



BURIED EVIDENCE

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- ? [CHAPTER I. WORD FROM THE PAST](#)
- ? [CHAPTER II. RHYDE HEARS ADVICE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER III. DEATH'S ADVENT](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW'S CLUES](#)
- ? [CHAPTER V. THE COVERED TRAIL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW PREPARES](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VII. MIDNIGHT DEATH](#)
- ? [CHAPTER VIII. THE ABSENT CLUE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER IX. THE LINK BETWEEN](#)
- ? [CHAPTER X. THE BROKEN CRUISE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XI. THE CROSSED TRAIL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XII. DYING WORDS](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIII. THE STAGE IS SET](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIV. SHOTS FOR THE SHADOW](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XV. AT THE TERMINAL](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVI. BURIED EVIDENCE](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVII. THE BUCK IS PASSED](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME CONFESSED](#)
- ? [CHAPTER XIX. FINAL EVIDENCE](#)

CHAPTER I. WORD FROM THE PAST

SUNSET rays shone through an office window high above Manhattan's streets. There, two men were seated at a flat-topped desk, engaged in earnest discussion.

Many New Yorkers would have recognized both those men. Their names - like their pictures—had appeared in the news at different intervals.

The man behind the desk was Curtiss Haslock, an attorney who had played a prominent part in political cleanups. Haslock was elderly. His thin hair was gray; his face a trifle withered. His eyes, though, were bright; they had a kindly sparkle that offset the sternness of his straight profile.

The other man—a visitor in the office—was Ludlow Rhyde, one of Haslock's clients. Rhyde was no older than thirty; but his face was a pale, tired one. At that, he had handsome features, topped by sleek black hair. When he managed to smile, it offset his weariness of expression.

While Curtiss Haslock had been figuring as a champion of reform, Ludlow Rhyde had acquired a blemished reputation. He was about to begin a new life; that was the reason for this conference.

"After all, Mr. Haslock"—Rhyde spoke in a rueful monotone—"I'm a jailbird! My friends are sorry for me; but that doesn't alter the fact that I have just finished twenty months in the State penitentiary. I can't shake it from my mind."

Haslock tilted his head. When he spoke, the lawyer used a soothing tone.

"You were never a criminal, Ludlow," he told Rhyde. "You were a headstrong young fool. Your stepfather, Blake Hoburn, allowed you too much money. After he died, you came into an annual income of twenty-five thousand dollars. You spent it recklessly; you were reckless in everything you did. Until one night, two years ago -"

Rhyde interrupted with a nervous gesture. Then, steadying, he took up the tale himself.

"I drove out to the old hunting lodge," he recalled, soberly. "I had been drinking. I hit the curves at sixty, like I always did. That's why I crashed the old car that was turned across the road. I killed the driver, poor fellow. He never had a chance!"

There was silence. Haslock broke it.

"The law was justified in terming it manslaughter," declared the lawyer. "You served the minimum sentence. You have paid the penalty. A clear future lies before you."

Rising, Haslock stepped from in back of the desk to clap an encouraging hand upon Rhyde's shoulder.

"You have new opportunities," said Haslock. "While you were away, the entire Hoburn estate became yours. We had to wait, in case Hoburn's nephew appeared to claim it. If he had, the estate would have been his. But the time limit is ended."

RHYDE nodded. He recalled that detail. It was one reason why he had squandered money while he had it. Waiting to see if that nephew arrived was something that had given Rhyde the jitters. As he thought of those past facts, he remembered the nephew's name.

"Dennis Carston," spoke Rhyde, reflectively. "Poor beggar, it would be tough for him to show up right now, when it's too late to collect. If he does, though"—the young man was earnest—"I'll take care of him, from some of those millions that I've inherited."

He arose and walked toward the door. Haslock followed; the lawyer showed an expression of approval.

"You are generous, Ludlow," said Haslock. "Too generous, sometimes. I believe you, when you say that you will help Carston if he ever returns. Meanwhile, think of yourself. Look up some of your old friends."

"I intend to do that," returned Rhyde. "As a matter of fact, I've heard from one already. Herbert Widdington."

Haslock frowned.

"A ne'er-do-well," was his definition of Widdington. "He may want to borrow money from you."

"Probably," smiled Rhyde. "But I know how to handle Herb. I'll tell him that my affairs are all tied up. I'll pay the dinner checks; that's all."

RHYDE left the lawyer's office. It was nearly six o'clock when he reached Times Square. Dusk had settled; Broadway was aglow with light. Rhyde stepped from his cab and entered a garish restaurant.

The place was Brindle's, a popular meeting place for those who were "in the money." Though the cafe attracted certain big-shots of the underworld, it also had customers of a sporty-sort.

Brindle's was one of Widdington's favorite spots. Rhyde was not surprised that his friend had invited him here. Just inside the door, he received a hearty thwack on the shoulder.

Rhyde turned, to be greeted by a sallow, mustached man whose eyes were squinty. It was Widdington, his mouth forming a wide grin above his tuxedo collar.

"Hello, Lud!" greeted Widdington. "Great to see you! Come along— I've reserved a booth."

They went up a short stairway to a rear balcony. In the booth, Widdington called a waiter, to order drinks. Rhyde refused, so Widdington called for one drink only.

"Had a few while I was waiting," said Widdington, "but I can stand another. I've got a lot to tell you, Lud. A lot!"

Rhyde lighted a cigarette and watched Widdington steadily. After the drink came, Widdington gulped half the glass; then squinted across the table.

"I did a big favor for you, Lud," he undertoned. "One that amounts to a lot, now that you're worth a few million bucks. I've heard the details. Since Dennis Carston didn't show up, the Hoburn money is all yours."

Widdington paused; his squint was shrewd.

"I don't like to talk about that automobile crash you had, Lud; but I've got to mention it. I'd have been with you that night, if I hadn't had a previous engagement."

"I remember, Herb. You helped me a lot, coming out there, after I got in touch with you."

Rhyde smiled as he spoke. He thought he saw what Widdington was after. Probably a small loan, in return for services rendered on that unfortunate night.

"I did help you a lot," insisted Widdington. "A lot more than you knew, Lud. I saw the dead man. I arranged his burial. Had a tombstone fixed with his name on it. You remember his name, don't you?"

"Yes." Rhyde's lips showed a wince at the recollection. "His name was James Silven. No relatives; no friends; Mr. Haslock never could find any. All we could do for Silven was give him a decent burial."

Widdington chuckled. His low tone was unpleasant to Rhyde's ears.

"No relatives or friends," repeated Widdington. "No wonder none ever showed up! All we had to go by were the cards that the dead man had on him. They bore the name of James Silven; but it wasn't the man's right name!"

RHYDE stared. He had wondered a lot about Silven, puzzling over the fact that the fellow actually had no one to claim him. This explained it; and it startled Rhyde. But the surprise was nothing compared to the one that Rhyde was about to receive.

Widdington's squint had narrowed. He saw that Rhyde was tense. There was a chance that Rhyde might guess what was coming, and Widdington wanted to spring it before he did.

Quickly, Widdington peered from the booth to make sure that no one was close. That done, the sallow man leaned across the table, to whisper:

"I knew that dead man, Lud. Knew him the minute that I saw him! That's why I knew he wasn't James Silven; but I kept that to myself. I let him go as Silven, instead of telling who he was. That's the big favor I

did for you, Lud!"

Widdington's lips were straight. His gaze, for once, was direct; he could forget his nervous squint, at this important moment. Widdington had been waiting for nearly two years to gain his present opportunity.

Slowly, emphatically, the sallow man delivered the low-toned statement:

"Lud, the man that you killed was Dennis Carston!"

CHAPTER II. RHYDE HEARS ADVICE

LUDLOW RHYDE sat silent. Widdington's eyes tried to ferret the pale man's thoughts. Widdington expected comment, but he was not prepared for the cool sort that came. Rhyde's nerve returned.

"Call the waiter, Herb," he said. "Let's order dinner."

Widdington's fist tightened; his lips twitched angrily. Then, in harsh whisper, he reminded.

"You took a rap for manslaughter, Lud. That was because you had no motive to kill Carston—or Silven, the name he was known by. But it would have been murder, if people had known the man was Carston!"

Rhyde snapped his fingers to bring a waiter. He ordered dinner; and Widdington reluctantly did the same. As the waiter started away, Rhyde arose.

"I'm going to make a telephone call," he told Widdington. "I want to talk to my lawyer."

Rhyde went down the steps, toward a telephone booth at the front of the restaurant. Widdington watched him and regained a grin. Leaning from the dining booth, the sallow man beckoned.

A stocky, hunch-shouldered man edged from another booth to occupy the seat that Rhyde had vacated. The fellow was long-faced; his lower lip projected noticeably. He questioned:

"Anything doing?"

"He's fallen, Badger," chuckled Widdington. "I'm ready for the build-up. Call my apartment, later."

"Badger" started from the booth. Widdington gripped the lippy man's arm.

"This is my game," reminded Widdington, his squinty gaze hardened. "It was mine from the start, when Dennis Carston first came to see me, two years ago."

"I was in it, though -"

"Sure! You knew that I bumped Carston and put him in that car, so Rhyde would ram it and think he killed the guy. When Rhyde went up for manslaughter, I had to wait before I worked on him. But the game's in the bag!"

Badger grinned agreement.

"Yeah," he said. "Rhyde's been in stir. He knows what the big house is like. He'll think about the hot-seat -"

"Never mind. Remember, the game's mine and be ready when I need you. You'll get a cut if you keep your trap shut."

"Say, do you think I'd blab to Rhyde?"

Widdington shook his head. He still had his grip on Badger's arm. He made another reminder:

"You've worked for Kale Bewer," he told Badger. "Kale's a big-shot. He'd muscle into this game, if he knew about it. He might promise you a lot; but you'd get nothing. No hints to Kale. Understand?"

Badger nodded. Widdington shot a squinty glance toward the front of the restaurant. He shoved Badger from the table, with the quick warning:

"Rhyde's out of the phone booth. Scram before he spots you. Call me later, Badger."

DOWN BY the telephone booth, Rhyde stopped at the cashier's desk to buy cigarettes. He was there when Badger arrived.

The bulge-lipped thug was careful not to glance at Rhyde. He merely paid his check and nodded to the cashier, with the words:

"H'lo, Bob! Seen Kale Bewer lately?"

"Haven't seen him, Badger. He's on a diet, I hear. Say—I thought you were a pal of Kale's."

"Sure! Haven't seen him, though, because I've been out of town. I just got back to-night. Stopping at the Hotel Spartan."

Badger went out. The cashier grinned as he turned to a husky waiter.

"Hear that?" asked the cashier. "Badger Griffin thinks he still stands high with Kale Bewer. Maybe Kale lets him stick around; but he knows that Badger is yellow. So does everybody else. Badger Griffin would sell out on anybody that he wasn't scared of!"

The cashier was too occupied to notice Ludlow Rhyde. That young man was standing by the counter, staring toward the wall. His fingers were twitching as they tried to open the fresh pack of cigarettes. His paleness had increased.

Mechanically, Rhyde walked to the stairs. He stumbled, but caught himself. He approached the booth steadily; but Widdington was smart enough to observe that Rhyde was shaky. After the first course was finished, Widdington questioned:

"Did you get hold of your lawyer?"

"No," returned Rhyde. "He had left the office and wasn't home yet. I'll see him later."

"There's nothing to worry about, Lud," said Widdington, smoothly. "As I figure it, Carston was going out to find you, that night. Probably wanted to talk to you. He must have gotten mixed on the road. That was why he was turning when you rammed him."

"But why was he using another name?"

"I don't know. It doesn't matter, though. The point is, I'm the only man who knows that he was Carston. What's more"—Widdington's smile was friendly—"I'm not asking a nickel to keep silent. Only"—his tone gained serious persuasion—"what I have told you may cost you money, Lud."

"In what way?" Rhyde was puzzled.

"Other people knew Dennis Carston," explained Widdington. "They have papers, other data, that might give a clue if assembled. It would be wise to acquire all that material."

Rhyde pondered over the new angle. Widdington proceeded.

"I know who the people are," he said. "I can get everything. It may take time, though; and it will mean expense. Afterward, I can tell you how much you owe me."

Widdington's suggestion was blackmail, covered with a veneer to make it look like a legitimate offer. Rhyde, apparently, was deceived. He asked:

"How much will the work cost?"

Widdington squinted craftily; then smoothly named the astonishing amount that gave his game away:

"One hundred thousand dollars!"

Rhyde looked worried, as his pale lips tightened. At last, he nodded.

"All right, Herb," he said. "I think you will be able to count upon it. Within a few weeks, at most."

THE subject dropped. The two finished their dinner. Widdington was tactful enough to let matters rest; Rhyde was anxious to avoid further discussion.

At eight o'clock, they parted outside Brindle's. Rhyde told Widdington that he had registered at the Hotel Goliath; that Widdington could expect to hear from him within a few days.

It was half past eight when Rhyde alighted from a cab in front of an old brownstone house near Eighty-sixth Street. Ringing the doorbell, Rhyde asked to see Mr. Haslock.

The attorney had arrived home and had just finished dinner. Rhyde was conducted to his second-floor study.

It took Rhyde just five minutes to repeat, word for word, the conversation that he had held with Widdington. By the time Rhyde's account was complete, Haslock's face was flushed with outraged fury.

"The scoundrel!" denounced Haslock. "This is blackmail, Ludlow! A case of absolute blackmail!"

"Herb asked nothing for himself," objected Rhyde. "He said he would have to buy up information."

"He probably intends to steal it; to pocket the full amount himself. A hundred thousand dollars! Outrageous!"

Pounding his desk, Haslock followed with advice that was precisely the opposite of Widdington's.

"Forget the matter completely," ordered Haslock. "If Widdington has nerve, he will threaten to make facts public. If he does, we shall charge him with blackmail. His own unwary statements will destroy his game. The fact that he kept Carston's identity a secret for nearly two years will show that blackmail was his motive."

"But Widdington says that there are others," inserted Rhyde, "who might prove that the dead man was Carston. And are we right to keep silent regarding Carston's death?"

"We have only Widdington's say-so on both those matters," declared Haslock. "Since he has branded himself a rogue, we are entitled to ignore him. I am your attorney, Ludlow. The matter is in my hands;

therefore, you are clear of blame. Ignore the matter from now on."

"But if Widdington calls me at the hotel? What then?"

Haslock's smile was kindly. He opened a desk drawer and drew out some papers. He spread them on the desk.

"Your stepfather owned a yacht named the Paulina," reminded the lawyer. "It is yours. It is ready for a cruise. I recommend that you go aboard the Paulina to-morrow. Invite some of your old friends; privately, of course, so that undesirables like Widdington cannot flock along."

THE idea suited Rhyde. Haslock told him that the Paulina was moored in Long Island Sound; that he would order the captain to bring the yacht to an East River pier. Pallor and worry began to slip from Rhyde's face.

"You are more than a counselor," Rhyde told the lawyer. "I needed a real friend, Mr. Haslock, and you are such!"

"You can always rely upon me, Ludlow," assured Haslock. "I esteem you for your honesty. That virtue always wins my friendship."

The lawyer conducted his visitor downstairs. Rhyde hailed a taxi, told the driver to take him to the Hotel Goliath. Through the opened cab window, Haslock gave a final admonition.

"Forget Widdington," said the lawyer. "As for the others that he did not name, we shall never hear more concerning any of them."

Haslock was pleased with his own prophecy, as he watched the cab depart. But the lawyer, though his legal advice might be sound, was wrong when it came to predictions.

Those whom Widdington had mentioned without naming, would soon be heard from. Crime was already in the making, fostered by a scheming brain. Crime that was more menacing than blackmail.

Herbert Widdington had spoken the truth when he said that Dennis Carston had been killed nearly two years ago. Widdington knew the facts; and so did Badger Griffin, for Widdington had admitted to that crook that he, Widdington, was Carston's murderer.

Buried crime had been brought to life. Murder from the past presaged murder soon to come. Murder that could mean trouble for Ludlow Rhyde. Trouble, too, for Herbert Widdington and Badger Griffin, as well as Kale Bewer, the big-shot whom the two had discussed.

For, already, another figure was encroaching upon this circle wherein crime threatened. A being who did not, as yet, know that murder brewed, but who would relentlessly hunt down any killer who came across the scene.

That opponent of crime was a person called The Shadow.

CHAPTER III. DEATH'S ADVENT

THE next day was Wednesday. Late that afternoon, Ludlow Rhyde checked out of the Hotel Goliath and went aboard the Paulina.

The yacht was scheduled to sail as soon as all his guests came aboard. Rhyde called Haslock to tell him that news; also that he had not heard from Widdington. Haslock was pleased.

That same day, however, another guest checked out of a New York hotel. That person was Badger Griffin, the stocky crook who claimed a close but discreet acquaintance with a big-shot named Kale Bewer. The hotel that Badger left was the Spartan, a dingy East Side establishment patronized by the underworld.

When guests left the Hotel Spartan suddenly, it meant that they were planning crime, or seeking some hide-out. That explained why Badger's trail was picked up later by a wiry, hunchy man who moved more warily than the crook.

The trailer was "Hawkeye"; he was an agent of The Shadow. Hawkeye's chief was interested in the activities of such suspicious characters as Badger Griffin.

Hawkeye heard Badger make a telephone call from a booth in a Bowery pool room. Badger's end of the conversation was all that Hawkeye caught; but it was enough to prove that the trail promised results.

"Yeah, this is Badger... Sure. I'll meet you... Yeah, Brindle's is out... He might show up there..."

Hawkeye reported that to The Shadow; then continued along Badger's trail. Soon afterward, another of The Shadow's agents was assigned to the place that had been mentioned—Brindle's restaurant.

This agent was Cliff Marsland, a well-built, square-faced chap. The underworld knew Cliff as a free-lance mobster. No one ever guessed that he actually served The Shadow.

Herbert Widdington was at Brindle's when Cliff arrived there; but the sallow schemer left soon after eight o'clock. Cliff scarcely noticed him; for Widdington looked like a man-about-town, not the type of person with whom Badger would have a connection.

Had Cliff trailed Widdington, he might have acquired some useful information.

Hawkeye, meanwhile, followed Badger to an old but well-kept hotel called the Brookland, which stood near Twenty-third Street. It was almost half past eight when Badger reached there, and Hawkeye lost sight of him just outside.

For several minutes, Hawkeye was at loss. As he peered through the lobby window, he heard a voice beside him:

"Report!"

It was the whispered tone of The Shadow. He learned of Hawkeye's difficulty and took over the trail. A cloaked form in black, he entered an obscure side door of the hotel and spotted Badger sneaking from a reception room. That place proved empty when The Shadow investigated it.

In less than ten minutes, Badger had held confab with some one unknown to The Shadow. That person had gone before The Shadow arrived.

Later, Badger reached a garage on the border of the underworld. The place was a blind for a notorious gambling joint called "Carraway's." Badger was admitted upstairs; he began to play roulette.

Soon afterward, a tall arrival in evening clothes appeared at the same table. The Shadow was checking on Badger Griffin.

At nine o'clock, Cliff Marsland reported from Brindle's restaurant by a telephone call to Burbank, the agent who served as contact between The Shadow and active workers like Cliff. Burbank ordered Cliff to Carraway's, to take over the job of watching Badger.

Just outside of the restaurant, Cliff encountered a bulky, thick-faced man, whose features were pudgy despite their hard-jawed appearance. A deep voice boomed a greeting, while sharp eyes surveyed Cliff. The Shadow's agent received the grip of a large, heavy hand.

"Hello, Cliff!" said the big man. "Haven't seen you for a long while. You know these boys"—he indicated two toughs who accompanied him—"so I don't have to introduce you."

"Glad to see you, Kale," returned Cliff. "Going to have chow at Brindle's?"

Kale Bewer's laugh was sour.

"Not a chance," he replied. "I'm on the bread wagon!"

"The bread wagon?"

"Sure! When you're off liquor; you're on the water wagon. Well, I'm off food, except milk toast. That puts me on the bread wagon."

"It's a diet," put in the taller of Kale's companions. "Some croaker gave Kale the idea—and soaked half a grand for it."

Kale glared angrily at his henchman.

"You weren't asked for an opinion, Ding," he growled. "Sometimes you talk too much!"

"Sorry, Kale."

Cliff noted how quickly the lieutenant subsided. It was proof of Kale's iron rule. "Ding" Luff was supposed to be a tough egg; but he didn't talk back to Kale Bewer.

The big-shot peered through the restaurant window; seeing no one whom he knew, he asked Cliff if he was going up Broadway. Cliff replied that he was going to Carraway's; that he sometimes had good luck there.

"It won't keep up," laughed Kale. "Carraway's got those wheels fixed. Has to, if he wants to pay freight. Tough racket, running a gambling joint."

"Kale knows better ones," put in Ding.

Another glower from Kale. The talkative lieutenant quieted.

On his way to Carraway's, Cliff called Burbank to report his chance meeting with Kale Bewer. At the gambling joint, Cliff chose the table where Badger was wasting money. Cliff joined the play; The Shadow left the place.

OUTSIDE, The Shadow donned black cloak and hat, that he had stowed in a vacant doorway. Soon he arrived at his sanctum, that blackened, hidden abode that was The Shadow's own headquarters.

Through earphones, The Shadow received reports from Burbank. Under a blue-rayed lamp, The Shadow made notations.

The Shadow recognized that Badger Griffin was engaged in some plot; but, for the present, it did not seem pressing. The Shadow planned to watch Badger further, hoping for a future trail that would lead to the unknown person who had met Badger at the Hotel Brookland. Crime, in The Shadow's opinion, was not threatening immediately.

For once, The Shadow had adopted a waiting policy at the wrong time. From that night's events was to come a startling result. The Shadow, his trail postponed, was not to learn the sequel until the morning; the time when others were to hear of it.

Dawn showed the yacht Paulina still moored to an East River pier.

An hour later, Ludlow Rhyde stepped from a companionway to the deck. He rubbed his eyes; stared down the river past a line of huge apartment buildings that fronted the shore. He gaped when he saw a distant suspension bridge stretching between Manhattan and Long Island.

A uniformed man approached. He was Captain Dunley, portly, genial skipper of the Paulina.

"Why are we here, captain?" queried Rhyde. "I left orders to sail late last night."

"Sorry, Mr. Rhyde. The guests were not all aboard."

"They said that they would be. When I left the party at Luken's apartment" —Rhyde gestured toward the shore—"it was only ten o'clock. They said they'd be here at midnight."

"They came aboard," informed Dunley, "but the Montagues did not arrive. They were on Long Island."

"That's so. I forgot the Montagues."

A girl in yachting costume came from the companionway. Rhyde greeted her with the words: "Hello, Fran!" The captain added: "Good morning, Miss Laceland."

Frances Laceland was surprised to find the yacht still in New York. She was pleased, also, when told that the yacht would not sail until evening.

"That means a crowd of us can go to the rodeo," declared the girl. "Phil Yamall will drive us to Boston in his car, leaving at eleven to-night. We'll rejoin you there, Lud. Unless you come to the rodeo with us."

"Not a chance," returned Rhyde. "Early hours and a lot of sleep: that's my motto for the future."

Fluffing her attractive blond hair, Frances started in for breakfast. Rhyde was about to follow, when he heard a gasp from Dunley. A sailor had just brought a newspaper to the captain. Face ashen, Dunley pointed to a headline.

"Read it, Mr. Rhyde."

Brows furrowed, Rhyde scanned the front page. Half aloud, he read snatches from the news account:

"Sidney Cleffard, retired banker—Shot through the heart—Body found in apartment—Place ransacked _"

"It was murder!" blurted Dunley. "Imagine it, Mr. Rhyde; a man shot to death in his Park Avenue apartment. Poor Mr. Cleffard!"

"You knew him, captain?"

"Indeed I did! Sidney Cleffard once owned this yacht. In fact, it was Cleffard who sold the Paulina to Mr. Hoburn. Too long ago, though, Mr. Rhyde, for you to remember it."

"I never cruised with my stepfather," said Rhyde. "I didn't even know he owned the Paulina, until Mr. Haslock told me."

The captain's eyes were moist with memory of Cleffard, the man who had given the skipper his berth. Rhyde pointed toward the stern.

"The flag, captain," stated Rhyde, soberly. "Have it lowered to half-mast."

"Right, sir." Dunley grasped Rhyde's hand gratefully. "You—you understand how I feel about poor Mr. Cleffard."

THE captain went to the stern of the ship. Rhyde stood with his yachting cap in his hand while the flag ceremony was performed.

A tall, carefree young man stepped out from the companionway. It was Phil Yarnall. He saw the flag sink to half-mast. Anxiously, Phil asked:

"Somebody—somebody dead?"

"A friend of the captain's," replied Rhyde. "Sidney Cleffard. He knew my stepfather, too. Captain Dunley is pretty broken up about it. It hit me hard, too, on Dunley's account."

On the way in to breakfast, Rhyde showed Yarnall the newspaper. They agreed not to mention it to the others, since this cruise was planned for pleasure.

Nevertheless, Rhyde did not join the banter at the breakfast table. Phil Yarnall noticed it. He thought that Ludlow Rhyde was still thinking about the grief that Captain Dunley had shown at news of Cleffard's murder. Yarnall's assumption was wrong.

Ludlow Rhyde was thinking about Herbert Widdington.

Rhyde was wishing that he could see Widdington this very morning, to hand the blackmailer a copy of the newspaper and see how Widdington reacted to the news of Cleffard's death.

But Curtiss Haslock had said to forget Widdington. Rhyde thought it best to follow his lawyer's advice.

The murder of a man who had known Rhyde's stepfather was something that could very definitely concern the matter that Widdington had discussed. Chances were that Sidney Cleffard was one of the men to whom Widdington had referred; one who possessed certain facts regarding Dennis Carston.

Rhyde no longer doubted the truth of Widdington's story. He was positive that Carston had actually been the man in that car, two years ago. The supposed James Silven, whose death had caused Rhyde to do a term for manslaughter.

The law would investigate the murder of Sidney Cleffard.

Would the trail lead to Herbert Widdington?

Ludlow Rhyde wondered. He wanted to think matters over, before voicing an accusation against Widdington, even to Curtiss Haslock. This would probably be a difficult murder for the law to analyze.

Such was Rhyde's surmise; and he was correct. Already, the law was finding difficulty in its investigation of Cleffard's death. But soon, upon this Thursday morning, the law was to receive secret aid in its work.

The Shadow, too, had learned of Cleffard's death. When The Shadow investigated, even perfect crimes could be solved.

CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW'S CLUES

CLEFFARD'S Park Avenue apartment was a secluded one; a place specially designed for quiet. That aspect had changed since murder had been discovered. Police were everywhere about the apartment.

In charge was a swarthy, stocky official whose stolid face and serious expression marked him as a person long trained in hunting down crime. He was Joe Cardona, ace inspector of the New York force.

Cardona was soon honored by the arrival of the police commissioner - a fact which did not entirely please the ace.

Ralph Weston, the commissioner, was a man of military appearance, whose pointed mustache added to his look of briskness. He had a habit of wanting results in too great a hurry, when he came to a scene of crime.

With Weston, however, was a tall friend named Lamont Cranston. Cranston was an impassive person, with an immobile, hawklike face but languid manner. Cardona knew Cranston to be a millionaire who had traveled everywhere; and the ace inspector was always glad to see Cranston. Results often came when Cranston was about.

There was a reason for that—one that Cardona had not guessed. The person who appeared as Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow.

"Mr. Cranston once conducted banking transactions with Cleffard," explained Weston. "I invited him to come here with me."

Cardona nodded. He turned to Cranston.

"You've been here before, Mr. Cranston?"

"Never before," replied The Shadow, in a quiet, even tone that suited the personality of Cranston. "Sidney Cleffard lived in the country when I knew him."

"You saw his home at that time?"

"No. We conducted our business at his office."

"Too bad," decided Cardona. "Most of this stuff must have come from Cleffard's old house." Joe pointed about to furnishings as he spoke. "The more we know about what belongs here, the better we can guess what has been taken."

THE SHADOW glanced about the living room. It was finely furnished with antiques. Nothing seemed out of place; but one sofa bore bloodstains. Cardona saw The Shadow eye it. Joe spoke grimly:

"That's where we found the body, Mr. Cranston. Cleffard was sprawled out on the sofa. Looked like he had been taking a nap there, when the murderer surprised him."

Cardona referred to notes.

"One bullet through the heart," he declared. "The surgeon's report states that death was instantaneous. Probable time: about eleven-thirty last night. The bullet was fired from a .38-caliber revolver. We will have photographic copies of the microscope examination.

"The body was found less than an hour after the murder. An elevator man noticed that Cleffard's apartment door was ajar and came in here to inspect. The murderer had two paths for a get-away: Either by the stairway to the ground floor, or by the fire tower."

Weston raised an objection.

"The stairway would have taken him through the lobby," reminded the commissioner. "The murderer might have been seen leaving by that route."

"The doorman went off duty at eleven," explained Cardona. "No one was in the lobby. All the apartments in this building are large ones. There are few tenants. They keep only the elevator man on duty after eleven o'clock."

The Shadow spoke next. His query was a quiet one.

"Reports state that the place was rifled," he remarked. "I see no such signs here. From what rooms were articles stolen?"

"Only from one," replied Cardona. "That was Cleffard's den. I'll show it to you."

He opened a door to a large square room. Brilliant sunlight showed the place in total disarray. Cleffard's den contained a desk. Every drawer had been ripped open; papers and letters were scattered everywhere.

A file cabinet stood beyond an overturned screen, which had once masked it. The murderer had pushed the screen aside; he had treated the file cabinet as he had the desk. Chairs had been shoved to the wall; rugs had been bundled up and thrown aside.

Even the articles from the desk and file cabinet had been subjected to rough treatment. Folders were lying open; letters were out of envelopes; a cigar box had been emptied, its paper lining tossed among the perfectos that lay scattered on the floor. A small wooden box of the tricky Japanese variety, had been ripped apart and cast aside.

"The only things he left alone," growled Cardona, referring to the murderer, "were the pictures on the wall."

CARDONA'S comment seemed justified. There were two dozen framed photographs upon the walls. These indicated that Cleffard had been a man of sporting likes. Some of the pictures were of famous pugilists; the others showed celebrated race horses.

"He didn't bother with those," added Cardona. "What the killer wanted was swag. He may have made his haul, too. There's no way that we can tell.

"Look at that smashed box. Cleffard may have had jewels in it. Maybe he had a stack of money in the desk. Those are things I want to know about; but there's no way of telling."

"Why not?" demanded Weston.

"Nobody knows enough about Cleffard," replied the ace. "He was close to eighty years old. He hadn't made any friends for the past twenty years. It seems like everybody who knew him well is dead. That was why I hoped Mr. Cranston could tell us something about him. No one else has been able to."

The Shadow was looking at a gray-covered photograph album that lay on the floor. Cardona smiled and picked up the book.

"Not much in it," declared Joe. "About eight pictures, pasted in the front pages. Snapshots of Cleffard's bank and a couple of shots taken at the races. They're labeled."

The Shadow received the book; while Weston looked on, he turned the pages. Cardona was right. Three photographs, carefully pasted; showed the bank building. The Shadow commented:

"They were taken within the past few years."

Weston nodded his agreement. Cleffard's bank, the Surrey National, had been rebuilt five years ago. The photographs showed the structure in its present state. The Shadow turned to the race-track photos. He smiled slightly and remarked:

"Bowie, Maryland, three years ago."

"Right," laughed Weston. "There's the bulletin board with the names of the horses. I see 'Iron Duke' on the list. That was a great race he ran, three years ago."

"Here's a picture that fell out," put in Cardona, spying a photograph that lay beneath an envelope on the floor. "This is an old shot. Look at that hansom cab; the topper the driver is wearing."

Weston showed the photograph to The Shadow; then tucked it between pages of the album as The Shadow placed the book aside.

"The murderer was in here," declared Cardona, opening a closet door. "Here's a stack of framed pictures that he didn't bother. All he did was ransack this box that's on the shelf. It's empty. He must have thrown the junk around the floor."

Weston decided to move elsewhere.

"We have seen enough, Cardona," declared the commissioner, abruptly. "Come. Show me the fire tower."

They started toward the door. Weston paused, to note that The Shadow was admiring the pictures on the wall. The commissioner smiled, spoke an aside to Cardona.

"Cranston appears to be interested in race horses," remarked Weston. "He can stay; he shall rouse him from his reverie before we leave."

THE moment that Weston and Cardona had gone, The Shadow turned from the wall. Quickly, he picked up the photograph album. He examined the pages that bore pictures. All had been taken with an old-fashioned camera. The name of each photograph was written beneath it; but no dates were marked.

All the photos had been pasted carefully; one of them, however, was loose at the corner. The dried paste showed plainly against the gray page of the album. The Shadow ran through the book, extracting the loose photograph that Cardona had picked up from the floor.

The loose picture had dried paste upon its back. It had fallen from a photograph album, but not from this one. Not a single page showed a mark to indicate a space from which a photograph was gone.

A soft laugh sounded from The Shadow's fixed lips. The photo of the hansom cab was at least thirty years old; but it had been snapped with the same camera as the newer pictures. The album which The Shadow held was obviously a recent one, into which Cleffard had pasted the last of many pictures which he had taken over many years.

The Shadow had learned of something that the murderer had taken from this rifled room. The killer had carried away an old photograph album; perhaps more than one. The old picture had been loose. It had dropped to the floor.

It was likely that the thief had gone through the pages of any albums that he had taken. That accounted for the final loosening of the one photo that had dropped.

Reasoning thus, The Shadow formed a prompt and accurate conclusion.

The murderer's real quest had been the acquisition of certain photographs. He had found them in an old album. He had known that to detach the pictures would be a give-away; for the titles would remain. He had preferred not to tear out pages.

Possibly this occurred to The Shadow immediately—the photographs would have especial value if preserved in the original album.

At any rate, the murderer had covered his trail by taking the old album. Joe Cardona had seen nothing of significance in the album that had been left. Even the extra photograph—dropped by chance—had slipped past. Cardona had found it, but overlooked it as a clue. It had taken The Shadow to spot the evidence.

This important finding caused The Shadow to study the photographs upon the wall.

THE wall pictures were arranged in a somewhat regular fashion. Those of prize fighters were taller than they were wide; the pictures of race horses were square.

Above the door, directly in front of Cleffard's desk, was a lone picture: a square one, that portrayed a horse called "Charlatan." The fact that this one picture held a place of honor was curious; for the horse was an unknown, compared to the famous racers that adorned the other walls.

Stepping upon a chair, The Shadow made a discovery through close observation. Projecting from each side of the picture were lighter surfaces of wall paper. Some one had removed a low, wide photograph to hang this one in its place.

Lifting the picture, The Shadow noted the dimensions of the faded space. That done, he replaced Charlatan's likeness, stepped down from the chair and went to the stack of pictures that lay on the floor of the closet.

Here, again, The Shadow found proof that Cardona had made a mistaken statement. The stack of framed pictures was somewhat irregular; wherever frames appeared, they were coated with dust, except at one point. That spot was three pictures from the top. It was proof that the stack of discarded pictures had been handled.

Carefully, The Shadow looked through the pile of frames. Horses and fighters, all of them; but of less importance than the ones that Cleffard had placed upon the wall.

The answer was plain to The Shadow. The murderer had taken a special picture from above the door. In its place, he had put one that he had selected from the stack in the closet.

The dimensions of the stolen picture proved that it was quite different from the ones that remained. Evidently, Cleffard had displayed a single picture that portrayed neither pugilist nor race horse. Yet it must be a photograph that covered some field of sport. Only pictures of that sort were in Cleffard's collection.

Hearing footsteps in the outer room, The Shadow strolled in that direction. He found Weston returning with Cardona. The commissioner was leaving; he expected his friend Cranston to join him.

They parted outside the apartment house. Weston's last remark to The Shadow was significant:

"If there are any clues, Cardona will find them."

The Shadow did not share the commissioner's confidence. As he stepped into a taxi, his thin lips wore the faint trace of a smile. The Shadow had found clues of his own.

The Shadow—more than Cardona—had cause to delve into Sidney Cleffard's past. Through such research, he could follow up the clues that he had gained. Old photographs from an album; a wide picture carried from a wall—The Shadow could see a definite connection between the two.

His purpose was to learn what the stolen pictures might represent. The answer might come when The Shadow had learned facts about Cleffard. The Shadow had ways to gain such information. Before nightfall, he would be well upon his trail.

In the past, The Shadow had gained results with quests more difficult than this one. He saw success approaching in his present investigation. Once facts were cracked, answers would follow.

The Shadow knew.

CHAPTER V. THE COVERED TRAIL

DESPITE The Shadow's discoveries at Cleffard's, the master-sleuth had found no link that connected Badger Griffin with it. Nevertheless, the fact stood that Badger had held a rendezvous last night with some person whose identity The Shadow had not placed.

Therefore, as a separate enterprise, The Shadow was keeping his agents on Badger's trail.

Badger had gambled at Carraway's until dawn. With daylight, he perched on a couch in a side room of the gambling joint and went to sleep. Cliff left Carraway's; Hawkeye took up outside vigil in his place.

At three o'clock that Thursday afternoon, Hawkeye saw a car roll from the garage that served as a blind to the gambling place. Badger was in the car.

Sidling into the garage, Hawkeye talked to a mechanic, saying that he was looking for a pal named Badger Griffin.

Hawkeye learned that Badger was going up to see Kale Bewer. The spotter shuffled away and put in a call to Burbank.

At half past three, Badger entered the lobby of an apartment house several blocks above Times Square. There were three men on duty who posed as ordinary attendants; but, actually, they worked for Kale Bewer. The big-shot lived in this apartment house and always had vassals on guard duty.

"H'lo, Bolo." Badger nodded to a thuggish attendant. "Is Kale upstairs?"

"Bolo" picked up a telephone from a mahogany desk and held brief conversation. He told Badger to go up in the elevator.

Ding Luff admitted Badger to Kale's sumptuous apartment. He conducted the visitor to an inner room, where Kale Bewer was standing near a window. Kale swung about, to rasp the question:

"What're you here for, Badger?"

"Just dropped in to say hello. Thought maybe you'd want to see me, Kale."

"About what?"

Badger did not reply. He was nervous. He didn't like Kale's glare; nor did he care for the way Ding was watching him.

"About Cleffard?" demanded Kale, as if reading Badger's mind. "The stuffed shirt that was bumped last night?"

Badger nodded. He glanced at Ding, not wanting to have the subject discussed in front of the lieutenant. Kale saw that much.

"You're right, Badger," guffawed Kale. "Ding never heard me talk about Cleffard. There's no reason though, why he shouldn't. I never had much to do with Cleffard. All I did was try to get the old geezer to put some dough into a race-track racket. He wouldn't listen. That's why I tied up with Felix Lausch, the Wall Street guy, instead."

This time, real surprise showed on Ding's face. He had heard of Felix Lausch. The man had committed suicide, according to the newspapers. But Ding, knowing Kale's methods, began to wonder about that report. He could figure what had really happened to Lausch.

"Too bad about Lausch," remarked Kale, dryly. "Things went sour in the market—he chucked himself out of a window. But we were talking about Cleffard. I never needed him, Badger."

"That's what I thought, Kale," said Badger, cagily. "Only I figured maybe Cleffard was a friend of yours; that maybe somebody croaked him to rile you."

Kale shook his head. He stretched himself by the window; sunlight made a garish effect of the purple dressing gown that the big-shot was wearing.

"See me later, Badger," suggested Kale. "Maybe I can use you. By the way" —beady eyes narrowed—"where were you last night?"

"Down at Carraway's," responded Badger, glibly, "sinking dough on that gaffed wheel of his."

THERE was a buzz from the living room. Ding answered the telephone, to announce that Cliff Marsland was downstairs. Badger looked worried at thought of another visitor. Kale opened a closet door to reveal a tiny elevator.

"Scram," he told Badger. "You know the back way out."

As the elevator rumbled downward, Kale told Ding to have Cliff come up to the apartment. After that, Kale added:

"Call Bolo and tell him to work the old stall in about five minutes. Faking it that Badger has shown up downstairs, and I don't want to talk to him."

Ding made the call to Bolo. He had just finished when Cliff arrived outside the apartment door. Ding admitted Cliff and took him in to see Kale.

"Hello, Cliff!" greeted the big-shot. "Glad you dropped in. I've been figuring out a new racket; thought maybe you'd like to get in on it."

"I wouldn't mind," returned Cliff, steadily, "provided there's not too much grief."

"There never is with my rackets," snorted Kale. "The police can't crimp anything I run!"

"What about the Feds?"

"You mean getting me on income taxes? I've got that fixed. I stagger my take; spread the dough over a couple of years. That gives me a chance to work it under the head of legitimate business. When it comes to the taxes, I pay them. It's worth it."

Cliff was gaining an explanation that had long been sought. He realized how Kale kept his affairs air-tight.

"I own this apartment house," added Kale. "I pay straight salaries to the guys that work here. They tend doors, run elevators; the place loses plenty of money on the books. That's why -"

There was a buzz from the other room. Ding, answering the telephone, called in to interrupt:

"Bolo says Badger Griffin is downstairs."

"That rat?" growled Kale. "Tell him I've got no dough to lend him; If he's given an IOU and can't pay it, let him take what's coming to him! That mug hands out too many phony markers. They've chased him out of every joint in town except Carraway's!"

Kale snapped his fingers. He swung to Cliff.

"Say!" exclaimed the big-shot. "You were down at Carraway's last night. Did you see Badger there?"

"Sure!" Cliff nodded. "He was losing dough all night."

"So that's it!" snorted Kale. He called to Ding. "Tell Bolo to give Badger the bum's rush."

Kale kept Cliff a dozen minutes longer, talking vaguely about the new racket. He told Cliff to see him often; when the time came, Kale would be able to use him.

When Cliff left, he felt sure of one thing: that he had arrived here ahead of Badger. He was also convinced that Badger had no standing with Kale Bewer.

Outside, Cliff reported both those details to Burbank by phone, to be forwarded to The Shadow.

After Cliff's departure, Kale told Ding Luff:

"I don't want anybody to know that Badger was here. He knew about it when I rubbed out Lausch. Maybe he's got a crazy idea that I croaked this guy Cleffard."

MEANWHILE, Badger was traveling untrailed, thanks to his departure by Kale's secret exit. He arrived at an apartment house east of Lexington Avenue and rode up to the eighth floor. He tapped a signal on an apartment door.

Badger was admitted by Herbert Widdington.

The squinty man was nervous. His mustache followed the twitches of his lips. Badger saw a stack of newspapers on the table, beside an empty coffee cup. An untidy kitchenette proved that Widdington was cooking his own meals.

"You've seen the newspapers?" queried Widdington, hoarsely.

"Sure." Badger grinned as he sat on a clumsy, thick-cushioned sofa. "A neat job, Widdington! It's got the bulls guessing."

Widdington's lips tightened. Tensely, he demanded:

"You think I killed Sidney Cleffard?"

"Who else?" queried Badger, gruffly. "You could use that stuff that's missing from his apartment. You told me you needed it to put the clamps on Ludlow Rhyde."

Widdington paced the room. He stopped short, pointed wildly as he said:

"I'll tell you who else could have done it. Kale Bewer! Maybe he's muscled in on my game. He could have wanted that stuff from Cleffard's. If Kale is wise to my game -"

"If he's wise," interrupted Badger, "it's because he's guessed it. I've told him nothing."

"You've seen Kale!" exclaimed Widdington. "When?"

"This afternoon, at his apartment. I stand in with him, don't I? What's he going to think if I never show up to see him?"

"What about yesterday?" demanded Widdington. "Did you go to his apartment then?"

Badger shook his head.

"Why should I bluff you?" he asked. "I'm with you, Widdington. You said I went to Kale's on your account. Kale knew Cleffard once. I'd be sure of my dough if I kept mum. I wanted to find out how he took it, after hearing that Cleffard was rubbed out."

Badger arose and strolled to the door. He stopped there; spoke slowly.

"Kale's a good guesser," said Badger. "Maybe he could have croaked Cleffard. So I'll leave it fifty-fifty. Maybe you handled Cleffard; maybe Kale did. Only, if any one asks me what I think, I don't know anything."

"I won't spill your name, Widdington, because we've made a deal. I won't spill Kale's, because he's death to any mug that talks. He'll croak any guy that muscles in on one of his rackets; but he don't mind stealing some other bird's game. When Kale's after something, it's a good idea to lay low."

His hand on the doorknob, Badger added a mention of his own affairs.

"I was at Carraway's joint last night," he informed. "Building an alibi. I'm going to cook another for to-night. That's keeping me clear out of it, Widdington. What you do; what Kale does"—Badger shrugged his shoulders— "that's up to each of you."

DESCENDING in the elevator, Badger showed a big-lipped grin. Whether it pertained to past or future, no one could have guessed. Perhaps the grin indicated a definite fact: that Badger was pleased with his own policy in this game.

Badger had been cagey both with Kale and Widdington; a good plan, since he was actually helping murder by keeping himself out of the picture. The alibi stunt was a credit to Badger's smartness. So was his talk of "fifty-fifty" as applied to Kale and Widdington.

For Badger was one man who could actually have pointed out the murderer, even though he had kept away from the scene of crime itself. That was something that the law might not suspect, if Badger came under consideration.

The Shadow, however, would suspect it. Given the opportunity to regain Badger's trail, The Shadow would make the big-lipped crook talk. What was more, The Shadow would certainly find the trail again.

Badger Griffin would not have felt so confident, had he known that his affairs were of interest to The Shadow.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW PREPARES

AT half past seven that evening, a round-faced man came hurriedly through the portals of the exclusive Cobalt Club. He was dressed in street clothes and carrying a briefcase. Gloomy-faced attendants stared puzzled as they saw him stride into the grillroom.

Usually, diners at the Cobalt Club came in evening clothes. That was true of this particular member. He was Rutledge Mann, an investment broker, who made the Cobalt Club his habitat. It was the first time in his long term of membership that Mann had ever made such a precipitous entrance.

In the grillroom, Mann saw a quiet personage seated at a corner table. The diner was in evening clothes. Mann hurried over and drew back a chair. The diner looked up in feigned surprise. The light showed his hawklike visage.

"Well, well, Mann!" he exclaimed. "You must have rushed over here directly from the office."

"I did, Mr. Cranston," returned the investment broker. "You wanted an immediate report on those securities. I felt that I should lose no time in arriving here -"

A quiet gesture served as interruption. Straight lips spoke in an undertone:

"No one is close at hand, Mann. You may report."

Mann, one of The Shadows agents, brought papers from the briefcase.

"Further facts about Cleffard," he reported. "He had other sporting interests. He was a yachtsman, at one time. He owned a yacht called the Paulina."

Behind Cranston's immobile face, a brain was remembering that picture space upon Cleffard's wall. It was just the size for a framed photograph of a yacht.

"Cleffard sold the Paulina," continued Mann, "to Blake Hoburn, now deceased, Hoburn was the stepfather to Ludlow Rhyde -"

"Who did time for manslaughter," came Cranston's insertion. "He killed a man with his car. Rhyde must be the present owner of the Paulina."

"He is," acknowledged Mann. "A Wall Street acquaintance knows some persons named Montague, who are leaving on for a cruise with Rhyde, to-night. The Paulina will sail from the old International Pier on the East River. But I do not know the exact hour."

Cranston's eyes showed keenly as Mann finished that report. The broker, however, had further facts. He produced more typewritten sheets.

"BECAUSE Hoburn's name was mentioned," declared Mann, "I made inquiries regarding him. I heard that Hoburn had only one other close friend beside Cleffard. The other friend is living."

"His name -"

"Is George Raskin. An oil promoter, his main office in Chicago. He has a small office here; but it was closed when I telephoned. So I called Chicago by long distance."

"Was Raskin there?"

"No. It appears that he was here in New York. But he is expected in Chicago to-morrow afternoon. The manager of the Chicago office supposed that Raskin is already on his train."

"Then his plans are known?"

"No. That, at least, is fortunate. Raskin decided upon his trip only yesterday. I doubt that any one would know that he may be en route to Chicago."

"He has a New York residence?"

"He did have, until recently. Then he moved into an apartment, to occupy it until the lease expired. The Chicago manager did not know the name of the man from whom Raskin sublet the apartment; nor the address. The man in charge of the local office might know it. His name is Peterson and he lives in New Jersey; but I have been unable to obtain an answer from his home."

The Shadow considered. Mann furnished a last shred of information.

"Here is a picture of Raskin," he stated, passing The Shadow a small printed page. "It was in a prospectus that he issued regarding oil investments. He would be easily identified."

The Shadow studied the picture, which had been printed from an electrotpe. It showed George Raskin as an elderly man with high-bridged nose and prominent forehead. The latter feature was conspicuous, for Raskin was almost entirely bald.

"A limited leaves the Grand Central Station at half past eight," remarked The Shadow, quietly. "It reaches Chicago to-morrow afternoon. There is a chance that Raskin may go aboard that train."

"Contact Vincent immediately, at the Hotel Metrolite. Have him cover the train gate, make a final report, then board the train. Vincent to cover Raskin if he is on board; otherwise, to contact him in Chicago."

The Shadow was rising as he spoke. Mann nodded, pocketing the picture, which he knew was for delivery to Vincent. The Shadow strolled from the grillroom.

A minute later, Mann followed, en route to the Hotel Metrolite, where Harry Vincent, agent appointed for the Chicago trip, would be found.

It was several minutes after eight o'clock when a limousine stopped a short distance from the old International Pier. A silent, cloaked figure stepped from the car and paused by a parapet which bordered the East River.

From this position, The Shadow could observe the old pier, together with the street that led to it.

A sleek yacht was swinging out into midstream, its white sides visible against the blackness of the water. The glow of Manhattan showed the low superstructure of the boat. The yacht was the Paulina.

Nosing northward toward the treacherous water of Hell Gate, the yacht had begun its belated cruise. It had evidently cast off several minutes before The Shadow had arrived. The tide was coming up through the channel; the boat's skipper had relied upon the current before calling for the motor full ahead.

Hilarious laughter reached The Shadow as the boat moved northward with increasing speed. A merry party was in progress; the guests of Ludlow Rhyde were looking forward to a large evening during their voyage down Long Island Sound.

The Shadow watched the yacht glide past. He turned about and gazed toward the pier. He saw a taxi wheel away from the darkness near a corner. Another cab edged forward; its driver leaned out and looked toward the inner end of the pier.

There were people there; a little group of four. They paid no attention to the cab driver's beckons. While the taxi waited, The Shadow followed the parapet. In thirty seconds, he was close to where the group stood.

There were three girls and one man in the cluster. The girls were voicing impatient remarks.

"That's the way with Phil Yarnall," The Shadow heard one say. "He left us here and said that he would be back in five minutes with the car. Probably we'll have to wait a half hour."

"Unless we take a taxi," suggested another. "One of the cabs just left. There's another still here, though, with the driver making faces at us."

"Call him, Jerry," insisted the third girl, to the man in the group. "We can go to the rodeo without Phil."

"Then what about afterward?" queried the first. "Phil is going to drive us to Boston as soon as the rodeo is over."

"We'll see him at the rodeo."

Jerry inserted a laugh.

"Phil has the tickets," he remarked, "and there goes the taxi. We're out of luck, girls."

"Stranded on the dock," declared one, gloomily. "I wish we had stayed aboard the Paulina, even if Lud Rhyde is a mope."

"Don't criticize Lud because he can't stand wild parties," laughed Jerry. "He's not used to late hours. The last two years have cured him of night life!"

"So now he goes to bed at eight o'clock. Well, I hope he gets some sleep while the bunch is having all their fun. I'm sorry we missed that party that was starting on the yacht -"

"Here's Phil!"

A LONG, trim phaeton swung up from the street that the taxi had taken! Phil Yarnall leaned from the driver's seat and beckoned the others into the car. The Shadow watched while the party pulled away.

The Paulina was gone; so was the car that had headed for the rodeo. The Shadow had learned only that the yacht was bound for Boston, and that Phil Yarnall and his companions intended to meet it there. The Shadow had formed no contact with Ludlow Rhyde.

Nevertheless, he regarded that young man as one who might still be in a critical position. Sidney Cleffard, friend of Blake Hoburn, had been murdered. Ludlow Rhyde was Hoburn's stepson and heir. The Shadow could see a possible connection. Because of that, The Shadow had decided upon new plans for one of his agents.

Returning to the limousine, he opened the door so silently that the patient chauffeur did not hear it. Dropping hat and cloak, The Shadow strolled quietly away. He circled a corner; street lights showed him in the guise of Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow entered a drug store that occupied a corner of a large apartment house.

A clock showed seventeen minutes after eight. The Shadow entered a telephone booth. He dialed a number; a quiet voice responded:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report!" ordered The Shadow.

"Awaiting word from Vincent," came Burbank's response. "Expected within ten minutes."

"Connect and call."

With that order, The Shadow noted the number of the pay station. He gave it to Burbank. Hanging up the receiver, The Shadow waited.

Nine minutes passed. The telephone bell rang. The Shadow raised the receiver and spoke. Burbank answered with a single word:

"Vincent."

Another voice came over the wire. It was Harry reporting to Burbank. The contact man had made a double connection, so that both he and The Shadow could hear Harry's report.

"No sign of Raskin," came a clear-cut tone. "I'm watching from a booth in the Grand Central. All passengers for the Chicago train have to stop at the ticket table before they go aboard. Raskin has not arrived."

"Maintain watch," ordered The Shadow.

Burbank relayed the word. Two minutes passed; then Harry's voice:

"Still no sign of Raskin."

One minute more until half past eight. The Shadow gave new orders.

"Instructions changed," he announced. "Vincent to take ten o'clock train for Boston. Inquire at hotels regarding reservations made by Phillip Yarnall. Contact Yarnall party. Report on Ludlow Rhyde, owner of yacht Paulina, due in Boston to-morrow morning."

With Raskin already bound for Chicago, as matters indicated, The Shadow could see no immediate threat against the oil man. Ludlow Rhyde was closer; his connection with the case of Cleffard might be more definite.

Yet The Shadow had not forgotten Raskin. When he returned to his limousine, he ordered the chauffeur to drive him to the Cobalt Club. Arrived there, The Shadow put in a call to Commissioner Weston's apartment, announcing himself as Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow was informed that the commissioner was not at home. He had gone out of town, but would be back later in the evening, not before eleven o'clock. The Shadow left word for him to call the Cobalt Club.

That done, The Shadow strolled from the club. Stanley, the chauffeur, had the limousine parked across the street. The big car pulled over; in the car, The Shadow gave an order in the quiet tones of Cranston:

"Madison Square Garden, Stanley."

CHAPTER VII. MIDNIGHT DEATH

USUALLY, The Shadow found action to be imperative. On this Thursday night, he had encountered a situation that kept him idle. The Shadow's present formula was to search out those who were linked with Sidney Cleffard. He had learned of two persons only. Both had left New York.

George Raskin had been a friend of Cleffard's; Ludlow Rhyde was merely the stepson of a man to whom the banker had sold a yacht. Of the two, Raskin seemed more important; yet either might furnish some guide to a further quest.

Behind crime, The Shadow knew, a criminal mind was at work. That definition could scarcely fit Raskin, whose oil interests were honest ones; nor Rhyde, whose prison term had been the penalty of foolhardiness, not of intended evil.

The murderer who had slain Cleffard had done so with a purpose. He had stolen photographs, along with a framed picture that could well be a representation of the yacht Paulina. Behind these thefts, The Shadow scented some peculiar intent. Blackmail was a motive that occurred to him.

Therein lay possibilities involving either Raskin or Rhyde. The oil promoter, however honest his present dealings might be, could have some buried past. His sudden trip from New York could possibly be due to matters other than ordinary business. Similarly, Rhyde, whose penitentiary sentence must have irked him, could conceivably have taken a cruise because of worryment.

Until he knew more concerning Raskin and Rhyde, The Shadow could do nothing. Raskin had been the first lead; The Shadow had dispatched Harry Vincent to look for him. With no trace of Raskin, The Shadow had shipped Harry over Rhyde's route. But The Shadow had not forgotten Raskin.

The oil man might need protection. That was why The Shadow had called Commissioner Weston. Failing to reach Weston, he had postponed the matter until later. There was no rush, with Raskin en route to Chicago.

MEANWHILE, The Shadow had gone to the rodeo. Seated in a box at Madison Square Garden, he noted the party that he had seen at the International Pier. Phil Yarnall was conspicuous among the three girls; for his friend Jerry was in a row behind the others.

Ten o'clock passed. An hour of double importance. It was the time when Kale Bewer retired, according to a report received from Cliff. It was also the time when Harry was taking the ten o'clock train to Boston; the last express before the one o'clock owl train that carried sleepers only.

Eleven o'clock; the rodeo was ended. Leaving the Garden, The Shadow followed closely upon Phil Yarnall's party. Their car was parked a few blocks away; walking, The Shadow heard mention of the Fenway Hotel and a meeting with Ludlow Rhyde at noon. These were facts that Burbank could relay by long distance to Harry.

Stanley had spied the figure of Cranston. Cruising in the limousine, the chauffeur finally caught his master's attention. The Shadow smiled; boarded the big car and ordered Stanley to take him to the Cobalt Club.

There was no message from Weston. The Shadow went to the lounge and idled there. Half an hour passed; suddenly, Weston appeared in person. The lounge room was deserted. The commissioner approached hurriedly and put a question:

"What is it, Cranston? Something important?"

"Hardly, commissioner," replied The Shadow. "What makes you so excited?"

"This Cleffard case." Weston sank in a large chair and accepted a cigar that The Shadow offered him. "Jove, Cranston! It is baffling! Cardona is totally at loss. His last report was as hodge-podged as a Chinese laundry ticket."

"You have learned nothing concerning Cleffard?"

"Nothing of consequence. Many bankers knew him; but only casually. If only there was some one -"

"Did you hear mention of a man named Raskin?"

Weston swung about, startled.

"Raskin!" he exclaimed. "Where did you learn that name, Cranston?"

"Through a friend. I was talking about Cleffard. The man with whom I spoke recalled that Cleffard had once been a friend of George Raskin."

Weston pounded a fist against an opened palm.

"I am stupid!" he exclaimed. "A call came to my apartment this evening. It was from a man named Raskin, with his telephone number. But The fellow left no message."

"At what time this evening?"

The Shadow's question was abrupt. He had become suddenly alert. He had livened from his role of Cranston; but Weston was too strained to notice the change.

"At about ten o'clock," replied the commissioner. "I did not think it important enough to call the number that he gave me. But I shall call him when I return to my apartment."

"Call him at once!"

The Shadow's statement, though emphatic, was delivered in Cranston's style. Something in the words alarmed the commissioner.

"Raskin is in danger?"

"I believe so. I called his office this afternoon. He had left for Chicago. I considered him to be safe, for the present. I intended to ask you to communicate with the Chicago police. It is now apparent that Raskin delayed his trip; probably, to talk with you concerning Cleffard."

THE SHADOW had risen and was walking toward the door as he spoke. Weston was striding along beside him. They reached the telephones; Weston brought out a memo sheet that bore Raskin's telephone number.

The Shadow saw the number; he knew that it must be that of the unlocated apartment which Raskin had rented from the regular tenant.

As soon as Weston had stepped into a telephone booth, The Shadow entered another and called Burbank. He had the contact man consult a special directory that listed telephones by exchanges and numbers, instead of names. He learned that Raskin was living in an old-fashioned apartment in the Eighties.

The Shadow stepped from the booth. He waited until Weston emerged. The commissioner's long session was explained by his first remark. Weston had made two calls.

"No answer from Raskin," declared Weston, excitedly. "So I called Cardona. He had just arrived at headquarters. Raskin had called there, at half past eleven. But he left no number."

The Shadow glanced at the lobby clock. It registered ten minutes after twelve.

"Raskin may have called from outside his apartment," suggested Weston. "We must keep calling him. When he returns, we -"

"We can go there in the meantime."

"A good suggestion, Cranston. Yes, we shall start as soon as Cardona arrives. I told him to speed up here. Wait"—Weston snapped his fingers—"I must find out the address from the telephone number."

"I have already gained that information, commissioner. I made inquiry while you were making your calls."

"But the telephone company does not give street addresses from numbers -"

"They made an exception in my case. Here is Raskin's address. It is an apartment house."

The Shadow and the commissioner went to the street. Stanley pulled over with the limousine. They waited a few minutes; The Shadow was about to suggest that a message be left for Cardona, when a police car pulled up and the acting inspector joined them.

The trio entered the limousine; Weston ordered a detective sergeant to join Stanley in the front seat. The chauffeur wheeled the big car and headed northward at The Shadow's instruction.

THE apartment house proved to be an old-fashioned, isolated structure, with an iron fire escape clinging to the side wall above a cement passage. There was a lighted basement window that revealed a sign marked: "SUPERINTENDENT."

Cardona rapped upon the door. A wan-faced man stepped into view.

"Does George Raskin live here?" queried Cardona. "Is he in his apartment?"

"I—I don't know, sir," stammered the superintendent flustered when Cardona flashed his badge. "That is—well, he lives here in Mr. Smedley's old apartment. But I couldn't answer if he is in, sir."

"Which apartment?"

"No. 3 B, sir. It's on this side of the house."

"You have a pass-key?"

The superintendent nodded. Fumbling, he produced a batch of keys and selected one. Cardona took it. He joined the commissioner and The Shadow. They had overheard the conversation.

"Cranston has suggested a quiet entry," remarked Weston. "I consider it advisable. Come, Cardona, and lead the way. And you, Markham"—he turned to the rugged detective sergeant—"come with us also."

They ascended in an automatic elevator and reached the lighted third floor hall. Weston stared at the door marked 3 B; then gave a smile of relief.

"It's shut tight," he whispered. "Not ajar, like Cleffard's was. It is unlikely that Raskin is at home; but some one may have entered."

"From the fire tower," suggested Cardona. "It would sit by one of these rooms."

"True," agreed Weston. "Let us act cautiously."

Cardona unlocked the door, and managed it quietly. A glimmer of light greeted them. It did not come from the first room, which was a living room; the light was from a doorway beyond. It indicated a bedroom.

After four paces, Cardona stopped short. The Shadow, at the outer door, was first to see the detective's hand come from its pocket. Then the others spied the gleam of a revolver. Cardona beckoned with his other hand. All joined him in the darkness by the wall.

"Look!" Joe's whisper was barely audible. "Those curtains in the other room! That window's by the fire escape!"

The others stared. The curtains covered a window ledge; close beside it was a table. Projecting from one side of a curtain was a hand; its fingers clutched the table edge, just above the drawer.

"The murderer!" whispered Weston. "He stopped when he heard us. It's gloomy there; he hopes that we won't see his hand!"

WESTON'S statement had merit. The light in the inner room came from a floor lamp. It was only through luck that Cardona had spied the telltale hand. Moreover, the bedroom had not been ransacked, as had Cleffard's den.

Cardona nudged Markham. The detective sergeant caught Joe's whisper and crept close to the door of the bedroom. Steadily, Markham aimed a revolver straight for the curtain. Then Cardona stole past him. The Shadow, drawing closer with Weston, saw Joe make a cautious circuit toward the window.

"Great work," whispered Weston. He, too, had drawn a gun. "The rogue cannot see from his position. Cardona will reveal him. Watch!"

The Shadow watched. He had produced no weapon. His face was immobile. It shared none of the elation shown by Weston. The Shadow could feel no enthusiasm. He knew the surprise that was coming. His analysis was keener than that of his companions.

Cardona had reached the window. Standing aside, to avoid the cover of the revolvers, the ace looked upward. He saw that the heavy curtains were held by a single rod. The curtain beside the motionless hand was bunched upward. Cardona thought that the murderer had drawn it toward himself.

Slowly, Cardona gained a grip upon the curtain on his side of the window. Ready with his revolver, he sped a glance toward the living room and saw the glitter of the other guns. A grim expression on his swarthy face, Cardona gave the curtain a vicious, downward yank.

The rod ripped away; curtains tumbled toward the floor. The extended hand slid from the table. With a challenging shout, Cardona aimed to cover the figure that came forward. Then Joe's cry stopped on his lips.

The figure that followed the arm began to tumble, restrained no longer by the doubled curtain. Helplessly, it rolled to the floor; thudded there; flopped crazily and sprawled face upward.

Weston and Markham stopped, frozen, as they bounded forward into the room.

Joe Cardona had uncovered a corpse. He had revealed the victim; not the murderer. Circumstance had

prevented The Shadow from averting another death. The man who lay stretched upon the floor had been shot through the heart. His bloodstained shirt front was the testimony.

Standing just within the doorway, The Shadow studied the face of the victim. He saw features that he recognized: a high-bridged nose, beneath a prominent, baldish forehead.

The murdered man was George Raskin.

CHAPTER VIII. THE ABSENT CLUE

FOR two hours following the discovery of Raskin's body, The Shadow was a spectator while the law sought facts regarding new murder. As Lamont Cranston, The Shadow maintained almost complete silence during that period.

A police surgeon came, to establish that George Raskin had died at midnight. There was irony in that fact. At the hour named, Weston and Cranston were just about to meet at the Cobalt Club. At the time of their get-together, Raskin was in his death throes.

Weston mentioned that freak of circumstance. He expressed the opinion that Raskin was slain by the same man who had murdered Cleffard.

Cranston made no comment. He knew that Cardona was to make a microscopic examination of the bullet from Raskin's body. If it bore the same markings as the slug that had killed Cleffard, Weston opinion would be definitely substantiated.

The matter of the murderer's entry was obvious to Weston. When the curtains of the bedroom window were drawn back, the rusted rail of the old fire escape showed outside. Having murdered Raskin, the killer had only to draw the body to the window ledge and stuff the curtain beneath it.

There was space for the criminal to pass by the body when he used the fire escape as his exit.

One point, however; puzzled the commissioner. The more Weston considered it, the more it bothered him. That was the condition of Raskin's room. Everything was tidy; a distinct contrast to the scene at Cleffard's, where the murderer had rifled the place.

Weston kept muttering about that fact, until he realized that he was getting no where. Cranston's silence began to irk him. Peevishly, the commissioner questioned:

"Can you explain it, Cranston?"

"There is a simple answer," was the quiet reply. "Raskin did not furnish this apartment. Only the clothes in the closet and the contents of the table drawers were his."

"But even those have not been thrown about -"

"Nor was Raskin's body left in view, with the apartment door ajar. Those were oddities in the Cleffard case, commissioner."

Weston nodded, as he tugged at his mustache. He remarked, at last, that those were merely peculiar features of the case. What he wanted was an explanation.

"Perhaps those details supply the answer," suggested The Shadow. "You have assumed that both murders were designed; logical enough, since Cleffard and Raskin were once associated. It follows, therefore, that the thefts could also have been designed."

"But we do not know what was stolen. There may have been no thefts either at Cleffard's or here."

"On the contrary, commissioner, theft was obvious. The criminal merely had a greater task at Cleffard's than here. There were more objects at hand; he had no time to replace things after a long search. To cover his search for a specific object, he hurriedly disarranged everything in sight. To-night, he found what he wanted, very promptly. So he left everything shipshape."

WESTON was impressed by the cold logic of the statements. So much so, that he began to bring out articles from the table drawers.

Keen eyes watched him in the process; had Weston not been busy, he might have recognized the glint of The Shadow's gaze. At one moment, Weston turned toward Cranston. His friend's eyes became lazy, before the commissioner met them.

"From what you say, Cranston," declared Weston, "the murderer is trying to puzzle us. He hopes that we will fail to connect the deaths of Cleffard and Raskin."

Cranston's head delivered a quiet shake.

"Hardly so, commissioner," he said. "The death bullets will probably match. The killer could scarcely expect to cover the fact that one man committed both murders. He wants to cover the theft motive; enough so that we cannot guess the nature of the objects that he stole."

Cranston's hand indicated the open drawer. The gesture encouraged Weston's inspection. The commissioner brought out loose bills and papers. Next, he found three compact bundles of old letters, that were girded with string at the center. Taking each packet in turn, he thumbed the loose ends, as one would riffle a pack of cards.

As Weston tossed the packets back into a drawer, Cranston remarked, in meditative tone:

"I picture the murderer as a man long skilled in crime, crafty enough to cover his work with many useless clues. Or else -"

"Or else?"

"A man nerved to crime, who omitted points when he slew Cleffard; who remembered them when he murdered Raskin. In brief, he is one of two extreme types."

"Good reasoning," commended Weston. "But where does it bring us? What did the murderer steal?" Then, impatiently, the commissioner added. "I'm going to call Cardona. He's questioning the superintendent."

THE moment after Weston strode from the room, The Shadow showed the same quick action that he had displayed at Cleffard's. He moved quickly to the table; from the drawer he picked out the objects that Weston had last discarded: the packets of tied letters.

At first glance, the bundles seemed alike. But The Shadow had noted a slight difference when Weston had handled these. One pack had riffled more easily than the others. That was why The Shadow sought a comparison.

He found it. A single bundle was quite flabby. Nevertheless, it had been tied as tightly as the others. The single string looped across the center had cut deeply into the edges of the top and bottom envelopes. Yet that string was loose, at present.

Running through the envelopes, The Shadow saw that the postmarks were more than two years old. Evidently these were letters that Raskin had received from friends. Some bore foreign stamps. But The Shadow knew that he would find nothing of importance among them.

The reason: certain letters had been pulled from his packet. That accounted for the slight looseness of the string. Just as he had gained photographs at Cleffard's, so had the murderer stolen letters at Raskin's.

The Shadow replaced the packets. He strolled to the door and lighted a thin cigar. He had just begun to puff his panetela when Weston returned with Cardona. The commissioner announced that the present investigation was finished.

It was nearly an hour later when a light appeared in The Shadow's sanctum. A long hand began notations beneath the bluish glow. The Shadow was summarizing facts that pertained to murder.

Both crimes had been done after ten o'clock. That was one definite point, but not a remarkable one. Night was the logical time for murder. Raskin, however, had been killed two hours later than Cleffard. That might have been through design; contrarily, it was possible that Raskin could have been absent from his apartment.

Yet The Shadow, weighing that possibility, decided otherwise. When he had called Weston, Raskin had left a number for the commissioner to call. It seemed obvious, therefore, that he would have remained at his apartment. Failing to receive a call there, he had telephoned headquarters.

Why had the murderer allowed Raskin to make those calls?

There was only one answer. The killer had not arrived until midnight.

The Shadow reached for the earphones. He put in a call to Burbank. He received three reports. First, from Hawkeye: the spotter had been trying to again pick up Badger Griffin's trail. As yet, he had been unsuccessful.

The second was from Cliff Marsland. He had found an excuse for another call on Kale Bewer. He had found the big-shot at home during the evening. Others of Kale's acquaintance had been present; the big-shot had not retired until eleven o'clock. Then he had sulkily ordered his friends to leave, complaining that he was under doctor's instructions and had already stayed up an hour too long.

The third report was from Harry Vincent. He had called Burbank immediately upon his arrival in Boston. Harry was at the Fenway Hotel. He had found that Yarnall's party had reservations there. They were expected by four-thirty in the morning.

The Shadow moved away from the light. When he returned, he carried a folder that he placed beneath the light. He began a study of typewritten reports. Though brief, they gave sufficient facts regarding Ludlow Rhyde.

That young man's wealth; his term in prison—two such conflicting factors had been sufficient for The Shadow to list Rhyde among persons in his files. Included in The Shadow's data were statements that pertained to the estate of Blake Hoburn.

There, The Shadow read a name: Dennis Carston.

Two years ago, Carston had figured as the possible recipient of Hoburn's estate. He was the dead millionaire's nephew; a closer relative than Rhyde, the stepson. Rhyde, his own chances of inheritance at stake, had followed a spending orgy that had terminated with the reckless ride out to the hunting lodge.

The name of James Silven was present as the victim of the automobile crash. There was nothing to show a connection between Silven and Carston.

In fact, all conclusions pointed to the opposite. The Shadow scarcely noted the name of Silven. However, his concentration upon Carston brought him to unusual conclusions.

Carston's time period for claiming Hoburn's estate had ended during Rhyde's prison term. Rhyde was in undisputed possession of the inheritance. Even his death would not benefit Carston, should Hoburn's nephew suddenly arrive in New York.

How close had Carston once been to his uncle, Blake Hoburn?

The data provided no answer. The Shadow supplied a possibility. Carston could have known his uncle, some years ago. If so, he could also have been acquainted with his uncle's friends. Only two such men were known to The Shadow; both had been murdered: Cleffard and Raskin.

THE SHADOW compared the situations of Carston and Rhyde. As matters now stood, Carston's loss had been Rhyde's gain. Once, the circumstances had been the reverse.

Crime, it seemed, could well concern the affairs of these two men. But in what connection?

To gain buried evidence. Such as photographs held by Cleffard; letters owned by Raskin.

Such evidence was the type that served in blackmail. If blackmail was intended by some one, it could be directed against only one person: Ludlow Rhyde.

Intended by Carston? Not necessarily, according to The Shadow's survey. By any one who might know too much about circumstances involving the estate of Blake Hoburn.

The case could be complex. Some where in the train could be an informer, or go-between. A crook, who could serve a man of huge criminal intent. The description fitted Badger Griffin.

The Shadow made notations. The search for Badger must be pressed. It had suddenly raised itself to paramount importance. But the word that The Shadow finally inscribed was not the name of an individual. It was a single statement.

Murder!

Violent death had accompanied the theft of missing clues. Turning to crime, a schemer had gone the absolute limit in his actions. Definite factors must have caused the plotter to exert such extreme measures.

The bluish light clicked off. A grim laugh sounded in the darkness. It was a tone of weird prediction. Death had struck twice; it could be planned again. The Shadow could see a motive for murder.

With that divined, The Shadow was confident upon one point. Whatever the difficulties that might beset his path, doom could not strike again.

The Shadow would prevent it.

CHAPTER IX. THE LINK BETWEEN

It was nine o'clock in the morning. A brawny police sergeant was seated at a precinct desk, scanning the pages of the Friday morning newspaper. The sergeant crumpled the sheet and placed it aside.

"Wait'll people read the evening newspapers," he grumbled to an officer who stood beside the desk. "That murder last night didn't get into the morning news. There's going to be plenty of howls from the news hounds when they hear that Raskin hooks up with Cleffard."

"You're right, sarge," agreed the bluecoat. "That bulletin we got is all the reporters need to make a big story."

"Yeah—the way those bullets matched. We're supposed to be on the lookout for a murderer, and we've got no description of him. Great stuff, Dolan!"

"Joe Cardona hasn't passed us much real dope, sarge. Except that the murderer must have been traveling around town last night."

"And what does that get us? He might be anybody in New York. He could walk into this precinct and we wouldn't know him. That's it in a nutshell, Dolan. He might be anybody."

"There's one guy he couldn't be."

The sergeant looked puzzled. Dolan grinned, and nudged his thumb toward a doorway.

"The drunk that shoved in here at eight o'clock last night," explained the policeman. "He's been dead to the world ever since. It's a cinch he wasn't out at midnight."

The sergeant looked at the slate. He read the name of Benny Griffin. There was no charge against him.

"Just halfway soused," recalled the sergeant. "Afraid he'd swig some more and wind up in Bellevue with the rams. That's why he asked to be put in a cell overnight. Bring him out, Dolan."

SOON, Dolan returned, bringing Badger Griffin. The big-lipped crook looked pale.

"You was a pal, sergeant," confided Badger. "I had to be put where I couldn't get no more hooch. A couple of shots more and I'd have been seeing purple crocodiles! I saw 'em onct -"

"Here's your money." The sergeant handed over an envelope. "Sign your name. I had to slate you last night."

Badger signed; then remarked:

"There ain't many people call me Benny. If some dick comes in from headquarters and sees this moniker, he might ask if it was Badger Griffin. You can tell him that's who I am—"

The sergeant's gaze stiffened.

"Maybe you'd like to go down to headquarters and tell them that yourself, Griffin."

"I haven't done nothing," protested Badger, hastily. "Don't ship me down to headquarters. It wouldn't be healthy for me." Badger became whiny, as he added: "You get the idea, don't you?"

"Yeah," returned the sergeant. "Quit blubbering and get out!"

Badger made a hurried departure. The sergeant nodded wisely, and said to Dolan:

"A stoolie! That's why he got jittery when I said I might ship him down to headquarters. Badger Griffin. I'm making a note of that name. I'll remember his face, too, the way he kept shoving it over the desk. Say, Dolan, I've got it!"

"Got what, sarge?"

"What Griffin was doing here. He wasn't soused last night. He was framing an alibi! He wanted it known that he was out of something. Some time, Dolan, you and me will be called on to say that Badger Griffin was in a cell at this precinct, all of Thursday night. I'm going to make a report on this!"

FAR from the precinct, Badger alighted from a subway local. He headed for Third Avenue; arrived outside a dingy shoe repair shop that fronted beneath an elevated railway.

Entering the shop, Badger nodded to the dull-faced shoemaker. He went through to a little alleyway; took another door and went upstairs to an unlocked room.

The place was an untidy hide-out, strewn with newspapers. Badger rummaged among tabloids that lay on a rickety cot. He found a flashlight and pocketed it. Raising the mattress, he uncovered a revolver. He broke it open, counted the six bullets. Badger shoved the loaded weapon into his pocket.

From old clothes that hung in a closet, Badger brought a blue bandanna handkerchief, that came from the pocket of a coat. He stuffed the bandanna into his hip pocket.

There was an overcoat, also in the closet. As Badger swung it sideways, it thudded slightly against the wall. That indicated another gun; but Badger did not take it from the overcoat. One revolver was all that he intended to carry.

Departing from the room, Badger descended to the narrow alley. He did not go out through the shoe repair shop. Instead, he followed the passage, took a turn and came out upon a side street. Badger's hide-out had the necessary qualifications: a front entrance and a secluded back one.

In his own shoddy fashion, Badger had made use of a measure that he had learned from Kale Bewer. On a crude scale, Badger's abode matched the big-shot's apartment with its secret elevator.

It was not far to Widdington's apartment; Badger make the trip in a few minutes. His suit, though wrinkled from his sleep in the cell, was presentable enough for him to enter the apartment house.

Badger went up in the elevator; when he was alone in the eighth floor hall, he rapped cautiously on Widdington's door.

There was no response. Badger produced a key and unlocked the door. He slipped neatly out of view and closed the door noiselessly behind him.

It was fully seven minutes before the elevator again delivered a passenger at the eighth floor. This arrival was Widdington.

The sallow man's mustache twitched nervously as he unlocked his door. Widdington stepped across the threshold; then dropped back with a startled gasp. He had seen Badger slouched upon the thick-cushioned sofa.

"It's me," greeted the lippy crook. "Badger! Shut the door. Don't be jittery."

THE door shut, Badger told Widdington how he had spent the night at the police station. The news bothered the sallow man. He liked the idea of Badger's alibi, but felt that close contact with the law was a mistake. Badger disagreed.

"It was the best way to work it," he lipped. "All I had to do was copy your act."

"My act?" Widdington didn't understand.

"Yeah," growled Badger. "The way you fake the jitters. I tried it myself, on the cops. They fell for it."

Badger counted on his fingers:

"Wednesday, Carraway's. Thursday, the police station. To day is Friday; I'll have another alibi to-night. Unless you need me."

Badger's tone was significant. Widdington winced; then shook his head. Badger handed over the duplicate key, stating that he wouldn't need it again. Widdington inquired anxiously:

"Did they see this key at the station house?"

"Sure," replied Badger. "They took it with my money. But they didn't know who it belonged to. You keep it; if I'm coming here again, I'll telephone you first."

Badger was about to leave. He lingered, expecting a question. It came.

"What about Kale Bewer?" demanded Widdington. "You haven't been to see him again?"

"Not a chance!" replied Badger. "You said lay off. Anyhow, I was in the hoosegow all last night. I won't be seeing Kale."

Widdington tossed a newspaper upon the table. It was a copy of a morning journal. Badger eyed it; then spoke.

"Anything else?"

"No," replied Widdington. Then, slowly: "Call me by telephone, if you think it is necessary. But be careful, Badger. I want to avoid trouble."

Badger opened the door and stepped out into the hall. Widdington half arose, as if to call him back, then settled down into the sofa.

Badger went down to the street. From the apartment house, he headed in the direction of Grand Central Station. He stopped at a news stand; evening newspapers were not yet on sale. With a shrug, Badger headed back to his hideout, only four minutes away. He entered by the angled alleyway.

ONE hour afterward, Badger poked his lippy face into the shoemaker's shop. He put a question to the dull-faced man at the bench:

"Did the boy leave that evening paper?"

"Over there," grunted the shoemaker. "You find it on the shelf."

"Thanks."

Back in his upstairs room, Badger scanned the headlines by the window. The front page teemed with news of murder. The death of George Raskin had been linked with the slaying of Sidney Cleffard.

An ugly chuckle escaped Badger's evil lips. His alibi was good; better than the one before. He had had no part in actual crime; yet he was as pleased as if murder had been his own.

The Shadow had divined correctly. Badger was the link between. But it would take a mighty threat to

make Badger tell what facts he knew. Silence was Badger Griffin's policy. He had been paid to keep it.

CHAPTER X. THE BROKEN CRUISE

THE headlines that had intrigued Badger Griffin were also of keen interest to Harry Vincent, as The Shadow's agent sat at luncheon in the Fenway Hotel. The big print differed somewhat from the New York headlines, for Harry was reading a Boston newspaper. Nevertheless, the topic was the same.

Murder. Two crimes linked by the law.

It was noon. Harry had good reason to be in the Fenway dining room. Five persons were finishing breakfast at a table close by. Phil Yarnall and his companions had arrived at half past four and had not appeared from their rooms until half past eleven.

"There's Lud!"

One of the girls gave the announcement. From his table, Harry looked toward the door, to see a pale-faced, dark-haired man who had entered. He knew that this must be Ludlow Rhyde.

The yacht owner spied the party. He came over to Yarnall's table. Harry noted that he had a folded newspaper tucked beneath his arm.

"Ready to take us to the boat?" inquired Yarnall, rising. "I've left my car in a garage, to stay there while we cruise. We can go to the harbor in a couple of cabs."

"Of course," stated Rhyde. "Is every one packed?"

"Not yet."

"Then hurry it. I'll look after the check."

As the members of the party started from the room, Rhyde held Yarnall back. Harry heard their conversation.

"You've got to help me, Phil," said Rhyde. "Remember that murder we read about yesterday—Cleffard's death?"

Yarnall nodded. Rhyde spread the newspaper.

"There was a second murder last night. Raskin, the dead man, was a friend of my stepfather's; like Cleffard was."

Phil Yarnall looked stupefied.

"I didn't know either Cleffard or Raskin," continued Rhyde. "But the connection is definite. It is serious, too, because I received a threat before I left New York."

"A threat of death?"

"No. Blackmail. I can't give you the details, Phil; but it may have developed into this."

Yarnall was awed.

"I want you to go to New York, Phil," said Rhyde. "Take the two o'clock train. It will get you there before eight. I shall wire my lawyer, Curtiss Haslock, to expect you. I shall give you a message for him. Tell him that I am taking the six o'clock, arriving by eleven."

"We can meet you at Grand Central Station?"

"Yes. I can't go on the earlier train, because I have the yacht party to handle. There would be excitement, talk, and what-not, if I tried to explain matters to those scatter-brains."

Rhyde gave further details. Phil Yarnall was to start in his car for New York; but decided to take the train instead. Taking the others to the yacht, Rhyde would explain matters quietly to the captain.

"Later," said Rhyde, "I can leave and catch the six-o'clock train. The yacht will sail. At dinner, the guests will find that I am not on board."

"Then the captain can spill the news?"

"Not about this matter. He will announce that a wire came from Providence; that you had a motor accident there. He will say that I decided to go at once and help you out of trouble."

"A swell plan, Lud! That keeps it right between us and the captain."

"Exactly! The crowd won't mind my not being on the cruise. They want a good time; I'm after a quiet voyage. The two don't fit together. Last night I didn't get to sleep until two o'clock, with that crazy bunch chasing all about the deck. It's a wonder some of them didn't fall overboard."

Yarnall chuckled at the reference. He and Rhyde arose and went out into the lobby. Harry followed a few minutes later.

ARRANGEMENTS worked as Rhyde had planned them. Yarnall's car was brought from the garage. Languidly, and with laughing remarks about the uselessness of yacht cruises, Yarnall drove away. His jocularly was answered by jests from the others. The girls shouted "Landlubber" as Yarnall's big car swung the corner.

From the window of the lobby, Harry saw the crowd pile into a single cab with Rhyde. Just as the taxi was pulling away, Harry hurried to the street and jumped into another cab.

"Keep along with that bunch," he told the driver. Then, as the cab started: "They thought they would spring a joke on me. I slept late; they figured it would be fun to leave me behind."

"Where are they going?" demanded the driver. "Maybe I can pick a short route and beat them there."

"Can't do it," informed Harry. "They're going to some dock, to get aboard the yacht Paulina. I don't know what dock it is; that's why they left me. They want to make me run up a big taxi bill, riding all along the water front looking for the Paulina."

The taxi driver laughed. He kept close behind the other cab; then dropped back at Harry's instruction. The Shadow's agent remarked that he was trying a little scheme of his own. He did not want the others to know that he had guessed their trick.

As a result, the head cab had already disembarked its passengers at the proper pier when Harry's cab arrived.

Paying the driver, Harry sauntered toward the dock. He looked back to see the cab pull away. The Paulina was tied at the end of the pier. Harry joined a small group of loiterers that was admiring the ship.

Harry saw Rhyde leave his companions and approach a man in uniform. This, Harry knew, must be Captain Dunley. Rhyde and the skipper went forward; they scanned headlines together. Their conference

became a close one; all that Harry could observe was a series of nods that became more frequent as they proceeded.

Reaching a fast agreement, Rhyde and Dunley separated. Harry saw the yacht owner stroll below. Promptly, The Shadow's agent walked from the pier, to find a telephone. It was a full block before he located one.

Harry entered a booth in a cheap restaurant and made a long-distance call to Rutledge Mann, in New York.

The investment broker was out to lunch, but was expected back in twenty minutes. Harry glanced at the restaurant clock. It showed quarter past one. Harry knew that he could call Burbank; but Mann was the proper contact for the present. Harry's report was one that could wait.

Strolling back to the pier, Harry remained there until twenty-five minutes of two. He then returned to the cigar store and made another call. This time he heard Mann's voice.

Briefly Harry gave details. Mann instructed him to stay at the pier; to make another call at half past two, unless an emergency should arise in the meantime.

THERE was no stir aboard the yacht when Harry again approached it. Captain Dunley was busy at the bow. Some of the guests were on the pier; others lounged beneath a canopy on the rear deck.

If danger threatened Ludlow Rhyde, it would not strike here, in this setting. Of that, Harry felt certain. None of the gawkers on the dock looked like desperadoes.

Harry bided his time until nearly half past two. He went to make the call that would bring instructions from The Shadow. He talked with Mann by long distance. He received orders to cover Rhyde and come back from Boston on the six-o'clock train.

This, to Harry, involved present discretion. He knew that Rhyde would have to come from the pier; he did not want the man to notice him, because he would see Rhyde later on the train.

Harry had escaped observation at the Fenway Hotel; the pier, however, was more conspicuous. Rhyde, if he felt himself in danger, would suspect a follower to be an enemy rather than a friend.

Harry remained at the inner end of the pier, beginning his new vigil at twenty minutes of three. A quarter of an hour passed; he noted activity upon the deck of the Paulina. Ropes were drawn aboard; the propeller churned. The yacht glided from the pier.

Had Rhyde decided to remain aboard?

Harry puzzled as the idlers strolled past him. Realizing the need for inquiry, he stopped the last of the loafers. The fellow was an old, bewhiskered man who carried a corncob pipe in one hand and used the other to hobble with a cane.

Harry asked if the old man had seen any one come ashore. The ancient roustabout nodded. Harry described Rhyde; again, the idler nodded.

"That was him," he informed. "The young fellow with dark hair. He come ashore a spell ago; the captain was walking along with him."

"Just how long ago?"

"A short spell. Mebbe an hour."

"Or more?"

"Don't reckon so, sir; but I can't say. He went that way."

The old man gestured his corn-cob toward the low, widespread line of buildings that marked the center of Boston. Harry found a taxi and rode to a hotel near South Station.

On the way, Harry calculated. He had made two calls close together; at one fifteen and at about twenty minutes of two. None after that, until half past two. That seemed the logical time of Rhyde's departure; particularly because Rhyde was not taking a train until six o'clock.

Harry guessed that Rhyde had waited until as near sailing time as he could. Catching an opportune moment, he had probably left the Paulina at two-thirty, instructing Captain Dunley to sail at three o'clock, before Rhyde's absence would be discussed by guests aboard the yacht.

No chance to trace Rhyde among the twisty streets of Boston. Harry decided to catch the six-o'clock train for New York. At the hotel, he put in a routine call to Rutledge Mann. That ended Harry's duty until dusk. Nevertheless, Harry felt uneasy.

He hoped that Rhyde would not encounter daylight danger in Boston. That period past, all would be well. Other murders had occurred after dark, all of them in New York. If a menace threatened Rhyde, it probably would not strike until after he arrived in Manhattan, at eleven o'clock.

That would be the time when Harry himself would reach New York. Although he did not foresee it, Harry would be able to render service to The Shadow, from the moment that the train trip ended.

Though his part seemed small, Harry was to be a definite factor in The Shadow's battle against crime.

CHAPTER XI. THE CROSSED TRAIL

It was seven o'clock in New York. Dusk had brought early darkness. Agents of The Shadow were out to regain their lost trail. They were supported by their chief himself.

For The Shadow wanted trace of Badger Griffin; and while Cliff and Hawkeye visited places where the missing man might be, The Shadow was also roaming the confines of the underworld.

A human chameleon, The Shadow could suit himself to any locale. On lighted streets, he appeared as a well-dressed stroller; not too conspicuous, but well enough attired to be welcomed in such places as Carraway's gambling house.

In dingier districts, where dives invited hoodlums, The Shadow traveled in sweated guise, passing as a rowdy tough enough to gain entree into any hangout.

Where dark, secluded alleyways were concerned, The Shadow used his guise of black. A living wraith, he covered a wide area, his very presence unseen and unsuspected.

For these transformations, The Shadow utilized a movable base. While he stalked the underworld, a taxicab cruised the fringes of the bad lands. Its sharp-faced driver passed up fares and scheduled his twisted route to reach required destinations at given intervals.

The cab driver was Moe Shrevnitz, as keen a hackie as any in Manhattan. His was an independent cab, uncontrolled by any company. Its actual owner was The Shadow.

In the back of the cab were all the articles that The Shadow required for his own tour of the underworld. Disguise kits, garments, ready for each transformation.

Finishing each sector, in the garb that it demanded, The Shadow contacted Moe's cab at the next meeting place. A few minutes sufficed for him to change his guise; then emerge for the next stage of his unceasing search.

Compared to The Shadow's systematic methods, Cliff and Hawkeye were limited to minor parts. Cliff covered hangouts where he was known and welcomed. Hawkeye picked places where a prowler could come and go unmolested. Each was adding to The Shadow's coverage, although their chief was accomplishing more than both agents combined.

Luck could well play a part in the search for Badger Griffin. The Shadow had counted upon chance; and it came. It was Hawkeye who first spotted Badger.

NOT far from the Bowery was a place called Mulley's Tavern. It had an upstairs bar, where small-fry hoodlums congregated. Crap games were frequent in corner tables; along the walls were bagatelle machines where players tried their skill and wagered bets among themselves.

Mulley, a brawny, shirt-sleeved proprietor, kept order; he was aided in this duty by a pair of big-fisted barkeepers. Little trouble ever occurred at Mulley's, for the riffraff who formed the clientele lacked toughness. That was explained by the fact that Mulley's attracted stool pigeons. Thugs who were wanted by the law stayed away.

Hawkeye visited Mulley's as a matter of routine. The little spotter gained a surprise the moment that he arrived in the upstairs joint. Standing at the bar was Badger Griffin. The crook was chatting with Mulley.

Sidling to a table, Hawkeye watched. He saw Badger's protruding lip move in eager conversation. At last there came a nod from Mulley. Badger shoved a hand into his pocket, produced a fat bank roll and peeled off a few bills which he shoved across the bar to the proprietor.

The transaction fitted with information that Hawkeye had received through Burbank. The Shadow had analyzed Badger's case and had sent the news along. Hawkeye knew that Badger was buying an alibi.

Wednesday night, Badger had been at Carraway's. He had not been located Thursday evening; but it seemed likely that he had chosen some safe spot. Here, on Friday night, he was due to stay at Mulley's. He wanted the proprietor to remember it.

Mulley stood well with the law. Stoolies were safe at his joint. Anything that Mulley told the police would be believed; for it was his policy to play straight. But Mulley was one who could do business on the side without jeopardizing his position.

Why Badger wanted an alibi, Mulley neither knew nor cared. The crook had simply made it profitable for Mulley to remember what he saw; and to tell the truth to the police, if called upon later. A phony alibi would not be supported by Mulley; but a real one would. That was the type of alibi that Badger required.

BADGER strolled from the bar. He pulled a handful of nickels from his pocket and began to play a bagatelle board. Hawkeye saw a couple of pasty-faced patrons making their departure. He slipped along behind them.

Ten minutes later, Hawkeye reached a darkened alleyway. He waited there and listened. He heard a footfall. He whispered, cautiously:

"Cliff!"

A response from the darkness. Hawkeye passed the word:

"I've spotted Badger. He's at Mulley's. Building an alibi. You cover, Cliff. I'll get the word to Moe."

Hawkeye knew the taxi's schedule. He shuffled off through the darkness, while Cliff headed for Mulley's.

The upstairs joint was well thronged when Cliff arrived. The Shadow's agent took his stand just inside the door. He saw Badger shooting marbles at the game board, his ugly lip mouthing oaths as the marbles missed the pockets where he had aimed to score.

There was a limp-shouldered idler close by Cliff. The fellow looked like a dope addict. Cliff noted him from the corner of his eye; for he had seen the man before and knew his name. He was "Hoppy" Lashler; and the "grapevine" had piped that he was a stool pigeon.

Hoppy was watching Badger.

A few minutes passed, while Cliff took care not to eye Badger too closely. He suddenly noted a shift beside him. Hoppy was edging toward the door. When Cliff turned about, the dopey-faced man was gone. Cliff stepped closer to the hall.

Voices on the stairway. One was Hoppy's. The dope had met a pal. Cliff caught Hoppy's whisper:

"He's still there, Gink."

"Better scram, then, Hoppy," came "Gink's" answer. "I tipped off the bulls. Cardona's comin' wid a squad!"

"O.K., Gink."

Footsteps went down the stairs. Gink was leaving. Hoppy came back into the joint; looked about in weary fashion then made his exit also. Cliff saw prompt need for action.

Somehow, the law had decided to grab Badger. Why?—Cliff did not know. No word had reached The Shadow of Badger's Thursday night sojourn in a precinct cell.

It happened that the desk sergeant had finally sent his report to headquarters. Cardona had guessed that Badger was traveling an alibi route and had posted stoolies to look for the lippy crook. But that sequence of events was unnecessary to Cliff's decision.

Cliff was concentrated upon one point only. The Shadow wanted Badger. It was Cliff's job to see that The Shadow gained him. If the law also wanted Badger, The Shadow would see that the fellow came into the hands of the police. But The Shadow needed first turn.

STROLLING over to the bagatelle board, Cliff watched Badger shoot the marbles. The crook looked toward him; Cliff passed him a sharp nudge.

"Keep your eye on the game," he stated, in an undertone. "You know who I am, Badger."

Badger nodded. He was nervous, however; his next play showed it more than before.

"The bulls are after you," added Cliff. "I just heard a stoolie spill it. Looks like they're going to stage a roundup here, so's to grab you. Got a good hideout?"

Another nod from Badger. He was restless. Between two choices, he found it difficult. Flight would mean the loss of his planned alibi; but arrest would mean a third degree. Badger disliked being grilled by the police.

"Do a sneak," suggested Cliff. "Duck into the pool room around the corner and stick there. I'll watch for stoolies; then I'll join you."

Badger liked the advice. He was loath to flee directly to his hide-out, for fear that stool pigeons would trail. Cliff's promise offered him a chance to learn how he stood.

Cliff stepped over to another game and began to play on his own. Badger finished out his nickel, gave a disgusted grunt and strolled over to the bar. There he spoke to Mulley.

"Going down to make a phone call," Cliff heard Badger say. "I'll be back in five minutes, Mulley."

The proprietor nodded. He looked at the clock. He was keeping close tabs on Badger's alibi.

Cliff finished his play just as Badger reached the door. He saw a pair of hard-faced customers that were about to leave. Neither was a stoolie; their exit offered Cliff a chance to stroll out also. Cliff followed.

He knew that Badger would be jittery, and would not stay long at the pool room. The sooner that Cliff joined him, the better. He could then stall with Badger until he had a chance to contact either Hawkeye or The Shadow. In a pinch, he could accompany Badger to the crook's hide-out and thus learn its location.

Cliff's plan was a good one. Chance, however, was due to ruin it.

HARDLY had Cliff reached the stairs before he heard a shout from below. Framed in the doorway to the street was Badger. Two plain-clothes men had seized the crook; beyond them was the stocky figure of Joe Cardona. The acting inspector was alighting from a police car.

"It's the bulls!" yelled Badger. "They're grabbing me!"

The cry gained aid. Midway down the stairs were the two hoodlums who had preceded Cliff. They were the toughest of all who had been at Mulley's. More than that, they were thugs whom the law wanted; they had taken a big chance in appearing so publicly.

The two thought that the raid was coming to ensnare them. With ugly snarls, they whipped out revolvers and aimed for the detectives. Piling forward, they opened fire.

Badger writhed from the grasp of his captors. The detectives swung to meet the attack. They were late with their shots. A bullet winged one plain-clothes man and dropped him, wounded, upon the sidewalk.

Joe Cardona had whipped out a revolver. With a straight shot, he downed the nearer of the two thugs, who was aiming at the wounded detective. The other plain-clothes man leaped for the second ruffian; the fellow met him with a snarl and a quick aim. The detective was caught flat-footed, blocking Cardona's chance to fire.

A gun roared from the stairway. Cliff had pulled an automatic. His shot was accurate and timely. The aiming thug sank with a sickened groan; his gun arm fell. Gaining aim, the unscathed detective ripped bullets into his enemy.

Joe Cardona saw the result. He thought that the shot had come from a detective who had gained previous entry to Mulley's. Joe turned to look for Badger. Already, another had covered the fleeing

crook.

That was Detective-Sergeant Markham, still in the car. As Cardona saw Badger reach the corner, Markham fired. His bullet staggered Badger. The crook wobbled as he rounded the corner.

"Get him!" shouted Cardona. "Get him!"

Markham and the saved detective joined Cardona in the chase. But the trio was due for opposition, of a sort that they did not expect.

The thugs from the upstairs joint had come down to join a band across the street. Three crooks, slouched in a touring car, had seen the arrival of the police and the quick fight that had followed.

Wild with rage at the sight of their fallen pals, these thugs bounded from their car and zipped bullets at Cardona and his men. Joe gave a shout for cover. He and the others dived to doorways.

Cliff, at the bottom of the stairs, began quick fire at the crooks. Guns spoke from the opposite direction. Cliff wheeled and dropped back into the doorway.

Two mobsmen from some hangout had been attracted by the gunfire. They had spied Cliff; like Cardona, they had taken him for a detective. They were trying to drop The Shadow's agent.

Should they succeed, they would go through to get Cardona and his companions. It was Cliff's job to take out these newcomers.

Cliff bagged one with two quick shots. The other dropped behind a big ash can and peppered bullets toward the doorway. Cliff dropped back to cover just in time.

All during those swift seconds, bullets spattered about the street, while the staccato barks of revolvers awoke wild commotion. Cardona and his aids were at bay. In diving for their doorways, they had lost the advantage. Crooks were aiming for the kill.

A TAXICAB wheeled suddenly from somewhere. A fierce laugh sounded in the momentary lull. The thug by the ash can heard it; he hopped about, yelled wildly and aimed for the cab, which was coming in his direction. The crook's finger never pressed the trigger that it sought to tug.

Head and shoulders were looming from the cab. Burning eyes showed beneath the brim of a slouch hat; beneath them, gloved fists with ready automatics. Simultaneously, each .45 delivered a blistering tongue of flame. The aiming gunman withered.

On roared the cab. The thugs who had come from the touring car wheeled about to meet it. They had crossed the street; they were on the curb near the entrance to Mulley's upstairs tavern.

Viciously, the trio aimed. Moe Shrevnitz settled deep behind the wheel, as he jerked the cab into a sudden zigzag.

The mobsters had seen The Shadow. Their revolvers spat; slugs skimmed wide. Moe had tramped the accelerator as he hunched. His cab seemed almost to leap ahead of the aiming revolvers. But The Shadow, still stretched from the window, was too prepared to lose his aim.

His automatics jabbed new bullets and recoiled like the guns of a cruiser's turret. Each echoing stab was effective. Six shots occurred in quick succession; and with them, enemies faltered.

Two crooks went down, their revolvers clattering. The third, though wounded, held his feet.

The cab swung suddenly at the corner. The last of the murderous trio took aim. He was an open target for The Shadow; but the cloaked fighter did not fire. It was unnecessary.

Cardona, Markham and the detective were piling out from cover. Their revolvers delivered a barrage toward the aiming thug. The foiled killer slumped before they reached him.

The Shadow's laugh faded as the cab swung the corner. Cliff, sliding from his doorway, heard the grim mirth end. A crowd was piling down the stairs from Mulley's; but these arrivals wanted flight, not battle.

Cardona, turning, saw them scatter and let them go. Cliff headed rapidly away under cover of the dispersing throng.

COMMOTION reigned around the corner; but no one there connected Moe's cab with the fight. The Shadow had dropped back from the window. Through the front, he was searching for signs up ahead. His keen eyes spied what he wanted.

Nearly a block away, a hunched man was yanking open the door of a chance taxi. His hand was in his coat pocket, bunching the cloth to indicate a gun. It was Badger, intimidating a taximan, as he boarded the fellow's cab.

The other taxi shot away before Moe could overtake it. The Shadow saw it round a corner on two wheels. Badger's threat had gone over. The crook had gained a mode of flight, and was spurring his unwilling driver to the greatest possible speed.

A whispered order from The Shadow. Moe heard it and nodded. Up again behind the wheel, Moe was speeding to pursuit. Badger Griffin, wounded, was heading for his hide-out.

The Shadow was on Badger's trail.

CHAPTER XII. DYING WORDS

THE whole Manhattan police force seemed on hand to harass Badger's flight. That became evident by the time the fleeing cab had traveled a dozen blocks.

Sirens were whining everywhere. Joe Cardona had sped the alarm. The radio patrol was closing in to trap the escaping crook. Luck, however, seemed with Badger.

Badger was directing the driver whose cab he had commandeered. The hackie was twisting at almost every corner, swinging right or left, according to Badger's orders. Frightened for his life, the driver preferred reckless driving to a bullet in the back.

Though capable at pursuit, Moe Shrevnitz could make no headway. He was lucky even to keep the trail, which lengthened at intervals to more than a full block. As the cabs roared cross-town, a police car spied them. Half a minute later, Moe's cab was under pursuit.

The Shadow was in the middle of the trail. While Moe sought to close the distance between his cab and Badger's, the radio patrol was trying to overtake The Shadow. For a few moments, Moe was desperate; then a quiet laugh from the rear seat reassured him.

If Badger's cab kept up its speed, it would outdistance the patrol car. So would Moe, if he kept up the pace. If Badger's driver faltered, Moe would overtake him. The Shadow would attend to matters before the police arrived. The situation did not offer the hazard that had first impressed Moe.

Other patrol cars were swinging into the chase. So were taxis and private automobiles that had been

boarded by policemen and detectives. Yet Badger's luck had held; the wild ride had reached the uptown section of Lexington Avenue.

Then came the sudden finish. Swinging down a side street, Badger's cab stopped short at the crook's order. Half sprawling from the opened door, Badger made another gesture with his doubled-up pocket. It meant for the taxi to clear the vicinity. The driver sped away, as rapidly as he had carried Badger.

The crook was out of sight almost immediately. The cab, however, was spied by the passenger of another taxi that had come around the corner. Moe had closed the trail in time for The Shadow to know what had happened.

A whispered order. Moe slowed at the curb. The Shadow stepped from the cab; he merged with the blackness of a wall, while Moe rolled lazily ahead. Then came the roar of motors.

Patrol cars whizzed into sight. Standing in darkness, The Shadow watched them overhaul Moe beneath the ironwork of the Third Avenue elevated.

The Shadow had put his properties beneath the rear seat. Moe's cab had no occupant. The driver was making a good explanation. Apparently, he had merely chanced to be in this vicinity.

Then other police cars bobbed into sight along the avenue. The Shadow saw explanations being given. Moe's cab pulled away, freed. The Shadow knew precisely what had happened.

The taxi driver who had carried Badger had reported to the police. The net would soon close in upon the escaped thug.

A tiny flashlight glimmered. It was near the spot where Badger had alighted. Guarded by folds of The Shadow's cloak, the light glowed along the sidewalk. It showed a blob of crimson. Badger's blood.

The light glimmered on a wall; then it moved along and showed an opening. The guarded glow faded. The Shadow had found a passage. The headlights of a patrol car suddenly lighted the sidewalk. The Shadow was gone.

The police, when they alighted, did not spy the bloodstain. They were searching doorways, beneath steps, everywhere that a man might have hidden. Two bluecoats noticed the passage between buildings and began a hunt in that direction.

MEANWHILE, a light had been turned on in Badger's hide-out. The drawn window shade hid the glow from outside. The light, itself, showed an almost doubled figure. Badger was in agony; his lower lip had drooped.

Markham's bullet had clipped his left side. Badger's pressing hand was stained with blood, that dripped and formed splotches on the floor.

His right hand was in his coat pocket. He tugged it loose; the pocket itself turned inside out. Badger managed a grimace. His hand and his pocket were empty. He had carried no gun to Mulley's. His gesture toward the taxi driver had been a bluff.

A pang ended Badger's momentary chuckle. The crook faltered, clamped his side and steadied. He reached the closet; pulled open the door. With his right hand, he found a box on a hidden shelf behind the hanging clothes.

His hand came out, clutching a thick bundle of bank notes. Badger stuffed the money into his pocket.

He reached for the overcoat. From its pocket, he drew the revolver that he kept there. Steadying, he gripped the weapon with his right hand, while his left pressed more tightly against his side. Backing clumsily from the closet, Badger wheeled about, toward the door of the room.

He feared that invaders were close. His action indicated a willingness to shoot his way through a police cordon.

But Badger had not expected a particular foe to be close. The snarl that came from his lips was one of startlement. A tall figure was standing in the doorway. The door, itself, was open wide.

There, Badger saw The Shadow.

The mysterious avenger had arrived close behind his quarry. Silent in the doorway, he had observed every action that the crook had made. For some strange reason, The Shadow stood weaponless. One gloved hand rested on the doorknob; the other was against the side of the doorway.

Coincidentally, Badger, in turning, had aimed his revolver directly toward the door. Had he faced an armed policeman, the mobster would have fired. But sight of The Shadow overwhelmed him. Blazing eyes made the wounded crook falter. His gun hand wavered; sagged.

The Shadow made no utterance. Badger gasped; blinked his glassy eyes. For the first time, Badger realized that The Shadow gripped no weapon. Sheer terror had made him think that he was covered. Vaguely, he realized facts as they were.

For a moment, Badger's grip tightened upon his revolver. A product of the underworld, Badger was one who had bragged often that he would like the chance to gain a pot shot at The Shadow. But in this crisis, Badger failed.

The Shadow had expected it. He had viewed the weakness of the criminal; he knew that Badger's wound was mortal. There would be little chance for parley. The Shadow had placed his weapons beneath his cloak, counting upon the move to gain Badger's confidence.

But The Shadow had taken a risk. Badger might have fired through sheer desperation. But The Shadow had decided that the odds favored his plan. He had taken the chance; Badger was lulled. His last effort to raise his revolver ended—partly through weakness, partly through bewilderment.

POLICE whistles shrilled from somewhere outside. Badger gasped; panting, he began to sag.

The Shadow stepped forward. His right hand gripped the crook's shoulder. Still holding his revolver, Badger followed the guiding move and reached the tumble-down cot. He sank there, staring upward.

"There is time to speak!" pronounced The Shadow, his voice a sinister hiss. "To declare the next scheme of the murderer whose plans you have served!"

Badger's eyes glowered. An oath was upon his lips. He tried to raise his revolver.

"The murderer who sought your own death," added The Shadow, "because you knew too much concerning him."

Badger's lips froze. His eyes opened wider. Finding voice, he blurted the thought that The Shadow's words had instigated.

"He—he double-crossed me!"

The Shadow gave no answer. His gaze was fixed upon Badger's startled eyes. The crook snarled suddenly, "A double cross, nothing!" he ejaculated. "Sending the bulls to grab me! What—what good would that have done me? If I'd wised"— he panted for breath—"if I'd wised, I could have squawked. It—it wasn't a double-cross at all -"

"There were others," reminded The Shadow, in his steady whisper, "beside the police."

Badger gulped. Instinctively, he formed a nod.

"Them guys on the street—yeah, they were there—they were there to get me, maybe. I thought they was helping me. I get it. They was guys that was sent —to rub me out!"

Badger had seized upon The Shadow's suggestion. Keenly, The Shadow had used chance circumstances to his advantage. Gunplay had begun through the sheer accidental presence of trouble-making thugs.

The Shadow, following Badger, had decided that the lone crook did not know the facts. He had seen a way to gain Badger's confidence, by appearing weaponless; to press that advantage through a play on Badger's ignorance.

The Shadow's plan had worked. Badger's dying lips, twisted in pain, were ready to snarl information.

"YOU know the guy who double-crossed me," gulped Badger. "You—you want to get him—when he pulls his next job—to-night! The last job - the easy one —where he don't need to rub out anybody unless there's trouble."

The Shadow nodded as Badger paused. He knew that inquiry for a name would stop Badger short. The Shadow's nod was an urge. Badger gasped facts:

"He's going to get a guy named Sendry. Martin Sendry—in his office. Sendry will—will be there, maybe. He may get bumped if he is but he won't have to be—like the others -"

Badger had raised his head. The effort was too much. He fell back. His eyes closed. He muttered statements that were half incoherent— references to the killer who he thought had double-crossed him.

"He got Cleffard," mumbled Badger. "And Raskin. He—he had to rub them out. Maybe he'll bump Sendry—even if he don't have to. He—he had them get me—the double-crosser! Yeah, he -"

Badger's eyes opened. He saw The Shadow's burning gaze close to his own vision. A sudden change showed on Badger's lips. With agonized effort, the crook wrenched into action. The last vestiges of his strength were thrown into one furious effort.

Badger had guessed the truth; guessed it through The Shadow's close interest. To him came the realization that The Shadow wanted the name of the murderer. With that assumption, Badger gained a sudden knowledge.

He knew that he had not been double-crossed. The Shadow had bluffed him into revealing the scene of coming crime. One moment more, and Badger would have babbled the name of the murderer—a name which he thought The Shadow knew.

Instead, Badger whipped toward the wall with the lashing speed of a rattlesnake. Rolling, he jabbed his revolver straight for The Shadow's eyes. In dying desperation, he tugged at the trigger. But a gloved hand shot forth with a swiftness that equaled Badger's.

The Shadow's hand clamped the crook's gun wrist. The aiming swing jolted backward. Badger fired as

he received the recoil of The Shadow's counterthrust. The searing flame of the gun went wide of The Shadow's head. It scorched the side of The Shadow's hat brim, and the bullet buried itself in the ceiling.

For a moment, Badger was rigid. Then his tightened muscles yielded. From his lips came a final gurgle. The rickety cot quaked as it took the dead weight of Badger's crumpled frame.

The Shadow's quiz was ended. Badger Griffin was dead.

THE SHADOW swung to the center of the room. Badger's gun, lost by his loosened fingers, went clattering from the edge of the cot. That sound meant nothing to The Shadow. He was listening to shouts outdoors.

The police had closed in tightly. Soon they would have found the hide-out through blind search. But the revolver shot had directed their hunt. Officers were below the window, heading for the door that led upstairs.

Delay would prove disastrous to The Shadow's plans. He had one chance of exit. Springing from the room, he saw a stairway that led upward. He took it, and reached the third floor while the police were pounding to the second.

The Shadow saw an open room. It was empty; he made for the window. Swinging out into darkness, he took advantage of the excitement below. Calls were coming that Badger had been found. No vigilant eyes were toward the third floor.

A projecting roof edge showed above the window. Leaning outward, The Shadow stretched up and gripped the ledge. His body swung like a pendulum; then drew straight upward as his strong arms functioned.

The city's glow showed the shrouded figure on the roof moving in speedy glide, toward other housetops well away from the area that the police had invested.

The Shadow had finished one quest. He was on his way to find a murderer.

Twice, crime had struck despite The Shadow. He would meet the next stroke when it came.

CHAPTER XIII. THE STAGE IS SET

SWIFT events had consumed no more than a scant hour. It was just past eight o'clock when The Shadow appeared in the vicinity of Times Square. No one would have recognized him; his guise was unusual.

To-night, The Shadow had donned special make-up for his search through the bad lands. His face bore only a slight resemblance to the countenance of Lamont Cranston. Though masklike, it lacked the calmness that The Shadow so frequently preferred.

His features were squarer; more mobile. Only a slight contortion was required to give them hardness. Thus The Shadow posed as either respectable pedestrian or tough-faced thug, according to the places where his search had taken him.

Across his arm, The Shadow was carrying what appeared to be a folded top coat. It was actually his cloak, with the slouch hat buried beneath it. He was wearing a dark-gray felt hat, as flexible as the black headpiece which he had concealed.

On the side street, The Shadow stopped, glanced at his watch; then looked for a cab. A hackie spied

him; but before the fellow could drive up, The Shadow had stepped into a nearer taxi. There was method in his choice. The cab that he was taking was Moe Shrevnitz's.

Moe gaped when he heard the quiet-voiced passenger give a destination. It was not long ago that he had left The Shadow in an area where a tight police cordon was forming. Yet The Shadow had moved from the law-surrounded district and was here at the corner.

Moreover, the cab driver could guess that The Shadow had accomplished his mission of locating Badger Griffin.

Driving northward, Moe speculated on The Shadow's amazing ability. Considering the past, the taxi driver remembered how he himself had once been saved from death through The Shadow's intervention. That had been Moe's first meeting with his chief. Afterward, Moe had been reminded of his adventure by Harry Vincent, who had sworn Moe into the service.

One reason, only, had apparently caused The Shadow to choose Moe as an aid. The superchief always picked men whose lives he had saved. Harry—Cliff—Hawkeye—all could recite stories such as Moe's.

THE SHADOW had given an address on Broadway, above Ninety-sixth Street. It was twenty minutes past eight when the cab pulled up in front of a small real-estate office which could be entered only from the lobby of an old-fashioned office building.

The Shadow alighted, carrying a briefcase into which he had stuffed his black cloak and hat. He gave Moe instructions to remain in the vicinity. He studied the name on the plate-glass window of the office. It read:

MARTIN SENDRY

Real Estate

Passing through the lobby, The Shadow entered the lighted office. The place was empty, but a door stood ajar. The Shadow heard a querulous voice call from the inner office:

"Come in!"

The Shadow entered a room as large as the front office. Its walls were lined with large filing cabinets, conspicuously marked with the dates of years. There was one space: a window that led to an areaway.

A small, rotund man sat behind a large desk. He was middle-aged; his eyes looked owlsh through their big spectacles.

"My name," introduced The Shadow, briskly, "is Henry Arnaud. I came to rent a house. I want one in a quiet section."

Sendry turned to a filing cabinet behind him; one that bore no dates. While he looked through it, he asked:

"How did you happen to come to me?"

"Your name was referred to me by a friend."

"Hm-m-m!" Sendry was fumbling in the files. "If my secretary were only here, this would be simple. But I am always alone at night."

"Suppose I come back to-morrow. I have an appointment that I must keep to-night."

Sendry turned around. He said that he stayed open until midnight; that he could go through the lists later, and have a selection ready when Mr. Arnaud returned. Casually, The Shadow shifted the subject.

"You keep many records," he remarked, looking at the filing cabinets. "They must prove very useful."

"They are, Mr. Arnaud," said Sendry, pleased that his system was admired. "I file every lease, every document, according to years. The files are subdivided into months. I never index names; but tell me an address of a house or an apartment, I can check its rental periods. Under the proper year and month, I find all needed information."

"Hardly complete," was Arnaud's objection. "Suppose I should rent a house from you, and two years from now, some one would inquire about me. What could you tell him?"

"Nothing!" snapped Sendry. Then, with a smile: "It saves me a great deal of annoyance, Mr. Arnaud, this policy of paying no attention to names."

The Shadow smiled. He had good reason. He had learned why Sendry's life was not as deeply endangered as those of Cleffard and Raskin. If documents bearing a name were stolen from this office, Sendry would not be able to tell what name had appeared on them.

"Of course," declared Sendry, "if some one asked about a particular house, I would have to search through each year's record in order to find the names of all the lessees. But that would not be difficult."

The Shadow arose. He looked toward the outer office.

"May I use your telephone, Mr. Sendry?" he inquired. "Perhaps I can arrange to cancel my appointment."

"Certainly, sir. Use this one, on my desk -"

"I might disturb you. I can use the one in the other office."

IN one sense, Sendry's position was secure. The Shadow knew that theft from his office would involve only a forgotten record, taken from a particular file. Contrarily, Sendry was in danger.

Theft was due to-night. The man's presence here might irk the murderer. Life was cheap to that criminal. With two previous killings registered, he would probably not shirk a third.

The Shadow's telephone call was designed as a protective measure in behalf of Sendry. On the realtor's desk, The Shadow had noticed a letter from Philadelphia; one that bore a registered stamp. He had also read the name of the concern that had sent the letter.

The Shadow called Burbank on the outer telephone. He mentioned the name on the envelope. Returning, he told Sendry that his friend was out; but that he would call back.

Sendry nodded. He was going through the house listings.

Ten minutes of nine brought a clatter from the outer office. A telegraph messenger was bringing a yellow envelope. Sendry signed.

"From Jennings Company!" he exclaimed. "They want me in Philadelphia. Odd that they said nothing about it in the letter."

"Very important?" queried Arnaud.

"Yes," replied Sendry. "I am handling some leases for them. There is a train at nine-thirty. I must rush for it. Suppose you call to-morrow, Mr. Arnaud."

While Sendry was putting things away, Arnaud strolled to the outer room. He opened the glass-paneled door. Wadding a slip of paper, he wedged it into the latch-socket. Sendry came out to draw down a large green window shade that completely covered the plate-glass window fronting the street.

As they went out, Sendry wiggled the outer doorknob to make sure that it was latched. The Shadow waited in the building lobby while Sendry closed the door. The owlish man peered back through the glass panel; but to no purpose. If he had left anything, he couldn't see it, for he had extinguished the lights.

In Arnaud's fashion, The Shadow signaled. Moe's cab wheeled from across the street. As Sendry bustled out, Arnaud halted him.

"Here is a cab, Mr. Sendry. It will get you to the Pennsylvania Station."

"Ah! Thank you, Mr. Arnaud. If you are coming my direction -"

"Sorry. I am taking the northbound subway."

Sendry was aboard the cab. The Shadow gave a signal that brought a nod from the driver. Moe was to take special care of this passenger.

THERE was a drug store a half block distant. The Shadow went there and put in a call to Burbank. He received reports from Cliff and Hawkeye. Both were significant.

Cliff had dropped in to see Kale Bewer. The big-shot had already received news of Badger's death. It had been learned almost instantly throughout the underworld. Though Kale lived in a better section of the city, he had plenty of contacts to pass him the information.

Kale was entertaining friends. His chief topic of conversation was a denial of any close acquaintanceship with Badger Griffin.

Cliff had managed to stroll out and report to Burbank. He had gone back to Kale's. But he could be summoned simply by a telephone call. Cliff had told Kale that he expected one.

Hawkeye was lounging at a small restaurant near Kale's apartment. He could be reached immediately. The Shadow gave instructions.

Hawkeye to go to Penn Station and contact Moe. The two to ride back and pick up Cliff. Burbank was to call Cliff and summon him, timing the call so that Cliff could make a quick connection near Kale's.

Then to the building that housed Sendry's office. The Shadow wanted agents stationed where they could watch for entrants at the side or rear.

It was three minutes after nine when The Shadow arrived back at the office building. He had lost no time, following his call to Burbank.

Moving into an obscure corner of the lobby, he opened his briefcase. From it, he drew hat and cloak. Donning these, he folded the briefcase and attached it to his body beneath his cloak.

A slight click of the doorknob was sufficient to enter Sendry's office. The latch had barely caught. The Shadow removed the wadding from the latch-socket. He closed the door silently.

The Shadow had calculated that Moe would reach the Pennsylvania Station by five minutes after nine. Hawkeye, near an Eighth Avenue subway station, would have just time to catch him there. By nine-fifteen, Cliff would be with them; nine-thirty, all would be here.

Moe was a speedy driver, however. He might make the round trip more quickly, if traffic proved clear.

The stage was set. All would be ready for the murderer. The Shadow was prepared for final vigil. But even as he paused by the drawn shade of Sendry's front window, The Shadow sensed that crime was coming early.

Motionless, the black-cloaked fighter paused in a silence broken only by muffled clock-ticks from Sendry's inner office.

CHAPTER XIV. SHOTS FOR THE SHADOW

THE only light which invaded Sendry's outer office was a trickle from the glass-paned door that opened into the lobby. The glow from that source was fitful. It was produced by the blink of an electric sign atop a Broadway hotel.

That sign was one with creeping letters that slowly formed a name, then burst into a blaze of bulbs. After that, it went almost black. The creeping glow gave no sign of The Shadow. Only the final burst produced sufficient gleam to outline the black-clad watcher.

Between the outer and the inner office was a door with frosted panel. Sendry had closed it before departure. That was why the clock-ticks sounded muffled. The Shadow had heard nothing from within; but he had spied a momentary flicker of light against the frosted panel of the connecting door.

Some one was entering Sendry's inner office. There was only one route by which the intruder could come: through the little window from the areaway.

To get there, he must have prowled through some other office—one that offered access to the areaway itself. The Shadow listened; he heard a scraping sound. The window of the inner office was being opened.

It was only ten minutes after nine. The Shadow decided to wait. He had counted on his agents. Moreover, it was well to let the invader search for what he wanted. If he took longer than fifteen minutes, it would fit with The Shadow's own plans.

The intruder was in the office. His flashlight was busy; it indicated his actions. The Shadow could tell that he was running the light along the files that were numbered with back years.

Meanwhile, the hotel sign delivered one of its lengthy-spaced flares. The brief brilliance showed The Shadow close to the closed connecting door. Four seconds later, all was darkness. Distant lights were resuming their slow creep.

Three minutes passed. The Shadow could hear the opening of file cabinets, while the flashlight blinked and moved. Then the light dwindled and steadied. The intruder had found the file that he wanted.

A pause. A full two minutes. New blinks; new motion. The man in the other room was moving toward the window. He had found the file that he wanted. He had taken the papers that he sought.

Quarter past nine. With luck, the agents might arrive at any time, for The Shadow had figured nine-thirty as the dead line. A delay would help. Moreover, The Shadow wanted action. By rights, the man in the other room should be the murderer whom he sought. The Shadow needed proof.

Another blaze from the far-off sign. It showed The Shadow resting his hand upon the knob of the connecting door. That barrier opened to the left. The window of Sendry's inner room was in the same direction.

THE light blaze finished. The Shadow turned the knob silently, then with a clatter as he swung the door toward himself. Instantly, a flashlight went black at the window.

A momentary pause. No sound but the louder ticking of the clock. Then The Shadow piped a querulous question, in a falsetto which passed perfectly for Sendry's:

"Who's there?"

No voice responded. Again, The Shadow spoke; still in the same pitch:

"Come! Answer! Answer—or I fire!"

One half second intervened. Then came the reply. Not by voice, but by the roar of a gun.

Tongues of flame spat from the window. Bullets, dispatched in rapid fire, zipped squarely for the center of the doorway where The Shadow had issued his first testy question.

With the echoes came a cry. The Shadow had started new words in Sendry's tone. They ended with a shriek, the thud of a sprawling body. The Shadow had stretched his length upon the floor of the outer office.

No living person could have received that hail of well-directed steel and still survive. The murderer did not wait longer, after his proof of identity. A clatter from the window of the inner office told that he had leaped to the areaway.

At that instant, the blaze of the hotel sign was repeated. Its glare showed The Shadow lying in the outer office; but at an unexpected spot. He was not in front of the connecting door. He lay to the left, fully six feet from the space through which the barrage had come.

Though motionless, The Shadow held an unusual position. His head was not against the floor; it was raised, in listening pose. Moreover, his right hand was ready. It gripped an automatic, which it pointed toward the connecting doorway.

Had the murderer decided to view Sendry's body, he would have found a living enemy. The Shadow had shifted after his first query. He had delivered his later words from a position just left of the doorway. With ventriloquial effect amid the darkness, he had deceived the murderer.

Positive that Sendry was in the doorway, the killer had loosed his shots. Deceived by The Shadow's position, he was sure that he had left a riddled corpse where a living man had been. The Shadow's well-timed shriek had completed the illusion.

A SECOND window clatter followed the first. It was more muffled. The blaze from the sign showed The Shadow rising; then the light blinked off. The Shadow knew that the murderer had reached an office on the other side of the areaway. It was time to follow.

The Shadow had no intention of letting the murderer know that his bullets had been futile. On that

account, he paused long enough to shine a tiny flashlight toward the front of the outer office.

Bullets had imbedded themselves in plaster; one, partly deflected by a radiator pipe, had ricocheted to the floor below the window. The Shadow picked up the warped slug.

Cutting through the inner office, he found the window open. He crossed the areaway and made clear entrance to an empty office.

The killer had closed the door. The Shadow opened it; he heard a door slam from the back of the building. With a swift, space-gaining stride, The Shadow continued the pursuit, his movement barely audible.

The Shadow found the outer door. It opened into a cement-paved passage behind the building. With one quick glance, The Shadow saw an escaping figure as it reached the side street. Then a man lunged into view; he grappled with the fugitive.

Arms flailed. The murderer sent his adversary sprawling and leaped beyond the corner of the rear building. The Shadow saw the downed man roll into the passage, just as a gun spoke from beyond.

Coming through toward the street, The Shadow recognized the blocker. It was Cliff Marsland. Unlucky in the quick fray, Cliff had at least flung himself to safety.

At the sidewalk, The Shadow saw the fugitive murderer leap into a cab. The taxi wheeled away, rounding the corner before The Shadow could fire.

From the other direction, Moe's cab sped up. The Shadow shoved Cliff in and followed. Whizzing for the corner, Moe sped out into Broadway.

The Shadow had gripped a police whistle that lay beneath a corner of the floor mat. He saw the other cab cutting wide past traffic. He delivered a whistle blast that could be heard for blocks.

Moe stepped on the gas. Again, a chase was on.

Another shrill burst of the whistle urged the fleeing cab to greater speed. Cliff, seated by The Shadow, understood his chief's purpose. The Shadow wanted the murderer to think that the law was trying to block his get-away. He would believe that Cliff was a plainclothes man who had heard the shots in Sendry's office.

THE fleeing cab was heading northward. The murderer had adopted the same tactics that Badger Griffin had used earlier in the evening. But his threat seemed greater than Badger's; his methods proved smarter. The cab swung a corner; when Moe came up, it was stopped there. A shaky driver was stepping to the curb.

"Question him," ordered The Shadow.

Cliff thrust his head from the window and quizzed gruffly:

"Which way did he go?"

"Through there." The trembling driver pointed to an apartment house. "He was out while I was stoppin'; I didn't have no chanct to lamp him. There's a hack stand on the next street."

The Shadow passed an order to Moe. The cab shot forward, rounded the corner and into the next street. There were no cabs in front of the apartment house. The murderer had found a lone one. He had

grabbed it without threat and made departure.

This spot was five blocks from Sendry's. All had been quiet here; the cab at the stand had taken the killer as an ordinary passenger.

There was no doorman at the antiquated apartment house. The murderer had known that fact, apparently. He had played a bold game and made a get-away.

Moe cruised about the neighborhood at The Shadow's order. While the hackie sought the lost trail, Cliff reported:

"I got the call at Kale's. Just as he was saying good night and getting ready to turn in. Kale didn't suspect anything when I left. The cab was at the corner.

"Moe made it speedy, getting up to Sendry's. He dropped me at one corner; then took Hawkeye to another. He was coming back when the fellow popped out of the passage.

"I made a grab; but I never had a chance to see his face. He was lucky when he took a swing at me. I ducked and lost my footing. I don't think he would have been tough, if I had managed to hold him."

The cab had reached Broadway. There was no sign of any suspicious taxi. The Shadow gave an order; the cab drew up to the curb.

Calmly, the cloaked sleuth stepped forth into the night. Moe pulled away, with Cliff. They were to pick up Hawkeye and contact Burbank.

AS the cab rolled off, a laugh sounded in the secluded gloom. Cliff heard weird, fading tones. He detected triumph in the mirth. Despite the failure to overtake the murderer, The Shadow had expressed his satisfaction.

The answer, perhaps, might have been found in the rays of The Shadow's flashlight, which gleamed beside a flight of old stone steps upon the silent street. The gleam showed The Shadow's gloved left hand. In the palm lay the bullet that The Shadow had picked up in Sendry's outer office.

Two bullets had matched. The ones that had killed Cleffard and Raskin had both come from the same .38. This bullet differed. The Shadow needed no microscope to ascertain that fact. Though battered, its size was apparent. It had been fired from a .32 revolver.

The murderer had adopted a new ruse. He had picked another gun. Was that because he had read the newspaper reports of identical bullets? Or was it because of what Badger had said tonight: that murder would not occur unless Sendry interfered with theft?

The Shadow did not hold the complete answer; but he had gained a clue that might be useful. His possession of this bullet told why he had deliberately drawn the murderer's fire. He had wanted the man to perform actions that were not originally intended.

That was sufficient for the present. The Shadow's next task would begin at eleven o'clock. That was when a man would arrive with needed facts. Eleven was when Ludlow Rhyde would arrive at Grand Central aboard the six-o'clock limited from Boston.

CHAPTER XV. AT THE TERMINAL

THE clock above the Grand Central Terminal information booth showed the time as being close to eleven. Near a corner of the vast concourse, Curtiss Haslock and Phil Yarnall were waiting at an

incoming train gate. The train was due in ten minutes; but Yarnall was showing uncurbed impatience.

"You should have let me go up to Stamford at nine-thirty," said the society man. "I could have boarded Lud's train when it reached there at ten twenty-five. I could have ridden in with him and -"

"All that is beside the point, Yarnall," interposed Haslock, testily. "The train has already reached the 125th Street station. It will be here in a few minutes. Besides, the police commissioner is to join us."

Haslock looked about. He saw a well-dressed man standing near. He noted a rugged, almost hawkish countenance. The lawyer's gaze met sharp eyes. There was a keenness in the stranger's glance.

Yarnall interrupted Haslock's stare. The lawyer forgot the hawkish man and turned to see another arrival, who approached with military stride. Haslock recalled photographs of the police commissioner. A few moments later, he was shaking hands with Weston. After that, he introduced Yarnall.

"I intended to send Inspector Cardona to 125th Street," announced Weston, "but he was investigating gunplay at a Broadway real-estate office. So I sent Sergeant Markham to come in with Rhyde -"

Weston broke off. Haslock was looking nervously at the hawkish man near the train gate. That individual had overheard the conversation. He stepped forward to introduce himself.

"Cranston!" exclaimed Weston. Then, his face confused: "I beg your pardon! I mistook you for some one else -"

"That's all right, commissioner," interrupted the hawkish man. "My name is Bailey. Special detective for the New Haven Railroad. Detective-sergeant Markham arranged for me to be here."

The news irked Weston. It wasn't Markham's job to arrange for a railway dick to be on duty. Nevertheless, the commissioner decided that Bailey could remain. A pleased smile formed on the lips of the supposed detective. It meant more than Weston realized.

This stranger was The Shadow. He was wearing the same guise as at Sendry's. The mellow light of the terminal, coupled with The Shadow's undisguised height, had caused Weston to think of Cranston. Seeing his face more closely, Weston had rejected the resemblance.

That result was a tribute to The Shadow's ability at make-up. By a clever introduction, The Shadow had won an opportunity to watch with the others at the train gate.

THE train pulled in. Rhyde arrived; saw Haslock and Yarnall. He joined them. Harry Vincent appeared a moment later; he set a suitcase near the train gate and began to mop his forehead with a handkerchief.

A few seconds later, Sergeant Markham arrived. He hadn't been quite sure of Rhyde's identity; but seeing the commissioner, Markham gave a bluff smile and joined the group.

Harry heard an undertone beside him:

"Report!"

Harry thrust a folded envelope into a waiting hand. Again, The Shadow spoke:

"Await instructions!"

That meant for Harry to go to his hotel. Picking up the suitcase, he strode away with the last of the passengers.

The Shadow strolled over and joined the group. No one had noticed his momentary pause near Harry Vincent. As Bailey, The Shadow had an inconspicuous pose.

Weston was too concerned with other matters to question Markham regarding the presence of a railway detective. As The Shadow expected, the commissioner was ready to suggest an immediate departure. Weston prefaced it by turning to Rhyde.

"We want to talk with you," Weston told the young man. "Mr. Haslock says that you have information for us. Facts regarding a man who -"

Weston paused of his own volition. Haslock inserted a suggestion.

"Suppose we go to my home," said the lawyer. "We can talk privately there. Mr. Rhyde can tell you how the matter began—with blackmail. He can name the man concerned."

To Rhyde, Haslock added:

"Your telegram suggested caution. Furthermore, the story is yours to tell, Ludlow. I am your counselor. I can only advise, as I did before."

Rhyde looked somewhat reassured. There was a trace of worry on his face; he had worn it since his arrival. He explained his anxiety.

"I've been worried," he told the group, "for fear that new crime might occur. We must talk all this over, promptly!"

That suited Weston. He turned to Sergeant Markham.

"Come with us," ordered the commissioner. "But first call that office where Cardona is and tell him to remain there. Until he hears from me."

As Markham started for a telephone, Weston turned to the others and added:

"Inspector Cardona is my best investigator. If there is need for prompt action, I can send him upon it, the moment that we have concluded our conference."

THE SHADOW, while listening to the conversation, had calmly opened the envelope that he had received from Harry Vincent. It contained a coded message, which Harry had written on railway stationery in the lounge car.

Briefly, it told that Harry had looked for Rhyde in the diner, but had not seen him there. Nor had Rhyde appeared in the lounge car. Harry had feared that he had met with harm in Boston, because the man had hours to catch his train.

At last, Harry had guessed the truth. Rhyde had reserved the drawing room of a parlor car and was keeping out of sight. From then on, Harry had managed strolls back and forth through the train, hoping to see a closed door open.

He had finally located Rhyde. When the train was leaving Connecticut, with half an hour more before it reached Manhattan, Rhyde had come from his drawing room just as Harry was entering the car. He had gone to the lounge and had remained there for the rest of the journey.

Harry had compiled his report while seated at a desk only a few feet from Rhyde's chair. He had held it open as long as possible; hence he had been able to add a brief notation stating that Markham had come

aboard at 125th Street.

No one saw the lines that The Shadow scanned. The writing faded. The Shadow crumpled the paper and thrust it in his pocket. He faced Weston, just as the commissioner turned in his direction.

"Thank you for being on hand, Mr. Bailey," declared the commissioner. "There is nothing else for which we shall need you."

Markham had arrived to report on his call to Cardona. Weston gestured; Rhyde, Haslock and Yamall followed him toward the taxi entrance. The Shadow stood alone.

Straight lips phrased an inaudible laugh. The Shadow knew where the conference would be held. He had learned Haslock's name; to learn the address would be easy. But The Shadow did not intend an immediate trip to Haslock's.

He knew that there a name would be revealed; by either Rhyde or Haslock—the name of a man unknown either to The Shadow or the law. That man would be a suspect in the murders of Cleffard and Raskin.

Commissioner Weston would act. He had already indicated what he would do. He would call his ace, Joe Cardona, and order him to make an arrest. Whether Cardona succeeded or failed would depend upon finding the man.

As in the case of Badger Griffin. The Shadow could gain results by being ahead of the law. He could do that as he had before: by starting from scratch with Cardona and outdistancing the case in the quest.

WALKING briskly from the train gate, The Shadow reached a telephone booth and put in a call to Burbank. He asked for a report; the contact man announced that Burke was at Sendry's with Cardona.

Another agent had entered the case. Clyde Burke, reporter for the New York Classic, had been informed of the shooting in the real-estate office and had gone there. He was the very man whom The Shadow could use in this emergency.

Leaving the terminal, The Shadow took the subway shuttle train to Times Square. A few blocks' walk brought him to the street where Moe Shrevnitz was lined up with hackies who were awaiting the after-theater trade.

The Shadow stepped into Moe's cab and gave a destination.

The address that he gave was directly across Broadway from the real-estate office of Martin Sendry.

CHAPTER XVI. BURIED EVIDENCE

LUDLOW RHYDE spoke tensely from beside the desk in Haslock's study, while Commissioner Weston faced him from the other side. Haslock was behind the desk; Phil Yamall was near the door.

"I served a term for manslaughter," declared Rhyde, soberly. "In a motor crash, I killed a man named James Silven -"

"I explained that to the commissioner," interrupted Haslock. "Let me tell him the rest." Turning, the lawyer told Weston: "Silven, it appears, may have been Dennis Carston, another claimant for the estate which Rhyde inherited."

Rhyde sank back, relieved. The ice was broken. Weston recognized the young man's position, and sympathized with him. His tone was friendly when he said:

"Proceed."

"A former friend told me those facts," explained Rhyde. "His name is Herbert Widdington. He said certain persons possessed evidence that would prove Silven to be Carston. He wanted to acquire that data for me. The price set by Widdington was one hundred thousand dollars."

Weston's jaw set hard. Haslock saw it. The lawyer was prompt with his comment:

"I termed it blackmail, commissioner. I advised Ludlow to ignore the matter."

"You were right," asserted Weston. "Quite right!"

Rhyde spoke more easily.

"That was on Tuesday," he explained. "On Wednesday, I boarded the Paulina, at ten o'clock in the evening."

"I drove you there," drawled Yarnall, "and the rest of us barged in at midnight."

"Thursday morning," resumed Rhyde, "I read of Cleffard's death. I learned that Cleffard had once owned the Paulina; but that did not seem important. At eight o'clock, Thursday night, we sailed for Boston on the yacht."

This time, Yarnall inserted a correction.

"You left at eight," he told Rhyde. "A few of us went to the rodeo and drove for Boston afterward. Got there at four-thirty in the morning, and slept until nearly noon. We were at breakfast, Lud, when you came in from the Paulina to meet us at the Fenway Hotel."

Rhyde nodded. He was anxious to go further with his account.

"I read of Raskin's death," he told Weston, "and learned that he had known my stepfather. That's why I told Yarnall to drive to New York; and wired Mr. Haslock. With both Cleffard and Raskin dead, I suspected Widdington of murder."

"I understand," said the commissioner. "So you sent your guests on their cruise and came in by the six-o'clock train. You have told me enough, Rhyde. We must apprehend Widdington. Where can he be located?"

Rhyde looked to Haslock, with the query: "Don't you have Widdington's address?"

The lawyer shook his head. Rhyde fished in his pockets; found some folded papers. On one of them, he had written Widdington's address. He read it aloud:

"Morningdale Apartments. But no street address."

Looking through the telephone directory, Haslock found the address of the Morningdale Apartments, read it off to Weston; then added:

"Near Lexington Avenue."

"Let me have the telephone," ordered Weston, briskly. "Meanwhile, Mr. Haslock, look up the office telephone number of Martin Sendry, on Broadway."

AT Sendry's, Joe Cardona was glowering moodily in the outer office. Detectives were standing by; so

were a few reporters. They had gained easy admittance to the place, for there had been no actual murder.

Cardona was juggling a bullet, pried from the wall.

"It doesn't hook up with the murders of Cleffard and Raskin," asserted the ace. "The killer used a .38 on those jobs. Here, some fellow pumped away with a .32, and didn't hit anybody."

"He must have been jittery," put in a reporter. "Maybe he was firing at a shadow."

"There was nothing here to steal," added Cardona. "Unless it was old records. But I'm worried about one thing: We can't locate Martin Sendry. If -"

The telephone bell began to jangle. Cardona turned a sour look toward a wiry, keen-faced reporter.

"If that's for you, Burke," he announced, "I'll throw you out! You had one call come here from your office. One's too many!"

"If it's for me, Joe," grinned the reporter, "tell them that I've gone. That will save you the trouble of bouncing me."

He edged toward the door as he spoke. With hand on the knob, Clyde Burke waited, ready for immediate exit. Cardona picked up the telephone. His response was a growl, that softened immediately:

"Yes, commissioner..." Cardona was nodding as he spoke. "Yes, I've waited here to hear from you. What was the name? Willingham?... I see; Widdington. Two d's... Herbert Widdington, Morningdale Apartments... Right away, commissioner..."

As Cardona hung up, he looked quickly toward the door, to see it closing. Burke was gone. Cardona smiled. Clyde was the only reporter whom Joe could not bluff.

The ace began to write down Widdington's name and address, while reporters clustered close:

"What's up, Joe?"

"Not a thing," growled Cardona. "The commissioner just gave me the name of one of Sendry's friends. Sendry is over there, all upset because his place was entered. I'm going over to see him. I'll be back. You fellows stay here."

"You'll call us if there's anything new?"

"Sure! But it's nothing. I don't want a pack of you at my heels, when I'm only going to tell a fellow that his place is all safe."

Meanwhile, Clyde had crossed Broadway to a parked taxi. He started to enter. The driver poked his head into view. "Sorry, sir. This cab is taken."

It was Moe Shrevnitz. Clyde gave Widdington's name and address in an undertone. He had heard Cardona's words from the office door.

Moe nodded. An approving whisper came from the rear of the cab.

Clyde stepped back. The taxi shot away. Clyde strolled a little distance; then watched the lobby of Sendry's building.

Two minutes later, Joe Cardona appeared, followed by two detectives but without accompanying reporters. Clyde watched the trio stroll to the corner and enter a police car.

Cardona had been deliberate, because of the reporters being present. The Shadow had gained at least a full four-minute leeway. The taxi was speedy. The advantage would be increased. Clyde grinned in pleased fashion as he walked toward a subway entrance.

It was approximately midnight when Moe's cab stopped in front of the Morningdale. A doorman was just ending duty; he was pushing back a row of potted shrubbery when he heard a question from the gloom beside him. The doorman responded, half turning:

"Mr. Widdington's apartment? On the eighth floor, sir. No. 8 D. I am not sure that he has come in, sir -"

The questioner was gone. The doorman caught a glimpse of a tall, striding figure entering the lobby. The visitor was carrying a briefcase.

The elevator man let a passenger off at the eighth floor. There, The Shadow quickly donned his garb of black. With a long, thin key, he began to probe the lock of 8 D.

The task required no longer than a minute. The Shadow had effective measures for such locks. He entered Widdington's apartment, to find it dark. The Shadow turned on the light.

With the door closed, he eyed the apartment. Looking for odd hiding places, The Shadow made a lucky find. He saw a sofa, with its thick cushions set three in a row. One end cushion was slightly askew.

The Shadow raised the cushion. He caught a glimmer from beneath the arm of the sofa. With gloved hand, he drew a revolver into view. The weapon was a .38 that had been well polished, probably to remove traces of finger prints.

The Shadow cracked it open. The gun was fully loaded; but its barrel told that it had been fired and had not been cleaned.

The Shadow replaced the revolver and put the sofa cushion over it. He turned toward the door; then stopped. He could hear the rumble of the elevator.

Was it Widdington or the police?

The Shadow sensed that the car was coming to the eighth floor. If it brought Widdington, time would be too short to quiz the man. That opportunity was lost when The Shadow had not found Widdington at home.

If the police were aboard the elevator, The Shadow did not want to be found. He had no desire for a meeting here with Joe Cardona.

The Shadow turned out the light. He swung toward the kitchenette. It contained a stove, sink and cabinet. The last was of strong construction; but it had not been built into the kitchenette. Its top was three feet short of the high ceiling.

The Shadow mounted the stove, caught the side of the cabinet and wedged himself upward and forward. His cloaked figure moved horizontally into the low space between the cabinet and the ceiling. Black within blackness, The Shadow lay hidden.

The elevator had stopped. A key rattled in the door. A sallow, mustached man stood in view the moment, that he turned on the lights. The Shadow knew that this must be Herbert Widdington.

CLOSING the door, Widdington paced back and forth. He stopped when he heard the noise of the elevator; then clenched his fists and tried to forget his nervousness.

The sound of the elevator stopped. Widdington tensed as he heard the muffled chug of its door. Then came a knock upon this own door; a voice that Widdington recognized:

"Mr. Widdington!"

Widdington hesitated.

"Letter for you, Mr. Widdington! It was on the elevator, but I forgot to give it to you!"

Widdington eased. He knew the elevator operator's voice. The mention of a letter lulled him. He opened the door of the apartment. An instant later, The Shadow saw him come sprawling backward, to land upon the sofa.

Joe Cardona had arrived. He and his two detectives were holding revolvers, flashing badges. They had used the elevator man as a blind. Entering, they had hurled Widdington back; now they had him covered.

"What—what's this?" spluttered Widdington. "I've—I've—I'm doing nothing! I've been to the movies -"

Detectives hauled the prisoner to his feet, frisked him, but found no weapon. They let Widdington sag back on the sofa. They began a search of the apartment, while Cardona kept Widdington covered.

The apartment was sparsely furnished. Table drawers, bookshelves brought nothing. The detectives overturned chairs; pulled up the rugs; then began to poke into the doors and shelves of the kitchen cabinet.

One man started to climb up on the stove, to investigate the top of the cabinet. The Shadow tightened. He had not expected that the search would come this far. Widdington's chance occupancy of the sofa had worked ill.

It was Joe Cardona who unwittingly relieved The Shadow's dilemma. The ace growled to the clambering detective:

"What's the idea, Kerry?"

"Looking up here, inspector," the man replied. "We've looked every where else."

"YOU have? Guess again. Look here!"

With one hand, Cardona wrenched Widdington up from the sofa; with his revolver, he motioned toward the cushions. Kerry and the other detective hopped to the sofa. They hurled away the cushions. Kerry uttered an exclamation.

Out from the spot where The Shadow had replaced it, Kerry drew the .38 and held it up for Cardona's approval.

Buried evidence had been found by the law.

CHAPTER XVII. THE BUCK IS PASSED

WIDDINGTON'S protest was frantic when he saw the gun. Panting, he testified incoherently that the revolver was not his. Cardona silenced the sallow fellow with a growl.

"A .38-caliber gun," observed Joe. "Loaded again. When we fire one of the bullets, it will tell its own story."

"It isn't my gun," swore Widdington. "I never used a .38 -"

"You've used other calibers, eh?" Cardona was quick to catch Widdington's slip. "Maybe you handled that .32 to-night, at Sendry's!"

Widdington chewed his lips, to stop words that were on them.

"So you knew Sendry," snorted Cardona. "I thought so! You wanted to bump him, like you did Cleffard!"

"I didn't kill Cleffard! Nor Raskin either -"

"Who asked you about Raskin?"

Widdington sank into a chair, gulping that he knew none of the persons named. Cardona snapped a pair of handcuffs on the sallow man's wrists.

"These Bean Specials will hold you," asserted Joe. "Bracelets fit you, Widdington."

"I want to talk to a lawyer!"

"We're taking you to one. We'll see the commissioner, too!"

Widdington tried a final protest.

"Badger lied to you!" he shrieked. "He wanted alibis because he was in it deep! He was framing something -"

"Badger?" snapped Cardona. "You mean Badger Griffin? Say—now you're talking right! So you're the guy he was working with!"

"No!" protested Widdington. "Badger was working for Kale Bewer."

Cardona cocked his head. Widdington's outcry had the ring of a true protest.

"Where'd you get that dope?" quizzed Joe. "Was Badger here? Did he tell you?"

"Badger came here," replied Widdington. "I suspected he was a crook. Not when I first met him—a few years ago."

"It's not when you met him that counts. Did Badger tell you he was in with Kale Bewer?"

"Yes. That's why I've been keeping low. I was afraid of Kale. I thought—thought maybe he'd try to get me. I—I felt helpless. If you arrest me, you've got to arrest Kale. Take him where you take me; only—only be sure there are enough officers to protect me."

CARDONA told Kerry to take Widdington over to Haslock's. Grimly, Joe assured the departing prisoner that he would attend to Kale Bewer. After the others had gone, Cardona turned to the remaining detective.

"I'm going to handle Kale Bewer alone," asserted Cardona. "That may sound like a tough assignment, Tim, but I'll tell you how I'll do it. I'll invite Kale to come over and meet the commissioner. Kale won't

refuse. He's too smart."

Joe considered his own statement; then added:

"That's just it. Kale's too smart. Says he never goes in for killings; but you can't run a racket without them. This fellow Widdington isn't a regular crook. When he accused Kale, it made me think. Palookas like Widdington don't know much; but what little they do know may be right."

Cardona took a final look about the apartment; then motioned Tim toward the door.

"I was going to leave you here, Tim," said the ace, "but maybe it would be better if two of us dropped in to see Kale."

Cardona and Tim departed. Dusty, The Shadow came down from his hiding place. He brushed his cloak; then went out into the hall. The two detectives had taken the elevator. The Shadow chose the stairway of the fire tower.

TWENTY minutes later, The Shadow stood outside of Haslock's antiquated residence. Though the street was gloomy, entry to the lawyer's home promised difficulty.

The commissioner's car had been called; it was parked by the curb. Two bluecoats were on duty, pacing an area flooded by a street lamp.

The Shadow approached the house. He had just one lighted stretch to pass before he reached the steps. He glided into the glow. A turning policeman looked his way. The Shadow whirled back into darkness.

"Who's there?"

The officer flashed a light; but The Shadow had moved farther. With a quick twist, he gained the space behind Weston's car. He was hidden there when the flashlight swung in his direction. The second policeman had joined in the search.

Quickly, The Shadow whipped off cloak and hat; he jammed these garments, together with the flexible briefcase, between the car's big bumper and the trunk which pressed close against it.

The yellow side of the tail-lamp threw a glow upon the chromium-plated bumper. Stopping, The Shadow saw his own reflection against the mirrorlike polish of the metal. His fingers were speedy.

They plucked the sides of his face, drawing away the puttylike substance that had given a different shape to his lower jaw.

That done, the fingers molded further. In swift seconds, The Shadow was looking more like Lamont Cranston. His operations ended when footsteps pounded the sidewalk, almost beside him.

As policemen flashed their lights from the near side of the car, The Shadow swung beyond. The chauffeur was leaning toward the sidewalk, to join in the search. The Shadow rounded the front of the car.

"Hello, Cathgart! Where is the commissioner?"

The chauffeur recognized the leisurely tone. He looked up to see Cranston. The policemen hopped forward to grab the stranger; Cathgart stopped them with a laugh. This wasn't the fellow they were looking for; this was Mr. Cranston, the commissioner's friend.

The cops went into a puzzled huddle near the house steps. Cranston chatted with Cathgart; learned that no one was to disturb the police commissioner. The chauffeur remarked that a detective had just brought

in a handcuffed prisoner. Cranston seemed disinterested; he strolled away.

Once past the big car, Cranston sidestepped from the curb. Out of sight, he resumed his black attire. As The Shadow, he peered forth, to see the policemen with Cathgart. They were asking the chauffeur to settle a dispute.

One cop claimed that the vanished stranger must have ducked beneath the car. The other swore that he must have headed for the corner. Cathgart avoided the argument by declaring that both were looking for some one that they didn't even see.

IN a sense, that was true; for while the policemen were standing by the car, The Shadow calmly ascended the house steps. The cops had their backs turned; they blocked Cathgart's view.

Unobserved, The Shadow reached the darkness of the door. He didn't have to waste time with the lock. The door was unlatched.

There was a servant in the lower hall, but the man did not discern the opening of the door. The menial stepped away; The Shadow came through the hall and ascended the stairway. He found a gloomy upper hall; he saw light from a door that was ajar.

The Shadow heard voices as he passed the doorway. He saw another door on the same side of the hall. It was open; it showed a darkened bedroom. The Shadow entered; he laughed softly as he spied a connecting door that led between this room and the study.

From then on, The Shadow's course was one of extreme caution. He reached the connecting door; turned the knob imperceptibly. Slowly, he pressed the door inward; the sharpest eye could not have detected the careful motion.

At last there was a crack, so slight that it barely revealed a streak of light. The Shadow pressed the door a fraction of an inch farther. He could see into the study. He could hear the voices of the persons whom he saw there.

Curtiss Haslock was seated behind the desk, Commissioner Weston and Ludlow Rhyde at either side. Phil Yarnall was standing in a far corner, smoking a cigarette. By the opposite wall was a seated man: Herbert Widdington, pale despite his sallow complexion.

Widdington was flanked by Markham and Kerry; his cuffed hands were trembling. But he was enjoying a brief respite of silence. All present were waiting for some new arrivals. As The Shadow watched, footsteps announced the persons expected.

Markham swung the doorway from the hall. Two men entered: Kale Bewer and his lieutenant, Ding Luff. Behind the pair were Cardona and Tim. They had persuaded the big-shot to accept their invitation to meet Commissioner Weston.

Kale Bewer wore a wise grin as he nodded to the commissioner. He looked at the persons present, eyed Widdington and shrugged his shoulders.

Weston had arisen; at his urge, Kale took a chair and motioned to Ding to seat himself beside him.

The Shadow saw Widdington look up; there was a gleam of hope upon the prisoner's hunted, twitchy face. Widdington had passed the buck; the law had listened to his plea to bring Kale Bewer here.

The Shadow watched intently. This room housed a murderer. A stern avenger, The Shadow was keeping vigil while the law began its effort to unmask the killer.

CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME CONFESSED

COMMISSIONER WESTON had supplanted Curtiss Haslock in the big chair behind the desk. Like a judge looking over a courtroom, he prepared for the scene to come. Cardona, Markham and the two detectives were ready should trouble arise.

"We have heard a statement from Ludlow Rhyde," announced Weston. "He was approached on Tuesday by Herbert Widdington, who told him that the man whom he had killed in a motor crash—supposedly James Silven - was actually Dennis Carston.

"Wednesday night, Rhyde was aboard his yacht. Thursday, he learned of Cleffard's murder. The yacht sailed Thursday evening. Friday— to-day, or we might say yesterday, since it is past midnight—Rhyde learned of Raskin's murder.

"He came from Boston on the six-o'clock train. He believes that those men were murdered because they had documents which linked Silven with Carston. We have accused Widdington of murder. He, in turn, has named Kale Bewer."

"Me?" uttered Kale. "Say—where do I come in? I never heard of any of these lugs before! What is this? Some kind of a game?" He turned to his lieutenant. "Listen, to them, Ding. Accusing me!"

"You can't bump nobody when you're on a milk-toast diet," asserted Ding, with a grin. "Say, Kale, I always thought Joe Cardona was screwy. This proves it!"

Weston rapped for silence. He turned toward Widdington.

"We are ready for your statement."

"I'll give it!" blurted Widdington. "All of it! Then you can see what Bewer has to say. He's the murderer!"

A growl from Kale. Weston pounded his fist on the desk. Widdington changed his manner. He told facts simply.

"Two years ago," he stated, "Dennis Carston came to New York. He didn't know that Mr. Haslock was Blake Hoburn's lawyer, so he looked me up to learn about the will. I talked to Carston; he decided that he ought to see Ludlow Rhyde.

"I guess that's why Carston drove out to the lodge. There was an accident. I came out and saw that Lud had killed a man in another car. It was Carston; but he was identified as Silven. I didn't want to say anything at the time -"

Widdington hesitated. Haslock snapped a query, asking if Widdington had been planning blackmail at that time. Widdington winced; but Weston called for silence. He told Widdington to resume.

"I owe money," admitted Widdington. "I gambled a good bit; that's how I met Badger Griffin. I saw a way to make some easy cash and told Badger about it. When Carston had talked to me, he mentioned Cleffard and Raskin as friends of his uncle. He said that either could prove that Carston was Hoburn's nephew.

"Cleffard took a lot of camera shots. He had some pictures that he'd taken of Carston, several years before. As for Raskin, Carston had written him some letters. If Raskin still had them, they'd be a proof, too."

Widdington paused for breath. Weston stared at Cardona; but before either could make a comment, the

prisoner resumed.

"THE day after Carston came to New York," stated Widdington, "he rented an apartment from Martin Sendry. He signed for the lease; that put his signature in Sendry's files. It would match the signature on Raskin's letters.

"That would prove that Carston had returned; and Cleffard's photos could show that Carston was the same person as Silven. All that evidence would back my statements, if I wanted to make them.

"It fitted so good that I wanted to steal all that evidence. I figured that Rhyde would cough up cash when he saw the documents. They'd be worth plenty to him, because without them, I couldn't prove that Silven was Carston. I had to pay Badger, in case I needed him. But there wasn't any hurry about getting the documents."

Widdington shifted, pleadingly. He was trying his best to convince his listeners. They looked doubtful; especially when Haslock interjected:

"So you resorted to murder, Widdington, in order to put through your scheme of blackmail!"

"No!" cried Widdington. He shook his cuffed hands toward Kale Bewer. "There's the murderer! Badger knew you, Bewer. He told you my name. He said he didn't; but he must have! He stepped out of it, so he could build up alibis for himself, while you did the dirty work."

Kale Bewer was coolly contemptuous. He seemed to enjoy Widdington's accusations.

"This is good," sneered the big-shot. "I'm finding out why Badger acted like he did. Say, Widdington! How come you haven't any alibis yourself?"

"You fixed that, Bewer," groaned the prisoner. "Badger fed me the story that you were tough. I stayed where I was—in my apartment— after I heard of the first murder. I was there the second night. To-night, I went to the movies; but it was Badger who suggested it. What's more, he planted the revolver. He was in my apartment this morning."

Widdington's story was showing earmarks of sincerity. It was obvious that Kale could have planted the goods on him through Badger. Kale saw that Weston wanted more than mere denial.

The big-shot put a question.

"Suppose I have alibis?" he asked Weston. "How would that handle this goofy story? Well? I'll let you be the judge, commissioner. Ding Luff can tell you that I've turned in every night at ten o'clock, under doctor's orders. Wait —I'm wrong. Last night, I stayed up until eleven. But to-night, I went to bed at ten."

"Both murders were after eleven," admitted Weston. "I think, Bewer, that your alibis will stand."

"One moment, commissioner," put in Cardona, from the doorway. "Let's put it this way. One man killed Cleffard and Raskin. The same man went to Sendry's. He had a different revolver; but that explains itself."

THE Shadow was watching Cardona. Joe had caught onto the very idea that The Shadow had gained earlier. Revolver shots had not been needed at Sendry's; therefore, the murderer had not carried the same gun.

The Shadow had divined that fact before he found the weapon at Widdington's; but Cardona was going

upon the discovery of the gun.

"The killer didn't intend to bump Sendry," explained Cardona. "With the lease gone, Sendry couldn't have given any real dope. But Cleffard and Raskin would have known what was missing from their places."

It pleased The Shadow to see Cardona take the very path that he himself had previously traced. The keener Cardona developed, the better he would be for cooperation with The Shadow.

"Whether the .38 was planted," decided Cardona, "or whether Widdington buried it, the gun wasn't needed tonight. The murderer had a smaller rod; and for some reason, he used it. But I'll tell you this, Kale"—Cardona wheeled to the big-shot—"you've got to have some better story than saying you went to bed. What's more, you'll need people beside Ding Luff to support it."

A grin appeared upon Kale's pudgy face.

"You think there's a back way out of my room," scoffed the big-shot. "All right—there is one. Come down and I'll show it to you. I could have been at Raskin's, or Cleffard's; but I wasn't. I'm telling you that, because there's no chance in the world that I could have been at Sendry's to-night."

Taking paper and pencil, Kale wrote a list of names and handed it to Cardona. Joe read the names of Bill Rolly, a bookie; Tony York, a night-club owner. Added to those were others, including Cliff Marsland.

"Ding will tell you that they were at the apartment to-night," assured Kale. "What's more, you can ask the bunch yourself. They all stayed until ten— except Marsland, who left at nine. What time was that fireworks up at Sendry's?"

"About nine-fifteen," admitted Joe.

Kale settled back in his chair. He produced a fat cigar, bit off the end. Lighting the smoke, he remarked:

"I guess the buck goes back to Widdington."

The prisoner had slumped. He revived to make a feeble protest, that he addressed to Ludlow Rhyde.

"You ought to believe me, Lud," whined Widdington. "I admit I tried to blackmail you at Brindle's. Badger was there. Tuesday night; he ducked out right past you, but of course you didn't know him. Only -"

"I might believe you, Herb," interrupted Rhyde. "But when a man ties up with a crook, it makes him look like one. You talk as though you had known Badger a long while."

"Only a few -"

The Shadow, watching, saw the jerk of Widdington's lips. He looked toward Cardona, expecting the ace to catch the slip. Joe did. "A few months?" he snapped. "Or a few years?"

"I don't know," gasped Widdington. "He—you couldn't trust Badger. He'd sell out to anybody!"

"Sure he would," put in Kale. "That's why I never liked the rat. He belonged with other rats—like you, Widdington!"

"Come back to my question," jabbed Cardona, centered on Widdington. "How long did you know Badger Griffin?"

"More—more than a year," gulped Widdington. "Yes, more than a year."

Kale Bewer had shifted forward. Cardona had hit something, but hadn't fully realized it. Before Joe could shoot another question, Kale took over. The big-shot rasped a question at Widdington:

"More than two years? Back before the time when Rhyde had his auto accident?"

Widdington sagged. It was Rhyde who came to his feet, to jab accusations with a pointing finger.

"You murdered Carston!" he shouted. "That's it, Widdington. That's why you had to pay Badger. Your schemes put me in prison for a crime I didn't commit!"

Widdington was nodding, hopelessly wretched. Kale Bewer turned to Luff and chuckled:

"I hit the jackpot with that guess!"

WIDDINGTON began to pour his confession. The Shadow listened with the others. Facts came from the accused man's lips in gulpy sobs. The story was simple.

Carston had intended to collect the proofs himself, from Cleffard and Raskin. He had told that to Widdington, in the little apartment that Sendry had leased.

Carston had money on him. Widdington had slugged him, on a wild impulse, figuring he could blame the deed on Rhyde. That was why he called in Badger.

Together, they had put the papers on Carston, to identify him as Silven. Knowing that Rhyde was going out to the hunting lodge, they had fixed the old car across the road, with Carston in it.

Carston's money was long spent by the time Rhyde came from prison. That was why Widdington had cooked up the blackmail scheme; not only to get money for himself, but to preserve Badger's silence.

Widdington sagged as he concluded that account. Markham and Kerry jolted him to his feet.

"I murdered Carston!" screamed Widdington, his eyes those of a madman. "I'll take what's coming to me! But I didn't plan to kill Cleffard, or Raskin! I -"

Widdington was fighting, despite his handcuffs. His captors smothered him. Weston motioned toward the door. Cardona took charge, helping the others to remove the prisoner.

"The truth is known," decided Weston, solemnly, while Widdington's incoherent screams still echoed from the floor below. "Widdington has confessed his murder of Dennis Carston. That is sufficient."

"He may deny it to-morrow," remarked Haslock.

"We have the facts that we require," asserted Weston. "Widdington will go to the chair. It will not matter if he denies the other murders. His motive was robbery; but when a murderer robs, he thinks nothing of killing his victims."

Weston extended his hand to Kale.

"I congratulate you. For once, you have aided the law. It was your keen guess, Bewer, that caused Widdington to break."

"Hear that, Ding?" laughed Kale. He turned, he saw his lieutenant gaping toward the front wall. "Say—have you gone bugs, like Widdington?"

A laugh interrupted. A chilling taunt, that came from an inward-swinging door. Kale spun about; others

gazed with him. They saw the sight that had frozen Ding Luff.

Framed in the doorway was a figure in black. Gloved hands gripped big automatics; but above those guns, the staring group saw only eyes. Flaming orbs, beneath a slouch-hat brim.

Like a peal of doom, the eerie laugh echoed within repressing walls. Every man in the study felt a shiver. Kale Bewer, product of the bad lands, was the first to grasp the identity of that dread avenger. Kale's gloss was gone; his nerve lacking, as he gulped:

"The Shadow!"

CHAPTER XIX. FINAL EVIDENCE

THE SHADOW stepped inward from the door.

Even his stride was uncanny. He came forward like a being from space. His automatics moved; their muzzles roved. Men shrank before the gesture.

Weston saw the burn of The Shadow's eyes. The commissioner moved back and took his place behind the desk. The eyes had almost spoken—to say that the story of crime was not yet finished.

Haslock and Rhyde dropped to their chairs, on either side of the desk. Kale and Ding backed toward the side wall until they reached it. They stopped, their hands half raised. Yarnall slumped, staring, into the chair that Widdington had held.

"You have unmasked a murderer!" announced The Shadow, his voice a strange whisper, while his eyes were fixed upon Weston. "A murderer whose only crime was done two years ago!"

"He killed Carston," answered Weston, steadily. "Yes, Widdington confessed that murder. But -"

"He has done no murder since!"

Haslock started to rise from his chair. For the moment, the lawyer was prepared to challenge the cloaked intruder. One piercing stare of The Shadow's eyes upon him, and Haslock subsided.

"Widdington spoke the truth," proclaimed The Shadow. "His only motive against Cleffard and Raskin was robbery. New murder would have been folly."

"Then the gun was planted," declared Weston. "By Badger Griffin— as Widdington declared. But Badger was a desperate character. He had a gun of his own when he died."

"One that he had not carried," declared The Shadow. "He had placed his first weapon at Widdington's. He did so at the order of a murderer. I have come to name the murderer!"

Weston gaped. How The Shadow knew that Badger had not carried a gun was something that the commissioner could not guess. He did not know that The Shadow had seen Badger's return to the hide-out, where the crook had taken a gun from the coat in the closet.

But before Weston could speak, another man had found his tongue. First fear ended, Kale Bewer was coming to his feet.

"You can't pin this on me!" he snarled. "My alibi stands! Why should I -"

"The murderer is within this room!"

Kale halted at The Shadow's pronouncement. Sagging back into his chair, he adopted a whine.

"Why would I have bumped those lugs, Cleffard and Raskin? What was Widdington's game? Only for a hundred grand. If I'd wanted to muscle in, what good would murder have done? Cleffard knew what Carston's photographs looked like. Raskin could have been called to back the letters. They'd have been good guys to have alive, if anybody wanted to shake down Rhyde. What good would it have done me to bump the pair? Nothing! It would have hurt me."

Kale was quaking as he made his plea. For emphasis, he had actually described how he himself would have attempted crime. The Shadow's laugh made the big-shot realize how far he had gone. Kale cringed.

"You murdered neither Cleffard nor Raskin," declared The Shadow. "Like Widdington, you would have lacked motive. The real murderer had a motive. He was the only man who could have had one."

The Shadow's eyes had turned. They were squarely upon Ludlow Rhyde, who was rigid in his chair.

RHYDE'S pale face had crimsoned. With his color had come challenge. Rhyde found action along with his voice. Both were rash. They showed him changed.

Reaching his feet, he snarled a challenge, while he shook a clenched fist toward the eyes that burned upon him.

"I had a motive?" he challenged. "Yes! With Cleffard dead, with Raskin gone, their evidence stolen, what could Widdington have done? Nothing except stand the brunt of murder, as he has done."

"How could I have killed?" Straightening, Rhyde folded his arms and snarled his answer to The Shadow's mockery. "I was a victim of a planted crime, for which I served an unjust penalty. I was a dupe, whom Widdington sought to blackmail. I knew nothing. I could not have learned -"

"Except through Badger Griffin!"

Rhyde blanched as he heard The Shadow's fierce statement. He steadied; then paled again at other words:

"Badger Griffin," repeated The Shadow. "Whom you must have seen when you talked with Widdington, whose name you overheard."

Silence followed The Shadow's challenge. Long since, The Shadow had divined contact between Badger and Rhyde. Badger's own dying statement had shown him in league with the murderer. Widdington's confession had merely supplied The Shadow with the potential details of the contact.

"Badger sold out," gulped Kale, whose tremble had ceased. "Sold out, like the double crosser he was!"

The effect upon Rhyde was electric. Revealed as a murderer, he seemed ready to glory in his crime.

"What of it?" he demanded. "What if I was smart enough to spot that Badger was there at Brindle's; and hear his name and where he hung out? What if I got hold of him and bought him from Widdington, with cash down? Sure, I talked to Badger! I saw him at the Brookland Hotel. I learned all that Widdington knew, and more!"

There was a significance in Rhyde's tone that Kale caught. The big-shot leaped to his feet.

"I get it!" he shouted. "You had to keep Widdington fooled. Badger told you how it could be done. You

worked it easy. Using Badger, you made Widdington think that I was the killer. So Widdington would lay low and be soft when they found the planted gun. Say, guy"—Kale's tone showed genuine admiration—"you learned plenty while you were in stir, didn't you?"

"Why not?" queried Rhyde. "I'd been in the big house, as you fellows called it. When Badger spilled his story, I saw my way to real murder—the kind I'd heard about up the river. Saw my way to it, yes - but no one will ever prove my crimes!"

Rhyde stared toward The Shadow as he made this challenge. A laugh came from hidden lips. Rhyde's confidence faded suddenly.

"ON Wednesday night," recounted The Shadow, "you returned to your yacht early. You left again; you went to Cleffard's. You murdered him. You took an entire album that contained photographs of Dennis Carston.

"But you did not notice the one picture that fell out. Nor did you believe that any one would learn of the framed picture that you substituted upon the wall. You removed a picture of the yacht Paulina, that your connection would not be known too soon."

Commissioner Weston stared when he heard this indictment. He remembered the detail of the loose photograph. He wondered how The Shadow had gained these facts. It was plain that they were facts, for Rhyde was sagging back against the corner of the desk.

"You returned to the Paulina," added The Shadow, "picking a time to board the yacht from the darkened pier. You came in between two of those late groups of guests."

Rhyde clutched the table edge. He shot a look toward Yarnall. From his corner, that young man was slowly nodding. He could see how Rhyde had worked it.

"Thursday night," resumed The Shadow, "a party left the Paulina to attend the rodeo. Those in the group believed you aboard the yacht. Those on board believed that you had gone with the group ashore."

Rhyde's lips were moving, wordlessly.

"You murdered Raskin at midnight," stated The Shadow, his eyes fixed on Rhyde. "You took the letters that had come from Carston. The packet from which they were taken remained loose."

Another amazed stare from Weston.

"At midnight," reminded The Shadow. "So late that those on your yacht— had they suspected—would have believed that you were already in the car with Yarnall. Your trip to Boston was not by car. You took a sleeper at one o'clock in the morning."

The motions of Rhyde's face told that The Shadow had divulged the facts.

"To Boston," added The Shadow, "where you met Yarnall at noon. You sent him to New York. You went to the yacht; you bluffed the captain and sent the Paulina on its cruise. You wanted unsuspecting persons to be gone, lest they be called as witnesses. You were staking your alibi on Yarnall, whom you deluded."

A pause. Then The Shadow stated: "You left the yacht shortly after one-thirty. In time to catch the two-o'clock train for New York—the train Yarnall was on; but you didn't let him see you."

The Shadow had rejected Harry's theory of a later departure by Rhyde. Harry had talked with only one

man who had seen Rhyde leave; the old man on the dock had shown his inaccuracy at estimating time intervals, by guessing that Rhyde had left "an hour before"—a time when Rhyde could not have gone.

The shot struck home. Rhyde's clenching fists lacked all strength.

"Finally, Rhyde," accused The Shadow, "you entered Sendry's soon after nine o'clock. You stole the leases that bore Carston's name. You had gained your final evidence. You fired useless shots. Sendry was not there. I was the person whom you sought to kill."

TOTAL amazement gripped Rhyde. One point that had floored him was the fact that Sendry had not been slain—something upon which he had kept discreet silence during his chats with Weston.

Rhyde stared at The Shadow as if the black being were a wraith through whom solid steel could pass without inflicting harm.

"You fled," added The Shadow, in his sinister tone. "You had just time to comfortably reach a train that had left Grand Central at half past nine."

No more words were needed from The Shadow. Rhyde's last alibi was killed. Phil Yarnall, from his corner, voiced a sudden understanding.

"He caught the train at 125th Street," expressed Yarnall, to Haslock. "The train that I wanted to take. He had time to get it. That train took Rhyde to Stamford. He had ten minutes to switch to the six-o'clock limited from Boston. That's why he came in on that train!"

Weston was nodding.

"Markham saw him aboard," remarked the commissioner. "It fits completely. Rhyde, you are the murderer!"

"I am!" snarled Rhyde, wheeling. "I killed Cleffard and Raskin. It's out! All I wish is that I'd made good with those shots at Sendry's. But what else is there to tell you? You've heard it all."

"You have!" The rasp came from Kale Bewer. The big-shot was glaring at Rhyde. "But what about the phony you tried to pull on me? Making me the fall guy!"

"Think again, Bewer," rejoined Rhyde. "I came to Sendry's early. That was to give you an alibi. Like it did. I wanted Widdington to take the rap."

"That's a smart one!" declared Kale. In admiration, he had forgotten The Shadow for the moment. Kale swung to Luff: "Say, Ding, this guy is a regular!"

Ding nodded. Kale's bulky body blocked his view of The Shadow. Ding was sharing the big-shot's restoration of nerve.

"If you'd come to me direct, Rhyde," volunteered Kale, "maybe it wouldn't have gone as tough with you. I might have given you some advice."

"Sure," added Ding. "Kale knew Cleffard."

"I had met him," admitted Kale. "But I dropped him like a hot potato. He wouldn't play ball. I didn't need Sidney Cleffard. I used Felix Lausch, instead. Until he quit."

Kale stopped suddenly with his last statement, realizing that he had talked too much. Ding missed the signal. The talkative lieutenant added a final phrase.

"And then you rubbed him out."

A FIERCE laugh came as Ding interrupted himself. The Shadow had delivered it. Strained, with Ding at his elbow, Kale Bewer had let slip the one crime that could enable the law to reach him. Lausch, supposedly a suicide, with his death almost forgotten, was suddenly classed a victim of murder, with Kale Bewer the slayer.

Kale snarled amid The Shadow's mirth. He turned to face the looming guns. Ding saw the blaze of The Shadow's eyes. He saw the effect on Kale.

Like a cornered rat, the big-shot bobbed his head in every direction, looking for a way of flight that did not exist.

Kale's eyes met Rhyde's. In that instant, two men of murder gained the same quick thought. With one accord, they threw themselves forward, straight upon The Shadow.

Their hands were quick as whips. Kale snapped a stubby revolver from his hip. Rhyde yanked the .32 which he had used at Sendry's. Hard behind the murderous pair came Ding, drawing an automatic.

Muzzles jabbed at The Shadow's face as he snapped forward to meet them. The cloaked fighter had but one choice. Weston's early dismissal of Cardona had left the field almost barren of aid. The Shadow's guns spoke while murderers sought their triggers.

Back went the cloaked fighter, with sprawling forms beside him. Half to the floor, The Shadow shook clear of Rhyde, who was rolling sideways, his revolver falling from his hand. Beneath Kale's stricken bulk, The Shadow jabbed an automatic muzzle straight at Ding, just as the lieutenant fired.

Ding's shot went wide. The Shadow had him covered; but did not fire. At that instant, a revolver barked from the doorway to the hall. Joe Cardona had returned.

On the stairs, he had heard the shots. Reaching the doorway, the ace had triggered a bullet to The Shadow's aid—a shot at Ding.

Rhyde had come to his feet, against the wall. He was trying to aim. The Shadow, pulling from beneath Kale, came up on one knee to beat the wounded killer to the aim. Again, The Shadow had no need to fire.

A revolver barked twice from the desk. Rhyde crumpled, snarling. Commissioner Weston held a leaning position half across the desk, a smoking gun in his right fist.

Like Cardona, Weston had adopted The Shadow's tactics in the pinch. Each had bagged a desperate crook. Cardona, in from the door, was staring at Ding's flattened form; Weston was viewing Rhyde, sprawled beside the wall.

Both looked to another spot. They saw Kale Bewer, motionless. The big-shot had not rallied, as had Rhyde. Kale had gone down to stay, when he had received a bullet from The Shadow's opening blast.

An echoing laugh came as a solemn knell. It sounded from the doorway to the hall. Weston, Cardona, the others with them, turned to see The Shadow's black-clad form. They saw the burning eyes once more - those eyes that had ferreted out clues to crime.

Then The Shadow was gone into the darkness of the hall. Only the echo of his solemn mirth remained within that room where murderers lay dead.

The Shadow had brought buried evidence to the law. With the law, he had settled men of crime.

THE END