, just so long as it don't get hit by de gas. But dat puts it on de blink. De gas does. Dese masks are empty. Watch while I fill dem."

FROM beneath the table, Skeet brought out a gallon jug, which was about one third empty. It contained a greenish liquid. The bottle was corked; a tin funnel was inverted on top of it. Skeet ordered Muggsy to hold a gas mask with the cylinder open. He set the bottle on the table; produced a small sponge which he thrust into the cylinder of the mask; then inserted the funnel.

Carefully, Skeet uncorked the big bottle and poured a small quantity of the fluid into the mask. He replaced the bottle, leaving the cork out. He showed the gorilla how to close the cylinder and lock it. Then he took the mask from Muggsy's hands.

It was Skeet's intention to replace the mask on the table and proceed with the filling of others. Before Skeet could do so, however, Cliff reached forward and took the gas mask from Skeet's hands. He examined it in the light.

"This thing is all set?" questioned Cliff. "Ready to use when we go out?"

Skeet nodded.

"And all you've got to cover is your eyes and nose?"

"Dat's right. But keep your mouth shut. Don't breathe dat way. We ain't got no piece to cover de mouth because we want de bandannas to cover de whole mask. See?"

"I get you."

In natural fashion, Cliff attached the gas mask to his head. The others looked on curiously, interested to see how easily the job could be done. Skeet paused with his hands on the large bottle, figuring that this was good instruction for the new crew. Grins appeared when the others saw Cliff in his outfit.

"All set," remarked Cliff, smiling in return. "All I need" - he looked toward the table and thrust his hand in the big box - "is one of these."

"Look out dere!" exclaimed Skeet, as he saw Cliff pluck a bomb from the box.

"Don't monkey wid dem pineapples yet. Easy dere, easy -"

Cliff had stepped back with the bomb. Skeet started forward with an expression of alarm, which the others shared. Before the little crook had taken more than a single step, Cliff performed the unexpected. He had raised his hand; now, with a quick motion, he swung his fist forward and hurled the pineapple to

the stone floor.

The bomb burst with a seething hiss. Instantly, a green cloud filled the room, obscuring the figures of those who stood therein. The vapor settled. Cliff, staring, saw the amazing result. His companions were rooted to the floor.

Skeet had settled back toward the table. Muggsy was leaning up against the wall, in a rigid pose. Gabby and Louie, away from table or wall, were balanced oddly on their feet in strained positions. Their bodies were swaying. Gabby's toppled as Cliff stared; then Louie's form lost its balance and went tumbling.

Only Cliff had evaded the death sleep. This was by virtue of the mask that he had donned. Cliff stepped over and found Skeet's keys. He unlocked the iron door to the hall. It opened inward. Cliff saw no need for hurry. The gas had subsided promptly; drops of moisture were drying on the floor.

One task remained. Cliff went back to the table and pushed the big bottle over the edge. The jug smashed; the precious neutralizer splashed across the floor and formed greenish streams that trickled in the direction of the doorway.

THE atmosphere had cleared. The neutralizer was following the evaporation process that had marked the disappearance of the gas drops. Cliff removed his mask, pulled out the sponge and dropped it down a grated drain that he found in the corridor.

His job was done. He had orders to leave the bombs untouched. The whole affair was to look like an accident - as if Cliff had not been here. A bomb set off by mistake; the neutralizer spilled - that would be all. But it left Spud Claxter without a crew; and it meant that no new raiders could fare forth protected against the fumes of the bombs that they might throw.

As Cliff turned back into the little room, he heard a click from down the hall. Someone was opening the door in the passage. Cliff dived back into the little room and shut the door. He locked it. Then he realized the futility of his action.

This must be Spud, coming alone, to see if the crew had assembled. Had Cliff drawn a gun, he could have made a break for it. That was too late. The light in the passage told Spud that Skeet and the others were here. The fact that Spud had a key for the outer door indicated that he had one for this door also.

Spud would be on the alert. He would see trickles of green that had gone out through the doorway. The chances were that Cliff would be trapped. A fight offered the way out even yet; but Cliff feared that it might injure The Shadow's plans. The game was to make this whole affair look like an accident.

Quickly, Cliff drew the little bag from his pocket. He brought out the syringe and jabbed it in his forearm. Someone was pounding at the door: Spud had arrived. He was announcing himself by name. Cliff was grim.

The keys! He had almost forgotten them. He shoved them back in Skeet's pocket. The syringe! He must dispose of it. Cliff thrust the needle through the bag; leaning against the table, he reached beneath and pressed the point deep into the woodwork.

Neither object would be found. Spud could come in any time. He was still pounding at the door, but that meant nothing to Cliff. The opiate from the syringe was working. Cliff swayed dizzily and slumped softly to the floor. Consciousness faded.

Two minutes later, Spud Claxter decided to unlock the door. The barrier swung inward. The mobleader started in consternation. Five henchmen - all in a stupor. The neutralizer gone! Fierce curses came from

Spud's evil lips.

Crime was off for tonight. This crew of rookies had made some blunder. A dropped gas bomb; a broken jug. That ended the game that Wolf Barlan had planned. Spud fumed; then became calm. He knew that he would have to take care of these henchmen. That meant a call to Wolf for instructions.

Spud looked the crowd over before he left to call Wolf. Cliff Marsland, like the others, was lying in a rigid posture. He passed Spud's inspection. The mobleader took Cliff - like the others - for a victim of the death sleep.

That emergency measure, the use of the quick-acting hypodermic, had been the final touch of The Shadow's scheme. It had served Cliff Marsland when he needed it. The thrust was made. All was well. Through his agent, The Shadow had delivered a stroke to forestall crime.

## **CHAPTER XIX. AT THE HOSPITAL**

EARLY the next evening, Lamont Cranston's limousine drew up in front of the Talleyrand Hospital. Two persons alighted; one was Cranston, the other, Commissioner Wainwright Barth. They were chatting as they went up the steps.

"It is nearly forty-eight hours since the crime was attempted at Galder's," Barth was explaining. "If the present victims responded as did the others, they should be recovering very soon."

"Do you intend to quiz them immediately?" inquired Cranston.

"Yes," responded Barth. "Throckmorton showed no ill effects after making his statement two nights ago. Hence we will question the recovering patients. But upon one point only."

"And the point?"

"The identity of the inside man who was working with the crooks. There were indications of a melee at Galder's. Detective Cardona believes that they had discovered the malefactor."

They had reached the elevator and were riding upward when Barth resumed his statement.

"Some supercrook is in back of it all," assured the commissioner. "Once we have discovered which of the victims was in the game, we shall quiz that particular man when he awakes. Through him we will learn the identity of the big chief."

THEY arrived at Doctor Lagwood's experimental room. Joe Cardona was there alone. The detective arose to greet the commissioner. He stated that Lagwood was visiting the various patients. While Joe was making this explanation, the physician entered.

Lagwood smiled wearily. He nodded and extended his hand when Barth introduced him to Cranston. The specialist sank in the chair that was in front of his desk.

"I am thoroughly exhausted," declared Lagwood. "I thought that those last cases would end this trouble. Two nights ago, I was ready to go home to Long Island and take a good rest. Then a dozen victims came here."

"We hope these will be the last," stated Barth.

"I share the hope," smiled Lagwood. "Another siege like this could make me a fit subject for my own sanitarium on the Sound. By the way, commissioner, when these new patients recover, it might be

advisable to send a few of them out there."

"For further observation?"

"Yes. There is a possibility that the death sleep may leave some ill effects. If I have a few patients convalescing under my personal observation, I shall be able to note any tendency toward recurring symptoms.

"There are several persons out there now who have partly recovered from various forms of sleeping sickness. Others are paralytics who have shown recurrent tendencies. There is one woman who is subject to occasional trance conditions. It is my practice to study all new ailments even after the patients have apparently gained complete recovery."

"A wise procedure."

The talk had become too medical for Joe Cardona. The detective's mind could not deviate from crime. Finding opportunity, Joe put in a remark.

"I was talking with Doctor Lagwood before you arrived," asserted the detective, to Barth. "You know what I said last night, commissioner. Twelve people knocked out in the middle of what looked like a brawl. I think some form of gas got them."

"We disproved that theory at Valdan's," objected Barth. "What is your opinion, doctor?"

"The gas theory has merit," replied Lagwood, propping his head wearily upon his hand. "But the blood condition of the victims does not prove it. I am inclined to reject it for the present. Later, perhaps, I may make tests with the convalescents."

"How?"

"By my vapor treatment. I tried it with but little success. I did not care to apply it too strongly while the victims were still in their cataleptic state. But with convalescence, at my sanitarium, I might make more concentrated experiments."

Doctor Lagwood paused. His eyes closed; he seemed half dozing. Yet his ears detected the approach of footsteps from the hall. Awakening from his catnap, Lagwood was the first person to witness the entry of a younger interne.

"Ah, Jennings!" exclaimed the specialist. "You have a report to make on the patients?"

"Yes, sir," replied the interne. "Rufus Galder is showing the first signs of consciousness."

"Good. We shall go into his room promptly. What else, Jennings?"

"I called Hoffer, sir, to ask about the neutralizer. You said you wanted some to take to the sanitarium."

"Yes, in case I try the vapor treatments on the convalescents. I wanted to be sure that he had the full supply available."

"He has it, sir. Hoffer was not there, but one of the assistants told me that he had made up a new supply from the formula."

"A new supply? I asked about the old."

"Apparently something happened to it, from what the assistant said. He told me that Hoffer raised a big

fuss the other day because he could not find it and that the old man immediately made up a duplicate amount."

"Very well. So long as Hoffer has some ready when I need it."

"I am sure that it is available, Doctor Lagwood. I made certain of the fact when I talked with the clerk."

Jennings left and Lagwood smiled wearily as he spoke to the police commissioner.

"There is an efficient helper," remarked Lagwood. "A new interne, that young chap, Jennings, yet he is the most capable man in the hospital. I have hesitated to call other physicians in on these last cases; but twelve persons are more than I can attend. Other physicians might want to prescribe according to their own methods. Not so with Jennings.

"He has carried out my instructions to the letter. In fact, some of the patients have been almost entirely under his care. Well, gentlemen" - the physician arose - "let us go in and view the first man to recover. If Rufus Galder appears strong, I can permit you to question him."

LAGWOOD led the way while the others followed. They found a nurse arranging pillows in back of Galder's head. The millionaire had come out of his trance in surprising fashion. Though Jennings had reported but a few moments before, Galder was already wide awake.

Doctor Lagwood motioned the others to remain in the corridor. He entered and made a brief examination. He came to the door, just as Jennings appeared beside those who were waiting there.

"Three others are recovering," said the interne. "I think you should see them, Doctor Lagwood."

"At once," replied the specialist. "All right, commissioner. You may enter and talk to Rufus Galder."

Barth and Cranston entered. While they stood beside the bed, the commissioner gave the nod to Cardona. The detective had questioned Throckmorton; Barth wanted him to do the same with Galder. Joe approached, told the millionaire his name and came to the point.

"I want to know about what happened at your place," explained the sleuth. "Tell me this, Mr. Galder. After the commissioner called you, did you make any effort to learn if a crook was among your guests?"

"I did," affirmed Galder, steadily. "What is more, I learned the man."

"You mean you got the fellow?"

"Yes. One of my servants - Rinehart - aided me in trapping him. But he made no statement. He would not tell the name of the man who had sent him on his mission of crime."

"He'll tell it to me," growled Joe. "Wait until he comes out of his snooze. He's right here in this hospital. Leave it to me, Mr. Galder. Say - what was the fellow's name? Which one was he?"

"His name is Huring."

With this statement, Galder closed his eyes and rested easily back upon the pillows. Joe Cardona swung abruptly toward the door. His purpose was obvious. He was going to make prompt use of this information. Joe reached the corridor. Barth and Cranston arrived just as the detective ran squarely into Doctor Lagwood.

The physician pressed Joe aside. He approached Commissioner Barth and spoke in a low, serious tone.

"Bad news," declared Lagwood. "I am sorry, commissioner, but I have come to report my first failure. One of the patients succumbed just as he was coming from his trance."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Who was he?"

Lagwood turned to Jennings who had just arrived. The interne had caught the commissioner's question. He was holding a list, which bore the numbers of the patients. He referred to it.

"The name of the dead man," declared Jennings, quietly, "was Huring. James Huring."

TWENTY minutes later, Commissioner Barth and Lamont Cranston were riding back to the Cobalt Club. Barth was glum. He had left Cardona at the hospital, to quiz other recovering patients.

"They're all coming out of it," remarked the commissioner, "all but the one man we wanted. I wonder, Cranston, why this misfortune should have befallen us."

"Huring was a crook," came the quiet reply. "It is better that he should have died than an innocent victim."

"That is true," agreed Barth. "We should naturally have expected some deaths among so many patients. I am afraid that Lagwood was forced to leave too much work to that chap Jennings. Yet I must not criticize. Lagwood has gained marvelous results. His work has been magnificent."

The car was at the club. Barth alighted. Cranston remained. The millionaire, presumably, was returning to New Jersey. The limousine drove off. After it had traveled two blocks in the direction of the Holland Tunnel, Lamont Cranston's quiet voice sounded through the speaking tube.

Stanley promptly turned a corner. He drove in a new direction and parked at the same spot where he had gone before - the point so near The Shadow's sanctum. A black shape glided from the rear door of the limousine. Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow.

## **CHAPTER XX. STRANGE QUARTERS**

CLIFF MARSLAND awakened. He sat up and rubbed his forehead in a dazed fashion. He felt doopey as he looked about. He was in strange surroundings: A room, lighted by a single dull lamp. Windows, below ground, barred with heavy gratings.

Cliff was on a small cot. In the same room were others. He made out the faces of Skeet and the three crooks who had been in the underground hideout. It was then that Cliff began to realize what had happened.

Spud must have engineered the removal of the victims. He had decided that Cliff was one of those overcome by the gas fumes. Cliff grinned. He owed thanks to the injection with which The Shadow had provided him. Moreover, he had recovered in advance of the others.

Though still half groggy, Cliff managed to make a time calculation. It was night; at least twenty-four hours had elapsed since the affair in the hideout. That was it. He had been snowed under for one day. These others would not waken until tomorrow night. Cliff would have plenty of opportunity to escape before they aroused and testified against him.



Cliff arose from his cot. Fully dressed, he moved groggily toward the single door of the room. He tried the barrier and found it locked. He rattled the knob; gaining no result, he returned and sat down on the edge of his cot. He began to study the rigid poses of the men whom he had gassed.

A key turned in the lock. Someone had heard Cliff's rattle at the door. A solemn-faced young man entered. Cliff stared at him. The man was wearing a white coat. He looked like a physician. He approached and studied Cliff. Since the man did not speak, Cliff took that task upon himself.

"Where am I?" he questioned.

"Never mind," was the response. "How do you feel?"

"Dopey," admitted Cliff.

"Weak, also?"

"Yes."

"Lie down a while. I'll take care of you later. Don't worry. You're all right."

Cliff caught a glint of suspicion in the man's eye. He watched the white-coated visitor turn and go out of the room. The man apparently left the door unlocked. Roused to sudden action, Cliff followed.

Beyond the door, he found a short, stone-walled passage. There was another door ahead. Cliff approached and listened. He could hear a voice on the other side, but he could not make out the words. Phrases were short and interrupted. Then the discourse ended. Cliff heard footsteps moving away; then came the sound of a closing door.

CAUTIOUSLY, Cliff opened his own door and moved through. He found himself in what appeared to be an office. This room also had barred windows. Cliff moved to the opposite door and found that it was locked. He looked around the room. He spied a telephone.

That was why the man had been talking. Making a report - to someone else - a report that might have concerned Cliff. The Shadow's agent was momentarily dizzy. He steadied; then headed for the table in order to use the telephone himself. He stopped as he heard footsteps from beyond the far door. A key grated in the lock. Cliff dived out through the portal by which he had entered. He closed the door behind him.

With effort, Cliff tiptoed back into the room where the cots were located. He dropped on his own bunk. He was just in time. The door opened and the solemn-faced man reappeared. He came to take a look at Cliff and the others. Without comment, the man departed. This time he locked the door.

Cliff scented danger. He had a hunch that his position was precarious. He felt in his pocket. His revolver was gone. He frisked the rigid forms of the silent crooks. Their pockets, too, were weaponless. Finally, Cliff decided that rest would be advisable. Drowsily, he dropped back upon his cot. Escape still dominated his mind; but it was hopeless for the present.

WHILE Cliff was thus concerned with his strange surroundings, a different episode was taking place in the apartment of Wolf Barlan. There, the big shot had just completed a telephone call. He was hanging up the receiver when the door opened and Spud Claxter appeared.

"I got the stuff, Wolf," informed the mobleader. "Out of Hoffer's cellar. Took it to the hideout. We're all set again. It won't be no trick to line up that new crew."

"How soon can you get them?" inquired Wolf.

"Inside an hour," responded Spud.

"Listen" - Wolf's tone was serious - "we're moving out. Get that? Moving out. There's been dirty work. We're taking no chances from now on."

"Dirty work? Who by?"

"This fellow Marsland. There's something phony about him."

"He was knocked out with the others."

"Yeah? Well, he's waked up ahead of them. You know what that means?"

"That he didn't get the gas?"

"That's it. Nobody's recovered in less than forty-eight hours before this. Here's a guy that's back on his feet inside of twenty-four. What's more, he's dopey."

"Shouldn't he be?"

"No. That gas don't leave a guy groggy. They come out of it just as fine as when they went under. That is" - Wolf chuckled - "most of them do."

"Who didn't?"

"Bud Jardell didn't. He croaked up at the hospital. I got the tip from the inside man. But let's get back to Marsland. I've got a hunch he's been working for The Shadow."

"Marsland? A guy with his rep?"

"That's just it," decided Wolf. "It's a cinch that if The Shadow picked birds to help him, he wouldn't use guys like police stoolies. He'd use a fellow like Marsland, wouldn't he?"

"Well, there's one way to find out. That's to get to Marsland and make him talk. That's what I'm going to do. I'm through with this place. We're taking it on the lam. Heading for London later."

"Then you don't want the new mob?" inquired Spud.

"Get the mob," ordered Wolf. "Listen. I'm going to the place where Marsland is. I won't be the only one there. We're going to make him talk. Meanwhile, you line up the mob."

"Take the crew to the hideout. Fix them up with masks and bring the gas bombs. You, like the rest of them. Bring all the pineapples. You carry the swag. Come and join up with me."

"But if The Shadow trails us -"

"How's he going to trail you if he was using Marsland to get his dope? We've got Marsland, haven't we?"

"That's right."

"Have the masks ready, just in case something funny happens. There's no telling about The Shadow - and the way things are hitting, the bulls are liable to horn in on the game, too. That's why I want the crew to be ready with the pineapples."

"I get you."

"All right. Scram."

Spud left. Wolf put in a hurried phone call, scowling as he made short, disgruntled statements. That completed, the big shot moved about, packed a bag and left the apartment.

MEANWHILE, a trim coupe came to a stop near Hoffer's Pharmacy. The Shadow had abandoned his limousine. He had sent Stanley back to New Jersey. Swiftly, The Shadow entered the blind alley and made his way into Hoffer's cellar. His light glimmered on the shelf of the closet. The bottle of neutralizer was gone. A grim laugh whispered from The Shadow's lips.

The Shadow moved from the cellar. He regained the coupe and drove eastward. The next token of his mysterious presence came when Joe Cardona, slouching in a corridor of the Talleyrand Hospital, received a summons from an attendant.

"Someone on the wire, sir," was the information. "Detective headquarters, they said."

Joe followed the attendant. He picked up the hanging receiver of the telephone and growled a hello. He expected to hear the response of some dick at headquarters. Instead, he caught the tones of a sinister voice. For a moment, Cardona stiffened like a victim of the death sleep. He knew that whispered tone. The voice of The Shadow!

Steady, hissing words came over the wire. Cardona still stood dumfounded. At last he found his voice, after The Shadow's speech had ended.

"I get it..." Cardona was gasping. "Right away... Here, yes. About the death of Huring..."

The line was dead. The Shadow's tip had been given. Cardona hung up and sprang out into the corridor. He hurried at first, then slowed his pace as he reached Doctor Lagwood's experimental room. He found Jennings there.

"Hello," growled the detective. "Say, where's Doctor Lagwood? I thought he was still about."

"He has left for the sanitarium," replied Jennings. "All of the other patients have recovered. He required rest so he left as soon as possible. Is there anything that I can do?"

"No," responded Cardona. "You'll be here, won't you, if I come back to make another quiz?"

"On duty until nine in the morning," responded the interne. "You're sure there's nothing -"

"Nothing at all," interposed Joe. "I'm going down to headquarters. Just wanted to say so long to the Doc before I left. I probably won't be back until the morning" - Joe was eyeing Jennings while the interne poured a liquid into a test tube - "and I can wait to see Doc until after he comes back here."

Cardona sauntered from the room. He descended in an elevator. He hurried from the hospital and put in a telephone call. He ordered a squad of men to cover the Talleyrand Hospital, another to meet him for a different mission.

A grim smile had formed upon Cardona's lips. He had forgotten the unfortunate death of the man called James Huring, who had been the inside crook at Rufus Galder's. The Shadow had supplied information that would offset the testimony that Huring had never given.

Thanks to The Shadow, the ace detective was on the trail of the big shot; and in his quest for the

supermind of crime he had hopes of capturing the lesser lights as well.

## CHAPTER XXI. THE FINAL STROKE

"COME along."

Cliff Marsland looked up from his cot. The man in the white coat had returned; it was he who had given the terse summons. Cliff arose; dizzily for the moment, he straightened and followed the course that the other led. They went through the passage. The man opened the door to the little office and ordered Cliff to enter. Cliff obeyed and slumped into a convenient chair.

The white-coated man went to the far door. He opened it and Cliff observed the broad, low-roofed space of a cellar room, with a passage beyond it. Then his gaze concentrated on a newcomer who entered the office and stepped forward while the white-coated man closed the door. Cliff knew that arrival. It was Wolf Barlan, one-time racketeer.

Wolf approached and stood leering. Cliff, his grogginess ended, met the big shot's gaze. He knew that this man was to be his inquisitor. Wolf had lost no time in making that fact evident. The big shot snarled.

"With The Shadow, eh?" quizzed Wolf. "Well, you're the mug we've been gunning for. We knew somebody gave him the tip-off. We've picked you for the guy."

"I don't get it," retorted Cliff.

"You will," sneered Wolf, "before I'm through with you. You're slated for the spot. But you're going to talk first - get me? You're going to spill all you know about The Shadow."

Cliff's reply was a contemptuous smile.

"Grinning, eh?" gibed the big shot. "Well, it won't be so funny - that mug of yours - when they find you stretched out on a pile of tin cans in some Long Island dump."

"So that's where this place is located," parried Cliff. "I was wondering about that, Wolf. Thanks for the information. I'll know which way to head when I start back to town."

"Smart guy, eh?"

Cliff retained his grin. He knew that Wolf wanted to make him talk. The longer that Cliff could stall, the better. His best policy would be to side step all mention of The Shadow. Cliff, despite his predicament, had confidence in the infallibility of his mysterious chief. The Shadow had saved him from death in the past; there still might be hope for the present.

Wolf fumed oaths. He saw that he was getting nowhere. Cliff was ready to face death. He was different from the yellow welchers whom Wolf had cowed in the past. This fellow - the big shot realized it - was no ordinary gorilla. Tough on the surface, cowardly at heart: such was Wolf's analysis of the average mobsman. Cliff was not of that brand.

"If you talk," snarled the big shot, with a scowl, "there may be an out for you yet. Savvy? Spill the dope and I'll give you a break. If you don't, I'll have Spud and his crew use you for target practice -"

Wolf broke off suddenly. The outer door had opened. The big shot turned; so did Cliff. Wolf recognized the man who had arrived, but Cliff did not. Tall and dignified, the newcomer wore a suave smile on his lips. It was an expression, however, that Cliff did not like; for the smile was twisted.

"Hello, Doc," greeted Wolf, shortly. "This is the guy."

THE newcomer nodded. He closed the door partly, but left it slightly ajar. He had heard Wolf's final speech to Cliff. He motioned the big shot to one side; then took upon himself the task of quizzing The Shadow's agent.

"Your name is Marsland?" quizzed the tall arrival, studying Cliff with a shrewd, steely gaze. "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Seton Lagwood. Doctor Seton Lagwood."

Cliff stared in astonishment. Lagwood smiled in dry fashion.

"You are my guest," purred Lagwood, smoothly. "You have been confined in the cellar of my sanitarium, which is located on Long Island Sound. This portion of the establishment is kept well covered. The actual sanitarium is upstairs."

"A blind!" blurted Cliff.

"Precisely," agreed Lagwood. "This gentleman" - he indicated the whitecoated fellow - "is Mr. Carson. I should say Doctor Carson, for he bore that title until he was disbarred for unethical practice. It was then that he took his place as resident physician in my underground hospital."

Cliff stared. Doctor Lagwood continued to smile. He knew that this open form of discussion would produce more results than a tirade of threats. Wolf looked on, half puzzled, half lost in admiration of Lagwood's suavity.

"I have played a game," resumed the unmasked physician. "So have you" - Lagwood paused to eye Cliff with a glittering gaze - "and in order to be fair as well as impartial, I shall sketch my activities for a beginning."

"I have known Wolf Barlan ever since his racketeering days. This underground hospital was used for treatment of convalescent gangsters. Then that game ended. I resumed my ethical practice; but I still maintained this hidden establishment."

"I gained a reputation for the treatment of paralytics and victims of trance conditions. Because of that, I was approached by a chemist named Troxton Valdan. He had devised a gas that induced that strange condition which has been termed the death sleep."

"Valdan and I met secretly. He brought me guinea pigs that he had gassed. He wanted my opinion of the efficacy of the gas before he took it to the War Department at Washington. Valdan was indiscreet. He mentioned that he had a supply of gas bombs in his laboratory and that file one hundred and eleven contained two formulas: one for the gas, the other for the neutralizer."

The physician paused. He saw that Cliff was drinking in these revelations. This pleased Lagwood. He resumed.

"I contacted with Wolf Barlan," declared Lagwood. "Valdan was to meet me in Providence. While the chemist was away, Wolf operated through Spud Claxter. Henchmen stole the gas and the formulas. The bombs went to the hideout. The formulas came to me from Wolf. The gas was tested on Seth Tanning and the persons in his apartment. It proved its merits. Tanning's place was chosen because of its proximity to the Talleyrand Hospital."

"When Valdan returned, he was murdered by one of Spud's minions. Guinea pigs in the laboratory nearly gave the police a clue to the gas. I diverted their suspicions. Meanwhile, I had a pharmacist make up the neutralizer, supposedly for a vapor treatment. Spud sent a man to steal it."

"Then" - Lagwood paused and resumed in a cold tone - "then came crime. With it, The Shadow. Your friend, Luke Gonrey, was wounded, along with another mobman. Spud reported it to Wolf, who called me in turn. I said to bring the men here and let Carson take care of them. When you and four others were found paralyzed in the hideout, this was the logical place to bring you. But" - again Lagwood paused - "you made the mistake of recovering too soon. That fact, coupled with your dopey condition, proved that you had not been gassed. Carson called me at the hospital to inform me of his discovery."

LAGWOOD became silent. Chaotic thoughts were passing through Cliff's brain. He saw the whole game. Lagwood had devised it and had left the work to Wolf. The big shot had hired Spud. Wolf also had other workers, unknown to Spud. They were men who spotted opportunity for crime. An inside man at Currian's; an inside man at Galder's. Yet Wolf, who managed crime, was but a tool for the man higher up. Doctor Seton Lagwood!

The physician had both formulas. More gas could be manufactured when needed. Lagwood had been crafty in the matter of the neutralizer. He had ordered it made by a pharmacist, as an experimental prescription. The green liquid had been stolen by Skeet, who knew nothing of Lagwood's connection with crime. Subtlety had been Lagwood's watchword!

"Tonight," remarked Lagwood, seeing that the time had come for further speech, "one of the death sleep victims died because he knew too much. I refer to a man who called himself Huring, who worked inside at Galder's."

"You, too, shall die if you prove dangerous. But not by the simple method that my friend Wolf has suggested. Suppose Marsland, that you should experience the death sleep. Two days of oblivion; then recovery. Just long enough to make you feel that life is good - that recovery. For promptly upon it, you would receive the death sleep once again."

"Think of it! Life worse than death! Up from beneath the surface long enough to gain respite; then submerged again. So on, for weeks, for months, for years. What would you do? I shall tell you. After a few periods of that sort, you would talk. You would tell your story as I have told mine. You would frankly give us full word concerning The Shadow."

"Why not confess and save yourself that dread existence? Do you wish to become a dead man who lives? Hardly. You have your opportunity to avoid the fate that I have outlined. You have served The Shadow. We can use you in our service. Take your choice: life or the death sleep."

Lagwood's tone had become almost hypnotic. Cliff was staring into the physician's cold eyes. He found himself yielding to the persuasive, purring words. It required an effort to break that spell.

"No!" challenged Cliff.

Lagwood made a gesture with his left hand. Carson stepped forward to take Cliff away. Wolf Barlan leered. Let Cliff be snowed under for forty-eight hours. Maybe the fellow would talk after that interval. The big shot saw the merits of Lagwood's scheme. Wolf was gloating when he heard a sound from the outer door. He turned; the other followed his example.

THE loose door had swung open. There, cloaked in black was an ominous figure. The Shadow stood upon the threshold. Burning eyes glared from beneath the brim of his slouch hat. Automatics loomed from his gloved fists.

The men in the room stood silent. The Shadow's whispered laugh broke the stillness. There was meaning in the mirth. The Shadow had heard all that Doctor Seton Lagwood had said to Cliff Marsland.

"Your confession, Lagwood," sneered The Shadow, "was unnecessary. I had divined the truth of your evil game. Two events, today, were the conclusive points. Your order for new neutralizer, to replace that which had been destroyed at my command. Your deliberate murder of the tool who called himself James Huring.

"I took no chances when I prepared my final stroke. I gave the police an inkling of your nefarious game. They covered the hospital, while I came here. At either place, your apprehension was made certain. It has been my privilege to effect the capture."

As The Shadow's tones ended, Lagwood acted with sudden fury. Like a madman, the treacherous physician hurled himself forward toward the cloaked avenger. His spring was made with amazing swiftness. It left The Shadow but one course. An automatic barked. Lagwood's long hands clutched The Shadow's cloak; they lost their hold as the physician slumped to the floor.

Wolf and Carson had yanked gats, aiming for The Shadow. The second automatic thundered; its bullet found Wolf's heart before the big shot could discharge his revolver. At the same instant, Cliff Marsland, leaping in Carson's path, delivered a left hook to the man's jaw. As Wolf crumpled, Carson slumped.

Echoes died. Then the silence was broken, by the croaking voice of Seton Lagwood. Mortally wounded, the supercrook was gloating even though he faced death. His words were directed to the Shadow.

"You will die," was Lagwood's prophecy. "You are trapped. This house is surrounded. Those shots will bring Wolf's henchmen. You have no escape. For you" - Lagwood coughed - "for you, the death sleep - then - death itself."

The Shadow's cloak collar fell to reveal a gas mask beneath. Lagwood stared with blurred eyes as the cloaked avenger brought forth a second mask and passed it to Cliff Marsland. Yet Lagwood managed another chuckle as Cliff donned the device.

"They are coming" - footsteps echoing from stony corridors proved the statement - "and you have no retreat. You may avoid the death sleep - but death - will be - yours."

Lagwood lay gasping, his life almost ended. The Shadow's cloak collar moved up under pressure of his hand. The gas mask was hidden. Whirling, The Shadow, swung to the outer door. His gesture warned Cliff not to follow. Then, with a shuddering laugh, The Shadow opened the barrier and stepped into the vaulted room outside.

LAGWOOD was right. The place was a trap. Stepping into full view, The Shadow was covered from three corridors. Each passage contained four mobsters. All held revolvers. Superfighter though The Shadow was, the situation offered impossible odds. Yet The Shadow laughed.

Someone barked an order. It was Spud Claxter. He and all his new mobsmen wore gas masks, as Lagwood had predicted. Spud did not know The Shadow was also masked. As he gave the word to fire, the mobleader performed the first action - one that he believed would assure The Shadow's doom. He hurled a pineapple.

The bomb burst at The Shadow's feet. Its greenish vapor spread on the instant, filling the room, sweeping into the corridors. Cliff saw the cloud; he knew that it would be the target for the gunmen. He expected quick shots from the automatics and replies from the revolvers that gorilla's wielded.

Instead, there was silence. The green cloud cleared. The Shadow, moving forward, beckoned Cliff to follow. Amazed, Cliff obeyed. When he reached the big room, he stood astounded. In every corridor were rigid mobsters. They had toppled, to a man, overpowered by the death sleep before they had time

to launch a single bullet!

The Shadow strode through the central passage, pushing forms aside. Cliff followed and his brain found the answer to the climax. Cliff knew that the mobsters had gained a new supply of neutralizer; that they had stolen it from the same place as the first. He realized, of a sudden, that The Shadow had been there before them.

The Shadow had removed the fresh supply for his own use. In its place, he had substituted an impotent liquid! The Shadow's mask - Cliff's mask - both were protection against the gas fumes. But Spud and the mobsmen were equipped with useless masks!

The Shadow had known that a bomb would come before the shots. He had counted on Spud chucking the pineapple. That was why The Shadow had stepped deliberately into the trap, ready to face the three-way odds that were against him!

They reached the outer air. The Shadow hissed. Cliff edged beside his chief, into darkness away from the building. Cars were arriving. Cliff heard the growled voice of Detective Joe Cardona. The police had followed The Shadow's tip. They were here to raid the fake sanitarium.

The Shadow led Cliff through the darkness, off toward his coupe, parked a hundred yards away. Men of the law did not hear that stealthy departure. They were entering the building. There they would find Seton Lagwood and Wolf Barlan, the team of supercrooks, dead in the lower office. Carson unconscious. Spud and his mobsmen rigid in the death sleep.

BUT before then, they were to learn of The Shadow's presence. Joe Cardona, ordering his men into the sanitarium, stopped short as he heard the sudden roar of a motor. The lights of a car twinkled from among the trees. Then the automobile shot away.

Cardona was about to order prompt pursuit when the token came to his ears. It was the sound of a fading laugh, a trailing burst of triumphant mockery that died as the throb of the motor lessened. Cardona withheld his order. He knew the laugh of The Shadow.

More than that, Cardona knew that the way was clear. No need for caution any longer. Gruffly, the detective ordered his men to enter the silent building. For Joe Cardona knew that where The Shadow had been, no man of crime could linger except in death or helplessness.

THE END