

BLUE FACE

Maxwell Grant

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BLUE FACE

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. MAN HUNT

THE policeman turned the corner of the dark street quickly. He moved without sound, as if he hoped to surprise some prowler.

He could see nothing along the black sidewalk to justify his caution. Nothing moved except a gaunt cat near a trash barrel. The cop sighed with relief. But the ugly nickname of a dangerous criminal stayed in his mind.

Blue Face!

The cop continued down the deserted street. His heels clicked loudly. The sound helped to reassure him. He passed the trash barrel from which the cat had fled. The sound of his solid heel echoes vanished.

From behind the barrel, a black figure rose. The figure seemed formless. Then suddenly it straightened. A hiss of sibilant laughter was audible. The figure moved swiftly past a light. For an instant, it was revealed.

The Shadow!

Police were not the only ones on a grim prowl tonight. The Shadow, too, was taking a hand in the stalking of a dangerous criminal. The Shadow was hunting the man known as Blue Face!

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Certain precautions The Shadow had taken emphasized the seriousness of the situation. Every agent of The Shadow was on duty somewhere throughout the city. Stationed at various key points, they were in constant telephone communication with Burbank, contact man for The Shadow. The Shadow was ready to race in a swift car to whatever point Blue Face might strike tonight.

For Blue Face struck somewhere every night! Nine times the police had almost caught him. Nine times Blue Face had escaped.

The police attributed this to luck. The Shadow believed otherwise. Nor did The Shadow believe a second police theory concerning Blue Face. He didn't think that Blue Face was a small-time burglar who killed people because he was jittery.

In these strange burglaries of Blue Face, The Shadow sensed something challenging. They seemed to be the work of a moron. Most of the people who had been robbed were of small importance.

A list of the victims revealed them to be people like bus conductors, longshoremen, petty clerks, laborers. A few were businessmen. But there was no connection between any of them to indicate a planned motive on the part of Blue Face.

Proceeds of the robberies made even less sense. Blue Face usually escaped with less than ten dollars in loot. The police would not have paid too much attention to these queer robberies had it not been for the vicious tactics Blue Face displayed.

Out of his nine previous raids, seven people had been wounded by the snarl of Blue Face's nervous gun; two had been killed.

The Shadow ducked from the dark street into a vestibule. An inner door opened and closed without sound. A moment later, The Shadow had a telephone receiver at his ear, was giving a number.

"Burbank speaking," a voice said.

"Report!"

The messages of The Shadow's agents were transmitted by Burbank. They were dishearteningly alike. No news!

But when Burbank's voice ceased, The Shadow's face was grim. One agent's report was missing.

"Report from Hawkeye," The Shadow said.

"None," Burbank replied.

"That is all."

The Shadow's voice revealed nothing of his grim tension. Hawkeye's silence had significance. He never disobeyed orders. He was a genius at trailing crooks. In fact, it was this very cleverness that had given Hawkeye his nickname.

Had Hawkeye run Blue Face to earth somewhere in the black-shrouded vastness of New York City?

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The Shadow wasted no time considering the answer. Soon, the hum of a fast car was audible. Behind the wheel of a dark sedan, The Shadow raced to the place where Hawkeye had been stationed.

It was a run-down neighborhood of tenements and alleys. The Shadow knew exactly where to look. Hawkeye had been posted in the front hallway of a slum tenement. The hallway was dirty and poorly lighted. But it had one virtue. It contained a coin-box telephone from which Hawkeye could report.

The Shadow didn't enter the building. His breath hissed when he saw his motionless agent.

Hawkeye was lying on the sidewalk near the entrance to a dark alley. His face was paper-white and smeared with blood. He had been dealt a vicious blow.

STOOPING close to the sprawled figure, to pick up his unconscious agent, The Shadow hesitated. His sharp eyes detected something lying on the sidewalk. His gloved fingers picked up the object. One swift glance and The Shadow shoved it into his pocket.

The clue told The Shadow certain things. Hawkeye had been struck down by Blue Face! Blue Face wanted the police to find Hawkeye. Blue Face wanted police to trail him down the nearby alley!

The Shadow decided to short-cut police help. They might ruin his plans.

With Hawkeye's unconscious body across his shoulders, The Shadow ran silently into the darkness of the tenement alley.

He was not quite in time. A policeman had rounded the corner. He caught a vague glimpse of something. The cop wasn't sure whether he had seen a human being or not. But the nerves of the cop were on edge. Every policeman in town had been given special orders to be on the alert for Blue Face. His capture meant certain promotion.

The cop blew his whistle to attract other cops. He started cautiously toward the alley, gun in hand.

There was little time for The Shadow to decide how to vanish with his unconscious agent. But his eyes helped him.

Close to the alley wall of the tenement was a barrel filled with tin cans. Alongside the barrel was a small square grating in the pavement. The grating covered a pit, evidently used to slide coal into the cellar.

A sharp tool from beneath the robe of The Shadow made a faint click. The click was the severing of the chain that fastened the grating from the lower side. The grating lifted and Hawkeye was lowered quickly into the dark pit. Then The Shadow moved the barrel close to the edge of the opening.

A quick downward spring, and The Shadow vanished. The grating was lowered without a sound. Through the bars appeared black gloved hands. They caught at a hoop of the barrel and pulled it over the grating. It was slow work, but The Shadow was helped by the approaching cop's caution. The blue-coat came on slowly, expecting gunfire from a cornered criminal.

By the time the cop entered the alley, the barrel of tin cans covered the grating. The cop sneaked past. He found nothing but a high fence at the other end. He came back. He was joined by another cop, who had heard the blast of his whistle.

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Unaware that The Shadow and Hawkeye were almost under their feet, the two cops conferred briefly. The Shadow listened grimly.

"Are you sure it was Blue Face?"

"I don't know. He looked like a patch of darkness sneaking into the alley, carrying somebody on his back."

"Did you see his face?"

"I saw almost nothing. But there's a smear of blood on the sidewalk. Somebody ran into this alley carrying a wounded guy. I think it was Blue Face!"

The voice of the second cop was tense.

"If it was Blue Face, why wasn't he dressed the way he always is? Why wasn't he wearing a dark-blue suit, a blue cap? Why didn't he have that stuff like blue Cellophane over his head? And why didn't we find a marijuana cigarette? Blue Face is a hophead! He's always dropping those damned reefers! It's what makes him so jittery and quick on the trigger."

"I don't know any more than I told you. But I know my orders. I'm going to phone headquarters. Stick around till I get back. And keep your gun out!"

There was a quick sound of his retreating feet. The second cop moved back to the mouth of the alley.

The Shadow emerged soundlessly from concealment. He had profited by the delay to revive Hawkeye, and to clap a hand over his agent's mouth. A whisper in Hawkeye's ear transmitted orders.

Hawkeye faded away. He scaled a fence. A moment later, he was in a cellar, streaking grimly for a back street.

Left alone, The Shadow examined the object he had picked up on the street close to where Hawkeye had fallen.

It was a marijuana cigarette.

Blue Face had left that clue as bait for police to pursue him. He wanted police to see him in the very act of robbery – as they had done on nearly every one of Blue Face's previous crimes. But this time, fate had played a trick on a cunning criminal. The Shadow was taking a hand!

THE SHADOW was no longer in the alley. He had scaled the same fence over which Hawkeye had vanished. But he did not enter the dark cellar. The Shadow climbed another fence, dropped into the back yard of a different tenement.

It was not guesswork. Before he had scaled the fence, he had bent close to the ground. At the base of the fence he found what he grimly expected: a second cigarette. Another "reefer."

Crouched in the tenement yard, The Shadow examined both those half-smoked cigarettes. He examined their tips, made an interesting discovery.

The ends were not wrinkled and damp as they would have been had Blue Face had them between his lips. Both of the marijuana cigarettes had been lighted, but they had not been smoked. The theory of the police

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was wrong. Blue Face was not a hophead at all. He was a very clever criminal posing as a dope addict!

Glancing upward, The Shadow stared at the lowest ladder of a fire escape. Its lower rungs hung just above his head. He saw something that revealed that someone had recently climbed that ladder.

There was a smear of dirty water on the courtyard pavement from the top of an overfilled garbage pail. Someone had stepped in that smear. There was a similar smear from a man's shoe on the lowest rung of the steel ladder above The Shadow's head.

He leaped high. His gloved hands caught a rung and swung him upward. He began to climb.

Darkness protected him. Shades were drawn on most of the tenement windows. The few that were open caused him no concern. He could hear the snores from tired men and women. The people who lived in this shabby structure were workmen who labored long hours. Nothing would stir them from sleep except the peal of their alarm clocks in the gray dawn.

Just below the slanting iron steps that led to the top floor, The Shadow halted. The window above him was closed, but its shade was not drawn. The lower pane of that dirty window looked peculiar.

The glass pane had been cut out!

Twin .45 automatics appeared in The Shadow's hands. He began to move silently upward. But he had hardly moved halfway when there was a startling end to his secrecy. Something light and taut stretched against his chest. He felt the pressure and guessed what it was – a black thread of some strong material.

He tried to throw himself back, but it was too late. The thread was attached to an empty milk bottle on the platform above.

The bottle fell to the courtyard below with the crash of smashed glass.

As The Shadow raced upward at top speed, the bedroom above suddenly blazed with light. A pistol shot roared inside the room.

A pajama-clad man was lying on the floor inside, with blood coming from a hole in his neck. Alongside the victim stood the snarling figure of Blue Face.

IT was impossible to see the criminal's face. Over his head was a helmet that looked like wrinkled blue Cellophane. But it was not really Cellophane. It was opaque, impossible to see through. It fitted closely over his head, giving him the ugly appearance of an Egyptian mummy.

Through narrow slits in this queer headgear, the eyes of Blue Face burned like flame.

"Die, copper!" he snarled.

His gun flamed toward the window. But as he fired, Blue Face received the shock of his life. Instead of a policeman, he saw the grim face of The Shadow.

Unnerved, he jerked back. The move sent his bullet wide. It thudded into the wooden sill of the window.

The answering shot of The Shadow went wide, too. He had fired, not to kill Blue Face but to wing him and take him alive. Blue Face's recoil carried him backward, unharmed. He fled.

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An instant later, The Shadow was racing through the apartment. He darted out into the tenement hall. He could hear pounding feet above him on the stairs. Blue Face was heading toward the roof.

The Shadow pursued swiftly.

He was delayed by the door leading to the roof. Blue Face had dropped a hook into a stout staple on the outside, locking the door. The Shadow's .45s roared at the barrier. Wood splintered. There was a rip as black-gloved hands yanked a board loose. The Shadow unhooked the latch and flung the door open.

Blue Face was cornered in a bad spot.

He had raced across the black roof to the opposite edge. He seemed gibbering with terror. Both hands were lifted above his ugly blue-swathed head in token of surrender.

Below him was an unbroken fall of six stories to a stone pavement in the rear courtyard.

The Shadow shouted an order to surrender. His .45s emphasized the order.

With a yell of fear, Blue Face went down on his knees. Then abruptly he dropped backward. The desperate criminal had slid over the edge of the high roof. He was hanging on only by his clenched fingers.

A moment later, the gripping fingers vanished.

Blue Face had let go! His body was hurtling downward to death!

CHAPTER II. DEATH IN THE DARK

AS the body of Blue Face hurtled out of sight, The Shadow darted forward. Bracing himself at the edge of the roof, he stared down.

He received a stunning surprise. No crumpled and bleeding body lay dead down below. That wild plunge of Blue Face from the coping of the roof had been a fake to elude the guns of The Shadow.

The Shadow dropped to his knees. Turning his back to the dizzy canyon below, he grasped the edge of the roof. He allowed his body to swing into space, held only by the stretched arms above his head.

The Shadow was duplicating the tactics of Blue Face. The spot where he hung was the same spot where he had last seen the vanishing criminal.

He was rewarded by an instant discovery.

A rope was stretched from a spot below the roof cornice to the open window of a top-floor apartment. Down this taut life line Blue Face had slid. He had wriggled through the open window to safety.

A glance showed The Shadow that the window below belonged to an apartment on the side of the building opposite that in which Blue Face's crime had occurred.

Far down in the black street, police whistles were already shrilling. Cops, drawn to the scene by the phone call of the patrolman on the beat, had heard the roar of gunfire above. They were racing toward the tenement.

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The Shadow was already sliding down the rope. His gloves protected his hands from friction burns as he followed swiftly after his vanished foe.

His feet hit the window sill. He grabbed wildly at the casing.

He was met by a choking blast of smoke that rolled outward from the window. The Shadow was caught unprepared, with his mouth wide open.

There was hellish potency in that smoke. It carried a noxious odor. The Shadow's brain reeled. His fingers slipped on the window casing, his body started to plummet backward to death.

But although The Shadow was for a moment only half conscious, his will was strong. His clawing fingers managed to grab another hold on the window casing. He rolled inward, and fell safely to the apartment floor.

He was holding his breath, now. With lips tightly compressed, he sent the ray of his flashlight cutting through the fog of death smoke.

The beam showed him the origin of the smoke that filled the room. It rose in black clouds from a circular chemical bomb on a table in the middle of the room. The table was the only piece of furniture visible. There was no carpet on the floor. The walls were dingy and bare of decorations. The apartment looked as if it had been empty for a long time.

Quickly, The Shadow raced from the apartment to the corridor outside. He could hear the voices of tenants who had been aroused by the shooting and had poured out into the hallway from other apartments.

Suddenly, there came the roaring echo of a shot. A moment later, The Shadow leaped out into the hallway.

He almost fell over the bleeding body of a man dressed only in his underwear. It was one of the tenants who had rushed into the hall. The Shadow saw the direction of the wounded man's pointing finger. He raced down the stairs.

None of the other tenants tried to stop him. One glance at the black-robed figure, and the people who had raced into the hall vanished back into their apartments with cries of terror.

"The Shadow!"

Sound of those shouts brought grim laughter from The Shadow's taut lips. He had already reached the street hallway. By the light of a dim ceiling lamp he could see no sign of Blue Face. There were three routes the elusive criminal might have taken: The front doorway to the street. The rear doorway to the back yard. Or the stairway to the cellar.

Instantly, The Shadow decided on the cellar. The onrushing figures of armed cops gave him the answer. They were racing into the building from both the front and rear doors. Blue Face could not have passed them unseen.

Bullets ripped through the dark hallway from both ends. The Shadow fired back. But he used his guns merely to delay the policemen, not to harm them. While he fired, he was jerking at the knob of the cellar door.

It opened. He flung himself inward to a dark landing. The Shadow shot a bolt on the inside. He could hear a bluecoat crash his body against the door. But it was strong and solid. It would take tools and time to burst through the stout barrier.

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The Shadow raced down the cellar stairs.

THE cellar was pitch-dark. The Shadow halted an instant, to avoid the possible spurt of bullets from the unseen criminal.

But again, Blue Face was unnaturally silent. The only sound The Shadow heard was a strange clang. It sounded exactly like the dropping of a steel bar into a slot on the inside of a cellar door.

The sound was not repeated. Silence filled the blackness of the cellar.

Soon, the beam of The Shadow's torch located the electric switch on the cellar wall. He flooded the place with light.

Blue Face had vanished!

Turning his gaze toward the two doors that guarded the front and rear exits from the cellar, The Shadow saw that both portals were locked. On the inside!

Was Blue Face still in the cellar? The Shadow did not believe it.

And yet, the evidence of the two locked doors showed that Blue Face could not have escaped either to the street or to the back yard. For one thing, both doors were locked by heavy steel bars that rested in solid metal supports on the inside of each door.

The Shadow gave each door a lightning scrutiny while the shouts of policemen trying to break through from the top of the cellar staircase rang like doom in his ears. He was looking for signs that might indicate that Blue Face had rigged a cunning mechanical device to enable him to slam a cellar door behind him – and also drop a ponderous steel bar in its metal slot on the inside.

He found no such evidence.

Indeed, added proof that Blue Face could not have escaped from the cellar to either the front street or the rear yard was given to The Shadow in the form of yells from cops outside each of those doors.

"Open up! In the name of the law!"

Blows began to rain on the outside of the barriers. The Shadow could hear the splintering of wood.

He remembered the strange metallic clang he had heard on reaching the cellar. That sound was the only clue Blue Face had left behind him. What did it mean?

The Shadow sought for the answer in a furnace that stood in a dark corner of the cellar. It seemed an impossible place for a man to use as an escape. But to The Shadow, nothing was impossible that was logical.

Opening the furnace door, The Shadow found the firebox was cold and empty. The dust-covered grates offered no clue.

Dropping to his knees, The Shadow swung open the lower door of the furnace. This was the door to the ashpit. Here he found the clue for which he was seeking.

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Across the film of dust and dirt on the ashpit floor was the unmistakable trace left by the body of a man. Blue Face had crawled straight into the ashpit.

But where had he gone?

The Shadow followed the trail of his cunning foe. It was a tight squeeze, but he made it. Upstairs he could hear the smash of police sledges. The cellar doors were being attacked, too, by heavy tools rushed up in a police emergency truck.

At the back of the ashpit, The Shadow found a metal panel that was not as immovable as it should be. He was able to pivot it with the pressure of his wrist and forearm. The panel moved aside. The Shadow wriggled through a narrow opening into the foundation wall of the building.

At the end of a short passage was a vertical pit. The pit was dark. The Shadow couldn't see to the bottom. But he saw at his elbow a loop of wire that looked like an old-fashioned bell-pull.

He yanked it. Instantly, he understood the meaning of the clang he had heard earlier. He heard it now behind him. The wire loop had closed the open ashpit door of the furnace. The Shadow's disappearance from a sealed cellar was covered – exactly as had been Blue Face's, a few minutes earlier.

THE SHADOW'S electric torch showed him the bottom of the vertical pit into which Blue Face had descended. It was about ten feet deep, but easily reached by the rungs of a wooden ladder. The bottom was greasy with slime and filled with the odor of rats and decay.

A single glance told The Shadow the nature of a tunnel that stretched from the pit through the earth in the direction of the nearby East River.

It was a length of abandoned sewer pipe. The tenements of this neighborhood were in an old section of town. New sewers had been installed a few years earlier by a reform administration. The old trunk line was not worth reclaiming. The pipes had been abandoned. People had forgotten they ever existed.

But not Blue Face.

The Shadow crawled noiselessly ahead through the nauseous film of slime on the base of this old sewer line. Around him he could hear the squeak and scurry of rats. One of them bit savagely at his arm. He flung it quickly aside. The hungry rodent smashed against the slimy wall of the tunnel with a dull thud.

Soon, a pale glow was visible at the end of the sewer. It marked the spot where the ancient pipe line ended on the mud flats below the shore end of an East River pier.

The Shadow emerged cautiously. He stepped into the soft mud that sucked at his shoes. It forced him to walk carefully.

He was underneath the flooring of a covered pier. Beyond him, he could see a line of muddy footprints that showed where Blue Face had retreated a few moments earlier. The prints were backward, indicating that Blue Face had hoped for the appearance of The Shadow, in order to send a hail of bullets into the body of his blackrobed nemesis.

But Blue Face's eagerness to escape was stronger than his lust to kill. He was afraid of The Shadow! His flight proved that.

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The footprints ended suddenly. They ended far short of the tide mark where the dirty water of the East River lapped at the mud flats under the pier. Blue Face had taken another twist in his cunning flight.

He had gone upward.

In the rough pier planks over his head, The Shadow found the square edges of a trapdoor. He climbed up on a cleat to brace himself. The cleat had evidently been placed there for just such a purpose by the amazingly foresighted Blue Face. The Shadow forced the trapdoor open.

As he did, he heard a distant shot.

The roar came from the river end of the pier. The Shadow raced forward. He had a difficult time getting to the scene of the shot. The pier was jammed with piles of merchandise in heavy cases. Several times, The Shadow had to turn back and find another route through the darkness.

When he reached the river end of the pier, he found the wounded body of another victim of Blue Face's determination to escape. This time, it was a pier watchman. A bullet had hit him in the back.

The end of the pier where the watchman lay reeked with the smell of oil. An oil drum had been upset; the greasy liquid formed a puddle all around the watchman. His clothing was soaked. Had a match been applied to that sinister puddle, the watchman would have been burned alive.

A grim thought entered The Shadow's mind. Only the swiftness of his arrival had prevented a horrible death for a helpless man.

He sprang to the stringpiece and peered into the darkness of the East River. He had heard a rhythmic sound. It was the noise of oars working desperately in oarlocks.

Suddenly, The Shadow's laughter rang ominously. He was staring directly at Blue Face!

He could see a hideous blue helmet that looked like wrinkled Cellophane. He could see fiery eyes glaring at him from the slitted holes in that opaque blue mask.

Blue Face was rowing swiftly toward where a slim speedboat was moored. He redoubled his efforts to row faster.

The Shadow's automatics barked. He didn't aim at Blue Face. He was determined to capture this unknown criminal alive. He fired at the rowboat. Two smashing impacts sent water flooding into the craft. Two more, and the rowboat began to settle, fast.

Blue Face dived overboard. The tide was strong. He didn't appear to be a very good swimmer.

Diving from the pierhead in a clean splash, The Shadow, too, took to the water. He began to swim swiftly toward the criminal who was floundering near the speedboat.

But The Shadow had made an error. He discovered his mistake when his head appeared above the surface of the river. All around him, the water was coated with oil from the overturned drum on the pier edge.

Blue Face stopped swimming the moment he saw The Shadow's dive. His hand produced something from his pocket. It was a waterproof match case. There was a small spurt of flame in the air as the criminal handled the case. He flung the lighted match backward.

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The next instant, the spark became a roaring sheet of fire. The oil-covered surface of the river spouted blue-and-yellow flames. They raced like hungry serpents toward The Shadow's head.

THE SHADOW dove instantly.

Kicking vigorously with his upended legs, he fought to keep his head below those roaring flames on the surface. Lungs that were nearly bursting forced him soon to the surface. He dove again. But he felt the agony of the flame before the river engulfed him again.

He struck out underwater with a desperate power that sent him through the water like a champion swimmer. When he again rose to the surface, he was past the area of the blazing oil.

Turning dizzily, he tried to locate the moored speedboat aboard which Blue Face had already climbed.

The speedboat was under way. The throb of its engine sounded dimly from the foggy murk. Soon it was gone. The silence was broken only by the swish of the tide against the spongy spires of the pierhead.

A moment later, The Shadow's safety was threatened by a new danger. Policemen had appeared on the end of the pier. They had been drawn there by the roar of the shot that had wounded the watchman. Flashlights bored out into the river. One of the beams barely missed The Shadow's head. He dove under the surface just in time.

The Shadow let the fast current carry him away from danger. He reached another pier, and climbed swiftly out before the police could spread up and down the river front and trap him.

He had fought Blue Face and lost.

But The Shadow's initial defeat was only an apparent one. His grim laughter whispered as he vanished among the dark streets of the water front. The laughter indicated that The Shadow had found out many things unknown to the police.

This duel between Blue Face and The Shadow was only just beginning!

CHAPTER III. CHALLENGE OF EVIL

IN pitch-darkness was the room. Silence filled it. It was a place of black nothingness.

The Shadow was in his sanctum – a room hidden away in the heart of New York City.

Darkness afforded no hint of how The Shadow had entered this well-guarded sanctum. Nor when he left would there be any betraying sounds to indicate his method of departure.

Many criminals had plotted countless schemes for locating this spot and destroying The Shadow and all his works. No crook had ever succeeded in achieving this ugly ambition. The Shadow was still supreme!

A ghostly rustle of laughter ceased in the darkness, its echoes dying into silence. Then, suddenly, a blue light glowed. Its illumination was thrown downward, lay like an oval pool of brilliance on the polished surface of a desk.

In that oval, the hands of The Shadow were visible. Above the hands gleamed the blur of The Shadow's face.

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His powerful beaked nose betokened strength of character. Deep-set eyes held a strange inner light of their own.

The Shadow was ready to sum up certain facts he had obtained the night before. Some of these facts he had learned at the risk of his life. These risks were now forgotten. Brain work counted now.

His fingers moved beyond the oval of light on his desk. When they returned into view, they held a small packet of newspaper clippings.

The Shadow examined the clippings first.

News of Blue Face's latest burglary had created a sensation in all the newspapers. The robbery committed in the tenement near the East River was described as the work of a criminal lunatic. Or, at the very least, a dope-crazed moron.

The total value of the loot which Blue Face had stolen last night was six dollars and seventeen cents.

To gain this pitifully small sum, Blue Face had seriously wounded a man, had broken the jaw of the victim's wife with a blow of his gun butt. He wounded another tenement dweller who had tried to block his helter-skelter race down the tenement stairs to freedom. He had shot a pier watchman.

The victim of the robbery and his wife could tell little of the events that had thrown an entire neighborhood into an uproar. Blue Face had appeared in the tenement apartment without warning. He had forced the awakened man and wife to hand over a small amount of cash.

Dazed, they had stood alongside their bed. Blue Face had forced the woman to enter a small bathroom. He had struck her savagely in the jaw with his gun butt, and had locked her in.

Then he had waited, his gun trained on the husband. Finally, a sound came for which he seemed to be waiting. It was the crash of a milk bottle from the fire escape outside.

At the sound, Blue Face fired instantly at his helpless captive. That was the last the man remembered until he had awakened in a city hospital.

His name was Peter Kolchak. He worked in a small bakery not far from the Brooklyn Bridge. His pay was pitifully small. Nothing about the man, his job or his prospects could possibly attract an intelligent burglar.

Considering this, The Shadow laughed. He pondered another peculiar aspect of Blue Face's tenth robbery.

Blue Face had succeeded in involving The Shadow himself in the crime. The victim and his wife insisted they had seen only Blue Face. But all other tenants and every policeman who had participated in the grim pursuit of the fleeing criminal had a different story.

All of them had seen only one figure. The Shadow.

Was Blue Face a sinister disguise of The Shadow? Some of the newspapers speculated on this possibility. They also noted the presence of a mysterious rope that had stretched like a life line from the tenement roof to the window of a deserted apartment on the top floor.

This apartment had been rented a short while before the crime by a man who had paid a small deposit. He had obtained a key from the janitor – and had never been seen again.

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THE sensitive fingers of The Shadow picked up another sheet of paper. This paper contained a list of names. They were the names of ten victims of this strange burglar.

Two of the ten were dead. Eight had been wounded. None had been robbed of more than ten dollars or so. The Shadow could discover no connection between any of the names. All lived in different parts of the city. Some were married. Some single. Three of the victims had been wealthy. The other seven had only poor jobs.

What was the hidden unity behind this strange menace?

The last document The Shadow examined was a written report. It had been forwarded by Rutledge Mann. Mann was The Shadow's financial and real-estate expert. He posed as an investment broker to conceal his real work – which was the trusted service of The Shadow.

Rutledge Mann had furnished The Shadow with the details of the management of the tenement from which Blue Face had escaped. The ease of the escape told The Shadow that Blue Face must have had an excellent knowledge of the building, gained from previous study.

The tenement was operated by a realty company owned by a man named Harrison. The Harrison company managed property for large-scale owners of real estate. The man who actually collected the monthly rent from the tenants was someone named John Shipton.

Already, The Shadow had acted on this report from Rutledge Mann. The disguised voice of The Shadow had talked over an untraced telephone line to Inspector Joe Cardona at police headquarters. The Shadow had pretended to be a denizen of the underworld. He advised Cardona to invite Richard Harrison to police headquarters for a conference about the robbery.

The Shadow intended to sit in on that conference. He wanted to get a look at Harrison. He was also eager to find out who the real owner of the building was. Rutledge Mann had been unable to discover this.

Clippings and the report were replaced out of sight. The light over The Shadow's desk went out. The sanctum lapsed into instant darkness.

Through that silent darkness The Shadow moved toward an unseen exit. No sound betrayed any motion on his part. A listener with a sharp pair of ears would have heard nothing.

But The Shadow was now gone!

A short time later, a man named Lamont Cranston appeared on the street and stepped into a custom-built car. No one paid any particular attention to him. Occasionally, on his ride downtown, he nodded to a traffic cop. The cop invariably smiled and saluted. For Lamont Cranston was a citizen with wealth and social position. He enjoyed membership in the exclusive Cobalt Club.

Nobody realized the truth. Lamont Cranston was a convenient identity assumed sometimes by The Shadow! He was on the way now to police headquarters, to meet his friend Inspector Cardona

He had a plausible excuse for the visit. Cranston intended to offer a reward for the arrest of Blue Face. He could do this in his role of a public-spirited citizen.

CARDONA greeted Cranston warmly in his private office. He had known him a long time. He thanked Cranston for his liberal offer of a reward.

BLUE FACE

"What about this talk of Blue Face being The Shadow?" Cranston asked.

Cardona frowned.

"That bothers me," he admitted. "I was there last night with the police. I saw The Shadow! I hate to believe it, but the evidence points strongly to the fact that The Shadow shot at the pier watchman."

Joe continued in a worried vein.

"It sounds screwy. The Shadow never before has done anything criminal, to the best of my knowledge. Just the opposite, in fact. There have been many cases I could never have solved without The Shadow's help. I swear, Mr. Cranston, I don't know what to think. The newspapers are beginning to yell at me for action."

"What do you think about Blue Face?"

"That part's easier," Cardona said. "It's just a question of time, before we nab that rat. I have good reasons for saying so. In the first place –"

Cardona broke off. His phone was ringing. He answered it casually. Then The Shadow saw Joe's eyes bulge with a startled light. His finger jabbed a desk button.

A police attendant rushed in and Joe made grim gestures. The Shadow understood. Cardona wanted an immediate tracer put on this phone call to which he was now listening.

Joe's voice on the wire was soothing. He spoke slowly, evidently trying to keep his caller from hanging up. But a moment later, Cardona swore as he put down the instrument.

"Gone!" he growled. "I couldn't kid him. He hung up."

"Who was it?" The Shadow asked in the cultured voice of Lamont Cranston.

"Blue Face! I tell you that guy's crazier than a coot! You'll never believe what he just had the gall to phone in."

"What is it?" Cranston asked lazily.

Cardona explained. Blue Face had called up to insist that he himself had committed the crime last night at the tenement. He denied that The Shadow had anything to do with the robbers. The Shadow, according to Blue Face, was just an intruder.

"What do you know about that?" Cardona growled. "Blue Face wants all the credit. He's due for the electric chair when we nab him – and he wants the credit for murder! Did you ever hear of anything whackier than that?"

"What else did he say?" Cranston murmured.

"He said that he'd bump off anyone who tries to interfere with him. He said that warning applies to The Shadow, as well as anyone else. And – listen to this – he promised to commit another of his crazy burglaries tonight!"

BLUE FACE

There was a sudden interruption. A policeman hurried into the office. He made a breathless report, and Cardona swore. The tracing of the phone call had been fruitless. Blue Face was gone long before a police car roared to a stop in front of an East Side drugstore.

The drug clerk could give no information. The cops found the clerk unconscious. He had been slugged over the head from behind just before Blue Face had made his mocking call to headquarters.

There was an uneasy silence in the headquarters room.

"You spoke about reasons why Blue Face should be caught fairly soon," The Shadow said in the voice of Cranston.

"Oh, yes. Let's see. First, a hophead is usually easy to nab. And we know Blue Face is a hophead. He smokes marijuana cigarettes."

The Shadow nodded. But he knew that Cardona was wrong. Blue Face did not smoke the "reefers" the police always found. He merely lighted them, carried them a while, then left them as fake clues.

"In the second place," Cardona went on, "Blue Face is nervous. He always botches things. One time he upsets a vase. Another time he trips over a rug. His victims always wake up and have a chance to yell for the cops. A nervous guy like that can't duck cops forever."

Wrong again, The Shadow thought. Blue Face had nerves of steel. He was the most clever foe The Shadow had faced in a long time

"Thirdly," Cardona concluded, "Blue Face is lucky. Each time he has escaped, luck helped him. Luck like that can't go on forever."

Luck? The Shadow mentally said no to that. The rope from the tenement roof, the furnace tunnel from the cellar – it was far from luck. It was the result of careful planning in advance.

The Shadow was saved from making a comment on Joe's false deductions by the appearance of a visitor. A well-dressed man was announced.

It was Richard Harrison, owner of the realty company that managed the tenement where Blue Face's last outrage had occurred.

HARRISON shook hands with Lamont Cranston. Cardona explained that Cranston had come to offer a reward for the capture of Blue Face. Harrison nodded.

He was a tall man with a pleasant face. His eyes twinkled shrewdly behind pince-nez eyeglasses. The lenses of the glasses were strong ones, The Shadow noted. Evidently Harrison was nearsighted.

The realty man was friendly in his replies to Cardona's questions. He knew nothing about the sewer tunnel through which Blue Face had escaped. He knew nothing of the unknown man who had rented the empty apartment on the tenement's top floor.

"I've never been near that building," Harrison said in his pleasant voice. "As you know, inspector, I manage hundreds of pieces of property, some shabby like this tenement, other important office and hotel buildings."

BLUE FACE

"Who is your rent collector?" Cardona asked. "Who actually visits the tenants and collects their rent? Is he reliable?"

Harrison laughed.

"I won't have to convince you of John Shipton's integrity, I'm sure, when I tell you that he married my daughter. John Shipton is my son-in-law, and a fine young man. The thought of Shipton being connected with a rat like Blue Face is preposterous!"

Cardona scratched his nose.

"I'm merely asking for information. Who owns the tenement?"

"David Barfield."

It was an important name to mention. Barfield was a wealthy man. He was as prominent as Lamont Cranston himself.

As Cranston, The Shadow had met Barfield often. It was unthinkable that any link could exist between David Barfield and Blue Face. Moreover, Barfield could scarcely be accused of sliding down ropes and racing through sewer pipes, since he was now confined to his home as an invalid.

Yet, The Shadow wondered. There was some mystery about the illness of David Barfield. He was in his early fifties and a man of considerable athletic ability. Up to a few months ago, he and Cranston had played many a game of handball at the club to which they both belonged.

The Shadow mentioned this to Harrison. He received an immediate impression that the realty agent was uneasy. Harrison's eyes held a strange inner flickering behind the screen of his pince-nez glasses. Was it fear?

"Interviewing Mr. Barfield would be a waste of time," Harrison murmured to Cardona. "He has a weak heart. There's something wrong with his legs that keeps him constantly at home. You'd have to go there to see him. He sees few people by day. And no one at all at night."

"What's his phone number?" Cardona rasped. He was annoyed at the millionaire's inaccessibility.

"He has a private number," Harrison said. "I'll be glad to give it to you."

He took a memo book from his pocket. Cardona reached into his own pocket for a fountain pen. Then, suddenly, Cardona's eyes popped. His face was muddy with shocked surprise. He was holding something in his hand which he hadn't realized was in his pocket.

It was a jagged piece of thin plastic material that looked like Cellophane. It was opaque. Its slightly wrinkled surface couldn't be seen through.

Its color was a dark shade of blue.

The color and the appearance of this sinister scrap of plastic material made all three men in the room think instantly of an ugly figure.

Blue Face!

"Where did this thing come from?" Cardona gasped.

His amazement was reflected in the staring face of Richard Harrison. It was The Shadow who replied. His voice was silky as he spoke to Cardona in the tones of Cranston.

"Someone must have stood very close to you at some time this morning, inspector. Can you remember any of those people you interviewed at the scene of Blue Face's latest crime?"

Cardona shook his head.

"How can I tell. I interviewed dozens of people in and around that tenement. Do you think –"

"I think," Cranston continued smoothly, "that you've had the rather terrifying privilege of talking face to face this morning with – Blue Face himself!"

Silence followed. It was like a cold breath of fear in the heart of police headquarters.

CHAPTER IV. SICK MAN

AN hour or so after the interview in the office of Inspector Cardona at police headquarters, a limousine pulled up to the curb of a fashionable street and halted.

Lamont Cranston got out.

His goal was the ornate entrance to a private dwelling. The Shadow was not wasting any time investigating the strange illness of David Barfield. He was about to climb the short flight of stone steps that led to Barfield's door, when he halted suddenly.

The door was opening. A spruce, well-dressed man emerged and started toward the sidewalk. It was Richard Harrison, the realty agent who handled all of Barfield's business.

Cranston smiled and held out his hand. Harrison blinked behind his thick-lensed glasses. He seemed exceedingly glad to meet Cranston again. But The Shadow noticed the same expression of worry back of his eyes.

"How do you do? Were you coming to inquire after the health of Mr. Barfield?"

The Shadow murmured a reply in the affirmative.

Harrison glanced quickly over his shoulder at the millionaire's house. He seemed afraid that someone might be watching from behind the curtained window alongside the entry door. But his glance apparently reassured him.

"I'd like to talk to you about Barfield," he said in a quick, nervous whisper. "Do you mind if I use a little deception, in case someone is watching? Pretend that we're discussing this book."

He handed Lamont Cranston a popular novel he was carrying under his arm. The Shadow looked it over gravely. He pretended to discuss the book with Harrison.

"What's the trouble?" he asked under his breath.

BLUE FACE

"It's about this fake illness of Barfield's."

"Fake?" The Shadow's tone was sharp. "Why did you tell Inspector Cardona only an hour or so ago that you thought Barfield was genuinely ill?"

"I didn't do otherwise," was the reply. "Barfield has just had me on the carpet. He found out I had been summoned to police headquarters. Don't ask me how he knew. I can't understand it. But he threatened me, just the same."

"Threatened you?"

"Yes. Barfield told me that if I caused him any personal publicity with the police in connection with the Blue Face crimes, he would cancel his contract with my firm and turn his business over to some other real-estate firm."

Harrison's face was pale. He lifted his glasses from his nose and rubbed at his eyes.

"I'm talking frankly to you, Mr. Cranston, because I know that you are a loyal friend of Barfield's. He may be in some serious trouble. When I just talked with him, I got the impression he was frightened. He seems to be worried for fear I might have told Inspector Cardona too much. He asked me two or three times if I had made light of his present illness."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him the truth. That I had done nothing more than give Cardona his private phone number. I finally soothed Barfield into still retaining me as his realty agent."

"What about his illness?" Cranston asked.

"It's a ridiculous pretense! You yourself know, Mr. Cranston, that up until a few weeks ago, he was a hard man to beat at handball. Heart ailments don't develop as quickly as that. And this business about his legs!"

"Yes?"

"He claims his legs are partially paralyzed. Sits a lot of the time in a wheel chair. He has even retired into a side wing of his house, where he keeps himself isolated, both day and night. Why should a man do that? He claims it's because he needs rest and quiet."

"How does he manage to get up and down the stairs of his home, if he's as paralyzed as he claims?" Cranston queried.

"He has put in a private elevator," Harrison said. "The whole installation was done very suddenly. The elevator is an automatic one. I complimented Barfield on its convenience and asked him who had installed it. But he turned as mum as a clam. He pretended he hadn't heard my question. I think he was afraid I might go to the contractor and ask questions."

"And what in Heaven's name would there be to find out, anyway? I tell you, I'm worried about the whole set-up in Barfield's house! I don't even like the looks of his doctor!"

"Who is he?" Cranston asked.

BLUE FACE

"Dr. Mortimer. Do you know him?"

The Shadow knew a little about Mortimer. He had met him socially once or twice, in his role of Lamont Cranston. He was aware that Mortimer possessed a good reputation. But he made a noncommittal reply.

Harrison drew in a deep breath. He took back the book he had handed to Cranston.

"Please keep everything I have said confidential," he begged. "Perhaps I can talk to you more about this later. Where can I see you?"

Cranston named the Cobalt Club. Harrison nodded. He got into his parked car and drove away.

It was all very queer.

THE SHADOW walked up the stone steps of the Barfield dwelling and rang the bell. The door was opened quickly by the butler. It was opened so promptly, that The Shadow wondered whether Briggs had been standing behind the street door during The Shadow's brief talk with Harrison.

But Briggs' face was bland.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Cranston. Mr. Barfield expects you, sir. If you'll follow me to the east wing –"

The Shadow started to follow, when a voice greeted him suddenly from the drawing room, whose door was partly open.

"How are you, Mr. Cranston? Glad you've come to visit my patient. A good thing for Mr. Barfield. He needs visitors. It will do him a lot of good."

The man in the doorway was dressed in a suit of expensive tweeds. He held a Homburg hat and a small black medical case in his left hand.

It was Dr. Mortimer.

"I was just on the point of leaving," he said. He gave a sudden exclamation. "Oh, bother!" He turned swiftly to Briggs. "I find I have forgotten my gloves. I left them in the east wing. Will you fetch them for me, please?"

Briggs hesitated. He looked as if he preferred to stay. But there was nothing else to do.

The moment he was gone, Dr. Mortimer leaned closer to Lamont Cranston.

"You're a friend of Barfield's," he whispered. "I'd like to stay here until you've seen him. Do you mind if I ride along with you, when you leave here? There's something I'd like to tell you."

Cranston agreed. A moment later, Briggs came back with the gloves. Mortimer gave the butler an innocent smile.

"Thank you. I believe I'll wait a few minutes more, Briggs. Mr. Cranston has very kindly offered to give me a lift in his car when he leaves."

Briggs blinked.

BLUE FACE

"Very good, sir... This way, Mr. Cranston."

The Shadow followed the servant to the east wing of the roomy old house. He noted that Briggs fished out a key before they could proceed into the east wing. The door was kept locked. It seemed a queer way to take care of an invalid. But The Shadow kept his thoughts to himself.

He rode up with Briggs in the automatic elevator. Cranston seemed bored. He turned his back to Briggs and stared without any seeming interest at the chromium fittings of the luxurious little lift.

He could see nothing unusual.

Briggs announced him with frigid dignity at the doorway of the top-floor suite in the east wing.

DAVID BARFIELD was sitting in an invalid's chair near a sunny window.

"Thank you for coming to see me," he said.

He seemed weak. His words were low. But he didn't look like a sick man to The Shadow. His face was as ruddy as it had ever been. His shoulders were broad and vigorous. The legs stretched out in front of him, Cranston couldn't see. They were covered by a steamer rug.

The Shadow wondered if Barfield had thrown that rug hastily over his legs a few seconds before his visitor had been announced.

Barfield talked eagerly about his physical condition, giving Cranston hardly time to say a word. His heart, he said, had gone suddenly bad. His legs, too, were afflicted.

"Mortimer can't understand what is causing the trouble," he murmured. "It may be caused by acute physical strain. You remember how active I used to be, eh, Cranston? Well, that's all over now."

"Can't you leave the house?"

"Impossible! My legs would buckle under me if I took more than a few steps."

There was a knock on the door. A pretty girl dressed in a nurse's uniform came in.

"Did you want me for anything, Mr. Barfield?"

"No. I'll call you if I need you."

The nurse withdrew. The Shadow asked a quiet question.

"Do you keep a day and a night nurse?"

"Just a day nurse," Barfield said. His eyes were veiled. "You see, at night I need quiet. Dr. Mortimer says so. A night nurse would be a nuisance. I sleep better when I have no one to bother me. I've even taken out my phone."

His voice hurried a little.

BLUE FACE

"You may have noticed that I keep the door that connects with this east wing always locked. Does that seem – silly?"

"Not at all," Cranston said, without much interest. "I hope Dr. Mortimer's treatments will benefit you. Perhaps I had better go now. I don't want to tire you."

"Wait," Barfield said. "Mr. Harrison was here just a few moments ago. He's my realty agent, you know. I understand you met each other down at police headquarters. Rather shocking, these Blue Face crimes, eh?"

It was a sudden, and rather grim, change of subject; but The Shadow pretended no interest.

The two men talked vaguely about Blue Face for a while. Then Barfield volunteered another surprising statement.

"Did you know that one of Blue Face's victims was my nephew?"

Cranston hadn't known that. His brain was suddenly alert.

"Yes," Barfield continued. "One of the men Blue Face robbed was my nephew, Charles Clee. Poor Charles tried to resist, and was killed. I'm afraid that his shocking death hasn't helped my heart."

Charles Clee was one of the two wealthy victims of Blue Face. He was also one of the two victims who had actually been killed. The rest had only been wounded. Was there some sinister meaning in all this? And why was Barfield volunteering this information?

"You think your nephew might have been deliberately murdered?" Cranston asked.

"Gracious, no! The whole thing was accidental. Blue Face is some sort of a degenerate hophead, the papers say. If poor Charles had only let the fellow steal the money he was after, he might have been alive today. But he was always courageous. And he paid for it with his life. Too bad! I... I hope the police nab this Blue Face. You offered a reward for his arrest, I understand?"

Cranston nodded. Soon, Barfield seemed to lose all interest in the subject. He placed his hand to his heart and uttered a faint moan. He rang for his nurse. The Shadow took the hint and departed.

Briggs escorted him down in the automatic elevator. Again, The Shadow gave detailed attention to the inside fittings of the lift.

Dr. Mortimer was waiting impatiently in the drawing room. He drove away in Cranston's car.

MORTIMER wasted no time in coming to the point. His remark was almost a duplicate of the words uttered by Richard Harrison.

"There's something queer about Barfield's illness," he said. "There isn't a thing wrong with his heart. I've tested it. It's as sound as a dollar. But Barfield simply won't believe that. He told me he'd get a new physician if I was as stupid enough not to recognize a bad heart when I saw one."

"What about his legs?"

"Sound, too. I think that Barfield's whole trouble is mental. He imagines he's sick. Why, only Heaven knows. I've tried to humor him, hoping he'd snap out of it. I've fed him harmless pills. I've tried to persuade him to

BLUE FACE

see a psychologist. But he's a very stubborn man.

"I'm telling you these things because you're a friend of his, Mr. Cranston. Someone ought to know what is going on. His heirs don't seem to care."

"Heirs? How many does he have?"

"Two. He had three nephews. But one of them is dead. He was killed accidentally in a burglary by that criminal who calls himself Blue Face."

The Shadow made no more comments. He didn't even ask the names of the other two heirs. He dropped off Dr. Mortimer and went on to the Cobalt Club. He stayed there only a short while.

When The Shadow left, he returned to the home of David Barfield.

This time, cloaked in robe and slouch hat of black, The Shadow's method of entrance was less conventional. The afternoon sunlight was shining. A forced entrance was risky. But The Shadow knew how to achieve the goal he wanted. He had come prepared with certain highly ingenious tools.

Presently, he found himself unseen and unheard in the very spot where he was most eager to investigate. He stood like a black and soundless figure on the lower floor of the locked east wing of the Barfield mansion.

The elevator drew his first scrutiny. This newly installed lift seemed to The Shadow like a reversal of logic. The Shadow did not believe that the elevator had been installed just because Barfield was sick. Barfield was sick to make it easier and more natural to install the elevator!

Entering the automatic lift, The Shadow examined the flooring. When he had ridden in it before, his scrutiny of the side walls had convinced him that there could not be any secret exit except through the floor of the elevator.

By using a sharp-edged tool, The Shadow was soon able to lift the covering on the floor of the cage. Underneath the deceptively solid covering was the square outline of a small trapdoor! Looking downward through the opening, The Shadow could see the dark bottom of the shaft.

He pressed a button. It brought the lift down to the cellar. It didn't quite touch the base of the pit. There was room enough for a man to squeeze through the trapdoor to the pit.

The Shadow's flashlight disclosed a block of concrete at the side of the shaft, that moved easily aside under pressure.

Advancing through a horizontal passage, he was not surprised when he discovered another concrete block. It, too, moved aside when he pressed it.

Sunlight made The Shadow blink when he squirmed through the opening. He was in a grass-covered court at the back of the Barfield home. The angle of the house kept the court from being observed from any spot except the east wing.

There was a door in the high board fence that inclosed the grassy court. It looked as if it might have been cut out recently.

BLUE FACE

The Shadow's laughter whispered briefly. Barfield's lack of a night nurse, the strange isolation of a sick man at night – it was all clear, now!

Barfield's "illness" was a device for him to sneak unseen out of his house at night. Only The Shadow was aware of the real truth.

Was David Barfield Blue Face?

The Shadow didn't answer that question. It was premature. He returned quickly through the cellar tunnel, emerged from the elevator shaft through the concealed door in the floor of the lift.

He was preparing to leave the house as silently as he had entered it, when he heard a sudden furtive step. The Shadow whirled. The sound came from the staircase that led downward from the top-floor suite that Barfield inhabited.

The Shadow ducked into obscurity. He glided in the direction of a heavily curtained ground-floor window. But before he moved, he did a peculiar thing. He uttered a loud and mocking laugh at the very door of the elevator.

The next instant, he saw the figure that had been sneaking down the staircase. It was David Barfield!

THERE was nothing weak or sick about Barfield now. In his hand was an automatic pistol. His face was tense with suspicion.

He ran in the direction of the laughter he had heard. He stepped into the elevator. Soon, The Shadow heard the elevator move downward, heard the hidden trapdoor lift. Then came the solid thump of Barfield's feet as he leaped to the bottom of the dark shaft. The Shadow knew what Barfield was doing. A fake sick man was crawling murderously through the tunnel looking for an intruder he wanted to kill.

Barfield was hunting The Shadow!

But The Shadow didn't want to observe the disappointment on Barfield's face. He took advantage of the millionaire's absence to leave the east wing as secretly as he had entered.

Soon, The Shadow was listening to a calm voice over a well-guarded private telephone wire:

"Burbank speaking."

To Burbank, The Shadow issued orders. They were orders that would be transmitted to Harry Vincent. Harry Vincent was a personable young man, who lived at the Metrolite Hotel. Harry's real business was something he never talked about to outsiders. He was a secret agent of The Shadow.

Tonight, Harry was going to have an interesting job. He was going to keep a sharp watch on the rear of the Barfield mansion!

CHAPTER V. A GRIM DISCOVERY

RICHARD HARRISON was angry. He took off his pince-nez glasses and rubbed at his tired eyes.

He sat at his desk in the private office that he occupied as president of his realty-management company. He

BLUE FACE

was signing letters that had been prepared for him by his secretary. His pen scrawled badly when he signed the sheaf of letters. He had forgotten to put on his glasses again. It added to his anger.

He growled under his breath: "Damn David Barfield! He's nothing but a hypochondriac! Worse than that, he's a stubborn, pigheaded fool!"

Harrison's concern came from a simple cause. It was his business to show real-estate profits, instead of losses. Unless profits were shown, clients could not be blamed for taking their realty business elsewhere.

But Barfield was making it tough for Harrison to do his job properly.

The time was late in the afternoon. It was the same day on which so many annoying things had happened to Harrison. For the first time in his life, he had been summoned to police headquarters. He didn't like that. It annoyed him to have Inspector Cardona asking curt questions.

The second annoying fact had been Harrison's visit to Barfield's home. Again the realty agent's back had been rubbed the wrong way. Barfield had talked in a nasty manner. Indeed, he had threatened Harrison.

Now, it looked almost certain that David Barfield was deliberately throwing away a real-estate opportunity that was worth a half million dollars a year. Barfield's only excuse was that he was a sick man and couldn't be bothered.

Harrison clenched his jaw. His job was to protect Barfield's holdings whether Barfield co-operated or not. He intended to try a different method of persuasion on his stubborn client.

Two wealthy young gentlemen had been summoned this afternoon to Harrison's office. He expected their arrival soon. The name of one was James Whorter. The other man's name was Elliot Peabody.

Whorter and Peabody were nephews of David Barfield. They enjoyed his favor. They were, in fact, Barfield's only heirs, since Charles Clee's murder.

A moment later, Harrison's pretty secretary opened the door of his office. The two nephews of Barfield had arrived.

They were both handsome-looking young men. Whorter was a bit taller than Peabody. He was less pleasant-looking, too. His face had a sullen mouth. There were unmistakable marks of dissipation around his eyes. Peabody, on the contrary, had a pleasant smile and a firm handshake. His face looked almost boyish.

Harrison described to them both the rental situation that was driving him crazy.

A certain big office building in town was owned by David Barfield. It was in a section from which tenants had moved away, drawn by the lure of a huge new office district. For a long period, this office building had been half empty, in spite of low rentals. Now, there was a chance to get the building off Barfield's hands and take the red ink out of Harrison's books.

A realty operator from Chicago wanted to buy the building. He offered a fair price. Tonight, this prospective purchaser was flying from Chicago to New York to sign the contract and close the deal. In the morning he intended to make a quick return trip to Chicago. He was forced to move quickly in the matter because of the pressure of important work in Chicago.

BLUE FACE

"Your uncle has refused to meet this man," Harrison told the two heirs. He removed his glasses and gestured emphatically with them. "Your uncle is willing to let the whole deal fall through."

"Why?" Peabody asked.

Whorter said nothing. He scowled, and drummed his fingers on Harrison's desk in bored fashion.

"Because of this nonsense about your uncle's illness," Harrison answered. "He refuses to leave his home at night. He won't come here to my office to meet the client. He won't even permit me to bring the man to his home. He claims that he needs rest and quiet. As you may know, your uncle retires to the east wing of his home at night and isolates himself. He doesn't even have a telephone in the east wing."

THERE was a brief silence.

"So what?" James Whorter finally said. His tone was unimpressed. "What do you want us to do?"

"I'd like you to persuade your uncle not to lose the opportunity of closing a profitable deal. Unless he sees this client tonight, the man will fly back to Chicago in the morning and the whole deal will fall through."

Whorter laughed curtly. The sound of it made Harrison flush.

"Sorry," Whorter said. "I've got better things to do than get in the bad graces of my uncle. Besides, I've no time. I've a social date tonight at the home of a good friend of mine. Howard Blair, in fact."

He shrugged indifferently, and rose to his feet.

Harrison was disgusted. He knew Howard Blair. Blair was a gilded young man of the stamp of Whorter. They knew plenty about liquor, race horses, chorus girls and very little about anything else. But Harrison tried to hide his annoyance as Whorter walked out.

Elliot Peabody was more reasonable.

"I'm sorry uncle is such a stubborn cuss," he murmured. "Perhaps I'm only causing trouble for myself – but I'll see what I can do. Let me have your phone."

He called up his uncle. Harrison, listening, felt his heart sink. All he could hear Peabody saying was "Yes, sir," and "Excuse me, but –"

Finally, Peabody hung up. There was chagrin in his face.

"Uncle almost bit my ear off! Told me to mind my own business and let him alone. Said he was a very sick man. Said that if your client from Chicago can't wait a day or two, the hell with him!"

"Well, at least you tried," Harrison murmured. His eyes blinked behind his glasses. "That's more than I can say for Mr. Whorter."

"You mustn't mind Whorter too much," Peabody replied. "He's been upset lately. The death of poor Charles Clee at the hands of Blue Face has bothered him more than he cares to admit. Clee was a great pal of his. They spent a lot of time together."

BLUE FACE

There was some small talk. Then Peabody took his departure, after promising to do anything in his power to help the disturbed realty man.

Harrison's pretty secretary noted the baffled anger of her employer.

"Maybe Mr. Barfield will change his mind," she said.

But Harrison knew differently. He was still annoyed when he left the office and drove home. Anger against Barfield stirred in his mind, as he opened the front door of his home.

But the moment Harrison was inside, his anger changed to startled concern. His daughter came to meet him with outstretched arms. Her eyes were red. She had been weeping. He could feel a frightened quiver in her body as he soothed her.

"Elaine! For Heaven's sake! What is wrong?"

"Dad, I'm almost crazy with worry! It's about John. I'm afraid he's involved in something nasty! I'm worried sick at the thought that he may have something to do with this horrible criminal whose name is in all the papers."

"Criminal?" Harrison's voice was sharp.

"Blue Face."

"What!"

His tone indicated that he thought his daughter must be losing her mind. John Shipton, his son-in-law, was the very last man to be thought of in connection with crime.

Elaine put her hand in her purse, gave her father something.

It was a package of cigarettes.

The box was plain. There was no name on it, no revenue stamp, nothing to identify it.

Harrison's breath hissed when he opened the package and examined one of the cigarettes.

The thing was a "reefer" – a marijuana cigarette!

"I found it in John's pocket," Elaine sobbed. "I didn't mean to spy on him. I was looking for a postage stamp. I knew that John sometimes kept spare stamps in the wallet in his suit that hangs in the closet. When I reached in his pocket, I found – this!"

HARRISON was stunned. He took off his glasses and polished them, to gain time for thought. When he put them on again, he tried to murmur some reassuring remark.

"That isn't all," Elaine continued in terror. "John has been acting very queerly for the past couple of weeks. Ever since the first robbery of Blue Face was reported in all the newspapers."

"How do you mean?"

BLUE FACE

"He's been staying out late every night. He won't tell me where he's been or what he's doing."

Her father tried to laugh reassuringly.

"Nothing remarkable about that, Elaine. John is an ambitious young man. You know as well as I where he goes at night, and what he does. He's attending night classes at the university, studying real-estate law. He's been doing that for months. He wants to get ahead in the business world. What's strange about attending night classes?"

"His classes end at eleven o'clock," Elaine replied. "John used to come home before midnight. Now, it's sometimes two or three o'clock in the morning before he comes in. And the way he comes in frightens me, although I usually pretend to be asleep."

"Father, he creeps in! He sneaks in his stocking feet, as if afraid I might wake up and question him. And the look on his face scares me! So strained and ugly! As if he were a... a criminal!"

Elaine stared wanly at her father. Both were thinking of the same thing. John Shipton worked as a rent collector for his father-in-law. His job was to visit the various buildings whose tenants paid their rent in cash. His was mostly the tenement trade.

Shipton had visited the tenement where Blue Face had struck, the night before. If anyone knew all the ins and outs of that particular building, it was John Shipton.

Harrison remembered his interview that morning in Joe Cardona's office at police headquarters. He shuddered. He had assured Cardona that Shipton was his daughter's husband and above reproach. But was he?

Awkwardly, Harrison attempted to soothe Elaine. He tried to change the subject. He promised to talk to Shipton privately.

"Leave it to me," he said. "Whatever the trouble is, I'll get to the bottom of it. Just leave us alone after we finish dinner. Pretend you have a headache and lie down. Let me talk to him."

Elaine agreed. Having unburdened her mind, she felt better.

When John Shipton returned home, a short while later, she greeted him with a smile and a kiss. The scowl on his face disappeared. He was in a humorous mood at the dinner table.

But his eyes narrowed again when Elaine spoke haltingly of a sudden headache, and excused herself.

Harrison lit a cigar and offered one to his son-in-law. Shipton refused. Harrison removed his glasses and polished them nervously for a moment with his handkerchief.

"What's on your mind?" Shipton asked.

Harrison showed him the plain package of marijuana cigarettes, and watched him. Shipton examined it without much interest. His face was expressionless.

"Where did you get this?"

"In your pocket," Harrison said bluntly.

BLUE FACE

If he expected Shipton to cringe he was fooled. Shipton laughed as if the matter was a joke. He talked smoothly. He talked so glibly, in fact, that Harrison wondered if his son-in-law might not have rehearsed this speech in advance, in case he ran into this very situation.

Shipton's explanation about the presence of the drugged cigarettes in his pocket was slightly incredible. According to his story, he had been mixed up in an unexpected bit of excitement in the subway, a few days earlier. A shabby man sitting next to him in the subway car had jumped to his feet and run. After him raced a grim-faced pursuer, who flashed a detective badge as he shouldered other passengers aside.

The train was standing in a subway station when the incident occurred. The fugitive raced to the platform and vanished up the stairs, pursued by the plain-clothes detective.

"The fellow must have been a narcotic peddler," Shipton said. "I can see now what happened, although I didn't suspect it until you just showed me this package of marijuana cigarettes. When the dope peddler ran, he tried to get rid of his evidence. He must have slid the package in my pocket just before he jumped to his feet."

Harrison didn't voice any disbelief. There was a short silence. Then he brought up the matter of Shipton's strange lateness in returning home at night from his classes at the university.

Shipton changed his tune. His smile faded. He refused to discuss the matter at all.

"It's none of your business when I come home. You have no right to spy on me. Perhaps I like to take long walks. Perhaps I find it easy to digest my law studies on such night walks."

He shot a sneering glance at his father-in-law's disturbed face.

"Or perhaps I'm Blue Face! That's what you're thinking, isn't it?"

Harrison denied it. He gave up the attempt to talk frankly with his son-in-law. His eyes blinked unhappily behind the sheen of his glasses.

"You'll have to trust me," Shipton growled. "And now, I've got to be going. I have my classes at night school to think of. Tell Elaine I'm sorry about her headache. I'll be home as soon as I can."

SHIPTON left the house, a tight smile twisting his lips in a hard curve. He walked to the corner where he always took the bus to the university. But he didn't wait for the bus. He hurried around the corner and walked toward a garage a few blocks away.

There, he was greeted as "Mr. Jones" by the garage attendant.

Shipton got into a small coupe. He drove to the other side of town, halted outside a shabby rooming house and entered, using a key he took from his pocket. In the lower hallway, he met the frowzy landlady. Again he was addressed by his assumed name.

"How are you, Mr. Jones?" the landlady smiled.

Shipton went up to a room he had rented a couple of weeks earlier. He locked the door and drew the shades. Going to a locked closet, he unlocked it. Inside was a small suitcase.

From this suitcase, "Mr. Jones" took a businesslike little gun. He pocketed the gun, locked the suitcase, the closet, and the room, and went down to his parked car.

BLUE FACE

He drove to a drugstore. There, he made a couple of low-voiced phone calls. First, he telephoned the apartment of James Whorter and asked a servant if Whorter was going to be at home that night.

The servant replied that Whorter would be out tonight. Shipton's next question elicited the place where Whorter expected to be later on in the evening. It was the home of a man named Howard Blair.

A grimace twisted Shipton's thin lips as he wrote down the information. Next, he telephoned the home of Elliot Peabody, the second heir of David Barfield. He learned that Peabody would be at home all evening. He wrote this second address down, too.

Shipton's next three hours were uneventful. He went to evening school and attended all his classes. After school was over, at eleven o'clock, he drove aimlessly around until he found a movie theater that suited him. He went inside and killed time watching the late show.

It was well past midnight when Shipton again entered his car. He examined a small slip of paper. On it was the penciled information he had obtained earlier concerning James Whorter and Elliot Peabody. His hand felt the pocket where he had hidden his gun.

He drove off through the darkness.

Another car followed the one driven by Shipton. Shipton was unaware of this. The man in the trailing car was careful.

He was Richard Harrison!

Harrison had been on the trail of Shipton all evening. He had shadowed him to the garage, to the furnished room, to the movie theater.

There were stubborn lumps at the hinges of Richard Harrison's jaw. Behind his pince-nez glasses, his eyes were very bright. He was determined to find out what this sly young husband of his daughter Elaine was up to!

CHAPTER VI. A RIDE WITH SLUG

AT almost the same time that Richard Harrison was so carefully tailing the strange movements of John Shipton, events of an equally sinister character were in the making in a much more respectable section of town.

The handsome residence of David Barfield was dark from cellar to roof. Since his sudden "illness," Barfield always made it a habit to retire early. His servants had gone to bed. The street in front of the house had few passers-by.

The street in the rear of the Barfield home was even quieter. A street light threw a small circle of brilliance on a deserted pavement. A high board fence closed off the rear of the mansion's grounds. The fence was tall enough to keep curious people from peeping into the property of the millionaire. Its coating of dull-gray paint made the fence blend into the darkness.

There was a small door cut into the smooth surface of that fence. Its location had been carefully noted by The Shadow on his secret invasion of the Barfield home early that same afternoon. He was aware that the fence door had been cut about the same time that the automatic elevator had been installed for Barfield's

BLUE FACE

convenience in the isolated east wing of the house.

Harry Vincent was watching that rear fence. He was in a spot where he could not readily be observed.

There were two empty cars parked at the curb of that rear street. One was not very far from the outline of the door in the gray fence. The other was halfway down the block. Vincent was hidden in this second car. He was there on the orders of The Shadow. Harry was ready to carry out a highly discreet job that had been intrusted to him.

Suddenly, his keen eyes saw what he had been so patiently waiting for during his long vigil.

The fence door was slyly opening.

It didn't open much. The movement was accomplished swiftly. For an instant, the open door showed a small aperture. A man dressed in dark clothes slipped out. With a quick gesture, he closed and locked the fence door. He darted through the darkness to the car that was parked nearby.

The man was David Barfield.

He moved like a man who had considerable muscular strength as well as excellent health. It proved what Harry Vincent had already been warned by The Shadow – that Barfield's bad heart and his paralysis of the legs were fictitious.

Barfield got into the car. It moved away from the curb and rolled onward to the corner. An instant later, it rounded the corner and sped up the avenue at a fast clip.

Vincent lost no time. His own car got under way as smoothly as Barfield's. He slowed at the corner and peered north. He didn't want to tip his hand by getting too close to the fugitive millionaire. But a quick glance made him crowd on more power. Barfield was streaking up the dark avenue at a rapid pace.

Suddenly, Harry grunted. His foot moved from the gas pedal to the brake. The car ahead had slowed without warning. Harry dawdled, keeping a couple of blocks between him and his quarry. He divined what was going on.

Barfield was taking nothing for granted. The millionaire's eyes were glued to the rear-vision mirror, to make sure that his sly sneak from his mansion had been unobserved.

Evidently, his backward glance reassured Barfield. This time, there was no doubt about the fact that Barfield was in a hurry. Vincent had to feed gas in a hurry, to make sure that he was not left behind.

Soon, Barfield slowed again. His tires shrieked as he swung his wheel to make a quick turn into a side street. The fugitive car vanished eastward in the cross-town street.

HARRY made ready to duplicate the same skid trick. But his maneuver was never completed. Another car was taking a hand in this grim chase.

The second car roared suddenly out of obscurity along the avenue. It came from the opposite direction to which Harry was heading.

There was no need for a collision, had the other driver kept to the side of the avenue on which he belonged. But this driver was a man with a hard face and reckless eyes. He was there to protect the flight of David

BLUE FACE

Barfield.

As Vincent started to make the turn around the corner, the second car roared straight toward him at a terrific pace.

Harry realized his danger. He tried to veer and swing up on the sidewalk to avoid a bad crash. His tug at the wheel came an instant too late. The other car struck his coupe a terrific impact. Caught in the act of turning, Harry's vehicle was struck squarely in the side by the front bumper of the pirate car.

There was a crash. Vincent's car was hurled against a street-light standard. The pole bent like a melted stick of cheese. The light overhead went out, the heavy glass globe fell to the street. It smashed with a loud jangle of broken glass.

For an instant, nothing happened. Harry didn't move, because he was senseless. The impact had knocked him into an inert heap. Blood streamed down his face from a cut across his scalp and forehead.

But the criminal wrecker was by no means out of action. He had known exactly what to expect. A heavy pad on the steering wheel protected his stomach. He had braced himself for the collision.

A moment later, he darted out of the crumpled front of his car. He limped a little as he ran, but the limp was only a slight one. He raced diagonally across the avenue, toward the entrance to a dark flight of cellar steps below a shop that had been closed for the night.

In an instant, the man was gone.

His flight was not seen by the unconscious Vincent. But eyes sharper than Vincent's had noted both the assailant and the direction of his flight. The Shadow had no intention of allowing this hit-run specialist to escape.

The Shadow had not appeared earlier, for a good reason. He had expected trouble. Aware that Barfield would have certain precautions planned in case of trouble, The Shadow had held himself in reserve, to take over in case Harry muffed his assignment.

He was aware that events tonight were only in the preliminary stage. Somewhere in Manhattan, Blue Face was preparing to make another of his vicious raids!

There was no proof yet that David Barfield and Blue Face were the same. But The Shadow was taking no chances.

A farther tailing of Barfield was impossible. He made good use of the wreck behind him. His car had already vanished at high speed toward the east side of town.

But Barfield had left behind him a direct link to his unknown game: the thug who had fled down the cellar steps across the silent avenue.

The Shadow darted toward the steps. He had one advantage. The thug was unaware that he was being followed. He thought that Harry Vincent was the only foe he had to consider. He had taken no chances in abandoning his smashed car. The license plates were stolen. The car itself had been stolen a week earlier, in Pennsylvania.

BLUE FACE

As The Shadow descended the cellar steps, his black robe seemed part of the darkness. The brim of his black slouch hat covered his forehead and dimmed the flame of his eyes. He stood utterly motionless in the gloom below the street, waiting for some sight or sound to betray the presence of the hit-and-run driver.

He knew that the man was somewhere in the blackness of the cellar ahead of him.

Suddenly, he heard a sigh. It was a sound of relief. A moment later, a ceiling light glowed in the cellar.

The Shadow, crouched in a black angle of the cellar wall, had a quick view of his foe. The man was peering back, a gun jutting menacingly from his hand. His face was a brutal one, in spite of his natty appearance.

The Shadow recognized that face. The man was Slug Narvo.

NARVO was a big-shot figure in the underworld. He headed an important mob. His mob controlled a lot of criminal business. Police had never been able to put much of a finger on them. They were cagey.

It looked as if Slug Narvo might know plenty about the secret identity of Blue Face.

Narvo left the cellar light on only for a second or two. The light convinced him that no one was trailing him. He snapped it off and continued his flight from the rear of the cellar.

The Shadow pursued, silently and unseen.

The chase led over a rear fence, through a yard littered with rubbish and tin cans. It brought The Shadow through the cellar of still another building. Narvo walked slowly westward along a side street. The Shadow paralleled him through the darkness on the other side.

Finally, he saw the goal toward which Narvo was heading. It was a large open-air parking lot. The place was filled with empty cars. They were parked in long rows, separated only by narrow aisles to permit the cars to be driven out to the street.

In the front of the lot was a small, lighted shack. Here the owner of the lot received his parking fees and issued receipt tickets.

Narvo walked to the shack. His voice was casual.

"Hello, pal. Got my car ready?"

"Sure!"

Nothing more was said. Narvo stayed where he was. The man walked back along one of the dark aisles.

The Shadow was a grim spectator of where the man was going. The Shadow had entered the lot from around the corner. He had found it not too hard to get over the woven-wire fence that closed off the lot from the sidewalk.

He was anxious to know where Narvo intended to go next. The best way to find out was to ride along with Narvo himself.

It seemed like an impossible task. The parking-lot attendant seemed suspicious. His eyes kept glancing here and there in the darkness, as if he sensed danger. But he saw nothing to alarm him.

BLUE FACE

Presently, he stopped alongside a sedan. This was the car Narvo was going to use. But it still seemed an impossible task to get into the trunk at the rear without the man knowing it.

It was necessary to get the man out of the car for a few moments, while The Shadow got in.

The engine of the car began to hum. The parking-lot man had switched on the motor. His next move was to turn on the lights. The moment he did so, he gave a little grunt of surprise. The beams of the headlights threw a bright glow on the dark exit aisle directly in front of the car.

On the concrete, a crumpled piece of paper was visible. There was something about its look and its color that brought that quick grunt from the lips of the attendant.

He jumped out and picked the paper up. It was a five-dollar bill, dropped by some careless motorist. At least, that was what the finder thought.

"This sure is my lucky night!" he muttered.

He went back to the car. A moment later, it got under way. He drove it to the front of the lot and turned it over to Slug Narvo.

"Anything stirring?" Narvo whispered

"Not a thing."

"Swell! Keep your trap shut. So long."

Narvo drove away, chuckling. In the trunk carrier at the rear, his chuckle was echoed by a tiny sound of sibilant laughter. The sound of the motor covered that mocking laugh of The Shadow.

Unknowingly, Slug Narvo was very obligingly taking The Shadow along as a passenger!

THE SHADOW lifted the lid of the trunk a trifle. Through the crack he could observe his progress without himself being noticed.

He saw that Narvo was driving aimlessly about the city. He knew why. Narvo was dawdling around to make doubly certain he was under no scrutiny before he proceeded to his real goal.

After fifteen minutes of this time-wasting, Narvo shoved his foot harder on the gas pedal. He drove over to the West Side and continued downtown. He paused finally outside an all-night garage. The door was open.

Slug drove right in.

There were a lot of cars in the garage. There seemed to be a lot of helpers, too. Most of them had faces that seemed tough. The overalls of some of them bulged slightly at the hip.

A man who seemed to be in charge walked over to where Narvo sat in his car. The man was grinning. There wasn't much mirth in his smile.

"Wanna park overnight, pal?"

"Yeah."

BLUE FACE

A repair job was being done on a car nearby. The driver, obviously a law-abiding citizen, was watching Narvo and the garage owner. Their small talk was for his benefit.

"The garage is filled," the tough guy in overalls said. "But we can accommodate you, if you don't mind parking out in back."

"Suits me," Narvo said.

He drove deeper into the garage. A metal door at the rear was hoisted by a mechanic. Through the opening, Narvo drove his sedan out to the rear. There was a paved courtyard between the back of the garage and what looked like a brick loft building.

The garage door dropped downward with a metallic clang. Narvo got out of his car, walked across the dark courtyard to the rear door of the brick building. The door looked as if it were made of solid steel, painted to disguise this fact.

All the windows above – as many as The Shadow could see from the cautiously opened crack in the trunk of the parked car – were closed by heavy steel shutters. The place looked like a veritable stronghold.

It was, in fact, the headquarters of Slug Narvo.

A man lay asleep on the stone steps that led to the door of this building. He was dressed in ragged clothes and looked like a bum. But his appearance was as deceptive as his sleep.

He got up when Narvo approached. There was a brief, whispered conversation between them. Then both chuckled. Evidently things were happening that pleased them.

Slug opened the steel door with a key he took from a leather container in his pocket. The key wasn't the only method he used to unlock that door. He did other things with his busy fingers, after he had turned the key in the lock. But The Shadow was unable to see. The crook's body masked the rapid movement of his hands.

As soon as Narvo had disappeared inside, the "bum" resumed his lazy sprawl on the stone steps. He made no further pretense of sleep, however. His beady eyes were bright.

He kept his glance moving restlessly toward the parked car, toward the rear of the garage, toward the entrance to a narrow alley that ran alongside the headquarters of Slug Narvo's mob. Evidently, Narvo had warned his henchman to keep a special vigil tonight.

Something big was brewing inside those sinister walls!

CHAPTER VII. THUGS' STRONGHOLD

THE SHADOW was still inside the trunk of Narvo's parked car in the dark courtyard.

Certain things were now clear to him. An entry through the formidable door of Narvo's headquarters was almost impossible. Even if the guard were put out of action, it would be a hopeless task to attack both the lock and the hidden gadgets which Narvo had so cleverly screened with his body when he had made his entrance to the gang stronghold.

Besides, The Shadow still wanted secrecy. His plan was to gain an entrance to that building without allowing

BLUE FACE

Narvo and his men to realize what was going on. It was clear enough now that an association of some kind existed between Narvo and David Barfield. The Shadow desired to learn more before showing his hand.

The car in which he was hidden was parked diagonally, so that the guard on the stone step opposite could not see the slight crack of the partly lifted trunk. The Shadow's problem was exactly the opposite of the one he had faced at the parking lot. There, he had to force a man to get out of the car so that he could get in. Here, he had to force a man to get in the car so that he could get out!

He used the open crack of the trunk lid to work his new scheme.

A black-gloved hand projected briefly. It held a length of lightweight cord, at the end of which was a running noose. There was a peculiar knot in that noose. It would enable The Shadow to loosen it with a quick jerk, after the noose had accomplished what he wanted.

One hand held the lid of the trunk slightly up, while the other skillfully tossed the noose. It dropped over the handle of the front door of the car on the side tilted away from the sharp eyes of the "bum."

The Shadow pulled slowly, with an evenly applied pressure. There was a faint click as the door of the car swung partly open. A jerk of The Shadow's wrist loosened the noose. He drew the thin cord backward and pulled it inside the trunk.

Almost instantly, he heard a grunt from the thug on guard. The thug had noticed the open front door of the car. He didn't dream that the thing had been done purposely. He figured that Narvo had closed the door too gently, and that it had swung open again. He came over to investigate.

What he did was what any normal man would've done. Having found the door faulty, he turned his attention to the car itself. He climbed in and tested the brake. He glanced at the instrument panel. Then he got out again, slamming the door hard to close it properly.

His inspection took only a few seconds. When he passed the rear of the car, his glance at the trunk carrier showed him that the lid was closed. He opened it just to make sure everything was all right.

The trunk carrier was empty!

The Shadow had moved even faster than a suspicious crook. He was now underneath the car.

Flat on the dark ground, his black robe melted into the pavement. His black slouch hat covered the blur of his face. Even if the thug had peered under the car, it was a probable that he would never have detected the presence of The Shadow underneath. But he didn't even look.

Satisfied that nothing was amiss, the thug went back to his post outside the rear door of Narvo's hangout.

While he was doing this The Shadow was on the move again.

NOISELESSLY, The Shadow bellied out from the front of the parked car and crawled swiftly across the black pavement to a spot close to the wall of an adjoining warehouse. He lay still, waiting his next chance.

It didn't come for quite a while. But presently the face of the guard shifted. He yawned noisily and produced a cigarette. There was a spurt of a match. The crook inhaled a big lungful of smoke. The flare of the match blinded him for a precious second or two. During that interval, The Shadow was again on the crawl. This time, he rounded the corner of the alley alongside Narvo's headquarters, moved completely out of sight.

BLUE FACE

Windows on this side were like the ones at the rear. They were all tightly covered by the stout steel shutters. Not a ray of light showed from any of those upstairs rooms. To get inside through one of those steel-covered windows would be a long and difficult task. And the risk of alarming the thugs inside was too great.

The Shadow wasted no time trying to reach one of the shuttered windows. He used the drainpipe that ran vertically up the side of the brick building, in an angle of the alley wall. His goal was the roof. The angle of the wall helped him climb the pipe to the roof.

It was a tough task. Several times, The Shadow had to halt, and blink the sweat out of his eyes. But he finally made it. He was able to reach above his head and catch a projecting cornice.

Then he was on the roof, lying prone to relax his strained muscles. The roof was flat, and covered with tar paper. There was no guard posted up here. Evidently the location of the building made the roof seem invasion-proof. The courtyard and the alley separated Narvo's hangout from other roofs. The street end of the alley was closed off by a high fence that made an attack from there unlikely.

Indeed, The Shadow suspected that the alley fence out in front was probably rigged up with some sort of alarm device.

He crawled carefully toward the roof scuttle. It was a square scuttle, with an ordinary chain and hook underneath. It was added proof that Slug Narvo and his henchmen were not worried about the raids from above.

The Shadow made a faint rap with his knuckles. He listened. The faint echo from below told him something of what lay below the scuttle. The echo was too loud to come from a small closet. The place underneath was probably a windowless room of the storeroom type.

The sound of the echo from below told The Shadow one more thing. The room itself was undoubtedly empty.

Gently, he forced the edge of the scuttle upward. He used special tools that he always carried. When the scuttle covering had been forced high enough for The Shadow's hands to slide in through the crack, another tool, with lean steel jaws of terrific cutting capacity, took care of the chain and hook that fastened the scuttle on the inner side.

He stared down into a bare and empty room. The door was closed. A light in the ceiling showed The Shadow that he had nothing to fear from any watchful thug.

He produced a slim, tough rope from below his robe. Fastening it to the scuttle hook, he slid quietly downward so as to avoid any betraying jar of his feet when he landed on the floor.

He had barely started to slide down, when something happened that no foresight on his part could have anticipated. A man entered the room from the hallway outside! He was just in time to see the black-robed figure of The Shadow halfway down the dangling rope!

THE thug was petrified with astonishment. For an instant, he stood staring upward with gaping jaws. Then his hand darted to his hip for a gun. At the same time, he tried to scream a warning to his pals in other parts of the house.

He had no chance to do either. The Shadow was on the floor at the foot of the rope when the thug made his first movement. A swift bound took The Shadow toward his foe. A black-gloved hand clamped tightly over the opened mouth of the criminal. Another hand clutched at his halfdrawn gun.

BLUE FACE

The Shadow knew he was fighting for his life. Mobsters would come pouring into the room in an instant, if a scream or a shot were permitted. The knowledge of his peril gave added strength to the hands of The Shadow. The gun was wrenched loose as the struggling thug fought to tear himself away from the throttling hand across his mouth.

He collapsed without a sound, when the butt of the captured gun thudded against the back of his skull. The Shadow caught the tumbling body before it fell to the floor.

His glance moved backward over his shoulder, toward the rope that still dangled from the open roof scuttle. There was nothing else to do but to carry the prisoner up that rope and hide his unconscious body on the roof. Any other course would be suicidal.

And there was an excellent chance that the captured thug would not be missed until The Shadow had accomplished his purpose inside this stronghold of crime.

Slowly, he went up the rope, the limp body of the thug draped around his shoulders. It made his previous task of climbing the water pipe seem trivial by comparison. But The Shadow made it at last. He laid the captive crook on the tarred roof and fixed the scuttle so that it fitted fairly well into place. Then he slid down the rope again.

This time, he jerked gently to left and right until the trick knot he had tied came loose. The fallen rope was wound around his body beneath his black robe.

The Shadow slipped from the storeroom to a dim top-floor hallway. He advanced cautiously in the direction of a stairway that led below.

From behind closed doors he could hear the snores of sleeping men. Evidently there was no thought of peril inside this well-guarded house. The thug on duty below and the one on the top floor were expected to give a swift alarm in case of trouble.

As The Shadow crept down the stairs to a lower floor, he observed the hallway was only dimly lighted.

The Shadow noticed a closet door in the hall. There were two other doors that led to closed rooms. One of the rooms seemed to be in darkness. But from beneath the crack of the other door – the room opposite the hall closet – a bright band of light showed that the room was occupied.

A hum of talk from within was dimly audible. The Shadow crept closer. Dropping to one knee, he was able to press his ear tightly against the panel near the tiny gap of the keyhole.

As he did so, he heard a familiar voice within. The voice of the speaker was shrill with a note of worry.

It was David Barfield!

"– not so sure about that," Barfield was saying. "Are you positive that the man who tried to trail me last night was not a... a detective?"

"It's my job to know every plain-clothes dick in the city!" The second voice was heavy with impatience. "I had a good look at that mug in the wrecked car, before I ducked out of sight. I don't know who the sap was, but he wasn't a plain-clothes bull. You can take my word for that!"

The Shadow recognized that ugly second voice. It was Slug Narvo's.

BLUE FACE

The keyhole opening gave The Shadow an opportunity to watch the faces of the two men within. The millionaire was hunched forward at the side of the mob leader's desk, his face tense with worry.

Narvo, behind the desk, seemed to be more at ease. There was a suspicion of a sneer on his lips as he stared at the millionaire realty owner.

"What the hell are you worrying for? I'm not!"

"Suppose that man whose car you wrecked was an agent of The Shadow?"

"Why should he be?"

"Because The Shadow suspects something! I can't prove it, but I'll swear The Shadow was inside my home this afternoon. I'm afraid he may have discovered the secret passage from my private elevator to the street in the rear of my home."

"What!"

NARVO'S tone changed. There was surprise and rage in it. He listened, with a scowl, while Barfield talked further.

"I heard a faint sound from my suite in the east wing," the millionaire went on. "I sneaked downstairs with a gun. I couldn't find a thing wrong. But the elevator was at the ground floor and its door was open. The tunnel door was closed, however. There was no trace of anyone in the passage."

"Then why do you suspect The Shadow?" Narvo growled.

"Because I heard him laugh. It was as plain as any sound I ever heard in my life! He was there, I'm sure of that! Yet, when I searched every nook and cranny of the ground floor, there was no trace of him."

"You imagined it," Narvo said. "Your nerves are on edge. Forget it. Just remember that you and I are working together. Nothing on earth can stop us. Not even The Shadow!"

Narvo blew smoke from an expensive cigar.

"Let's get back to business. Let's talk about your heirs. Clee is dead. Blue Face bumped him. That leaves two more. One of them is James Whorter, the other guy is Elliot Peabody. Right?"

"Right," Barfield whispered.

"They share your estate, every penny of it, if you croak before they do. On the other hand, if they croak first, their money goes to you. Correct?"

"That's right. But what has that got to do with it? I've told you already what my only interest is in this matter. I'm paying you plenty for the help of you and your gang. Tonight, I'm going to need that help. May I suggest that it is already getting quite late? Why don't we get going?"

"We got time. What about your rental agent, this fellow Harrison? Do you think he suspects anything? And what about John Shipton? I think it's high time me and my boys handled Shipton!"

BLUE FACE

"Harrison knows nothing," Barfield remarked. "He has no idea who Shipton really is. I didn't know about it myself until long after Shipton had married Harrison's daughter Elaine. Then I discovered it purely by accident."

"Shipton is one of your heirs, eh?"

"Not my heir!" There was anger in Barfield's curt growl. "But he is one of my nephews. I had four sisters. When I started in business years ago, I had very little money. Three of my sisters agreed to – ah – co-operate when I asked them for their savings. The fourth sister accused me of some regrettable things, and refused to let me have a penny. John Shipton is her son."

"And now all your sisters are dead, including the one you didn't like," Narvo said softly. "And Shipton blames you for the later death of his father and mother. He hates your guts, in fact."

"That is true," Barfield said. "Shipton would do anything to get revenge for what he thinks is my – ah – heartless treatment of his mother. A false accusation, of course."

"I believe he would not hesitate to kill me, if he got the chance. Or to kill my other two nephews and leave himself as my only living relative in the event of my death occurring before his."

"Maybe Shipton is Blue Face," Narvo said.

"Perhaps," the millionaire replied slowly.

"Perhaps! That's all you ever say! You're sure you don't know who Blue Face is?"

"What does it matter who he is, as long as you and your mob carry out your contract with me?"

"O.K. Leave it that way. But I'd like to ask one more question."

"What?"

"If this guy Shipton is such a damned nuisance to you, why don't you let me and my boys handle him right now?"

"No!" Barfield spat it harshly. "Your job tonight is to do what I've arranged. We're going to take care of James Whorter tonight!"

Narvo grinned, and expelled a mouthful of smoke.

"O.K. You're the boss. You sure Whorter won't be in his own apartment tonight?"

"I'm positive! He's visiting a man named Blair." Barfield's words were bitter with contempt. "No doubt, they've got together to discuss their chief interest in life – horses and women!"

HE rose impatiently. So did Slug Narvo. They moved toward the door.

The Shadow had to beat a quick retreat. A moment before the door opened, The Shadow faded inside the closet across the hall.

Barfield shook hands with the mob leader and went down the stairs. Narvo remained in the open doorway of the lighted room opposite the closet.

The Shadow would have liked to keep on the trail of David Barfield, but that opportunity was denied him by the presence of Narvo opposite the closet. From downstairs came a heavy clang of metal. The Shadow knew what it meant. Barfield had left the house by way of the guarded back door.

A moment later, the sound of a car motor was dimly audible from outside. Barfield was wasting no time in getting away.

Narvo turned and went back into his room. But by some ill chance he did not close his door behind him. Sitting at his desk, he was visible in the lighted room opposite the hall closet. The closet, of course, was also visible to Narvo from where he sat.

Fate had marooned The Shadow at an instant when he wanted desperately to be on the move!

But he had no choice. It was still of supreme importance to keep Narvo and his gang from realizing that The Shadow was already inside their fortified hangout.

The Shadow waited.

CHAPTER VIII. KILLER'S TRAP

ALTHOUGH The Shadow had to wait inside a stuffy closet, he was not idle by any means. His senses and perceptions were grimly on the alert.

The closet was different from an ordinary closet. For one thing, it was curiously shallow. For another, it contained no shelves, no hooks on the back walls on which to hang clothing. The Shadow examined that rear wall with the tips of sensitive fingers.

After a brief interval, he snapped on the light of a tiny electric torch. The torch was no larger in diameter than a pencil. It threw only a thin beam.

But the beam was powerful enough to show The Shadow certain aspects of the rear wall in the closet, that confirmed the judgment already made in the darkness by his fingertips. The rear closet wall was a farce. It was, in fact, a camouflaged door that could be opened by a persistent man whose patience was only matched by his sharp intelligence in matters of this kind.

The rear wall of the closet finally slid aside into a groove in the house wall. A large inner room was disclosed.

Again, the tiny beam of The Shadow's light probed the stuffy darkness of an inclosed space. This inner room was like the one on the top floor. No windows cut its walls. There were no other doors. The air smelled close and stale.

But it was at the floor of the room that The Shadow gazed in grim understanding. The place was a veritable arsenal!

The Shadow could see racks of guns. Some of them were sawed-off shotguns. Others were even more deadly weapons: automatic rifles. There was ammunition piled neatly in many boxes. There was a case of tear-gas

BLUE FACE

cartridges. There was something even more deadly – small incendiary bombs, that suggested Slug Narvo and his gang were proficient in the art of arson.

However, there was one fact about this secret room that puzzled The Shadow. It had no exit except the one through the closet in the hallway of the house.

This seemed a queer fact to the shrewd brain of The Shadow. If police ever raided this house, it would be an impossible task to get rid of all this damning evidence quickly. The capture of it by police would mean long jail terms for Slug Narvo and his mobsmen. There must be some swift way for them to dispose of all this contraband armament in the event of a swift police raid.

Where was the secret exit?

It must be an extraordinary efficient one, for it would have to be designed to get rid of the criminal evidence almost in the twinkling of an eye.

The Shadow began to search with patient care. His eyes lifted from the deadly merchandise of death on the floor to the walls of the room. The walls were bare, with only one exception: a cheap calendar tacked to the plaster.

Or rather, a calendar that was not tacked to the plaster. The tack was fully two feet above the top of the wire-suspended calendar.

The Shadow moved forward to investigate.

Then, suddenly, he whirled. He had heard the voice of Narvo from the open room across the hallway outside the closet entrance. Narvo was talking loudly into a telephone. The Shadow retraced quick steps to listen.

"Hey, Joe!" Narvo was shouting into the phone. "What's the matter? Can't you hear?... We got a job tonight! Wake up the boys on the top floor. Tell them to get ready. Hey – Joe!"

There was no answer. The Shadow realized the reason for the silence from the upper floor. Joe was the guard whom The Shadow had put out of action. His unconscious body, gagged and bound, lay out of sight on the roof of the crooks' hangout.

At almost the same instant. Narvo sensed that something was wrong with his top-floor sentry. He pressed another button on his desk panel, switched to somebody downstairs.

"Pug! You there?... Listen! Something phony is going on! I don't know what, but Joe ain't on duty up above. He don't answer."

There was an inaudible reply. Narvo spoke again.

"Put a guard on the downstairs door. Blast anyone who tries to escape from the house!"

He raced from the lighted room and tore swiftly up the stairs. The Shadow could hear Narvo's furious shouts. Other shouts answered. The "boys" were all wide awake now. There was a terrific commotion.

THE SHADOW profited by this brief delay. He dashed boldly across the hall from the closet, raced into Narvo's office.

BLUE FACE

From beneath his cloak, he snatched a diamond cutter. Its hard point bit into the glass pane of Narvo's window. The glass was laid aside. The steel shutters that screened the window were opened by the swift hands of The Shadow. He looked like a man eager to make a desperate leap to freedom from a high window. But that was merely an illusion.

Instead of leaping to the alley below, The Shadow tossed his cloak downward. He weighted it with an object snatched from Narvo's desk. The cloak landed almost exactly where The Shadow intended it. From above, it looked like the crouched figure of a man bent close to the dark base of the alley wall.

The Shadow darted back across the hallway and into the closet. He retreated through the wall of the closet, into the windowless arsenal room. He headed for the calendar that hung from a thin wire on the plaster wall.

By this time, the mobsters on the top floor had discovered what had happened to the mysteriously vanished Joe. A quick search disclosed that the roof scuttle had been forced by a clever intruder.

Joe's bound-and-gagged body was found writhing on the roof. Swift knives slashed his tight bonds. The gag was ripped from his mouth. He uttered a hate-filled snarl:

"The Shadow!"

Narvo listened to the discomfited guard's story. One thing was instantly clear to Narvo and the rest of his mobsters.

The Shadow was still inside the house!

He had not escaped by way of the roof. It was also impossible for him to have sneaked past that steel rear door downstairs through which David Barfield had departed.

"Search the whole damned place!" Narvo shouted. "You boys start here from the top floor. The rest can work upstairs from the cellar with me. And don't miss a crack or a knothole. If you see The Shadow, blow him to pieces!"

The search began – a deadly search by enraged crooks. It took considerable time. But it yielded no captive.

The thugs moving from above and those from below met in the hallway outside the closet into which The Shadow had vanished. Narvo pointed to the closed door.

"Look in there! It's the only place he could have gone."

His hand was on the closet door, when there came a startling interruption. One of the prowling mobbies had entered Narvo's office. His yell brought the rest pouring in. He pointed to the cut-out windowpane and the open shutter. Heads peered watchfully into the alley below.

It was Narvo who saw the cloak at the base of the alley hall. His gun pointed at what he thought was the crouched figure of The Shadow.

"Freeze!" Narvo snarled. "One move, and I'll rip your guts with lead! Go get him, boys!"

Narvo didn't fire for fear the noise of shooting might attract attention from the street in front of the house. It cost him an effort not to pull the trigger. He was wild with rage at the way The Shadow had penetrated into his stronghold.

BLUE FACE

But soon his rage increased. His henchmen, racing from the house, had surrounded the cloaked fugitive. They sprang closer, to capture him. Then they yelled with dismay.

They found themselves grappling with an empty black cloak weighted with an object from Narvo's own desk.

They were called back into the house by the mob leader. His rage had changed to grim understanding. He began to sense what lay behind The Shadow's strategy. Once more, he sent his men toward the hall closet.

A hand flung open the door. The closet was empty. At Narvo's nod, one of his henchmen manipulated the mechanism to open the closet's fake rear wall. Guns lifted in readiness to blast The Shadow into bloody shreds.

THE SHADOW, however, was not idle. His trickery had given him a precious margin of time. He wasn't wasting it.

A silent leap toward the wall of the arsenal room had carried him to the calendar that had excited his suspicion. He jerked at the thin wire that suspended it from the tack.

The result was startling.

Except for a narrow strip along the base of the wall where The Shadow stood, the whole floor of the arsenal room hinged suddenly downward. Everything on that tilted floor slid into a black chute!

It happened with appalling swiftness. Guns, cases of ammunition, incendiary bombs – the whole deadly cargo of death hidden in this windowless room vanished downward into blackness.

One object, however, remained. Before The Shadow had yanked at the wire, he had seized one of the arson bombs. It was clutched in his hand as he stood on the narrow strip of flooring at the base of the wall.

Holding the bomb, The Shadow stared downward. He had no idea what lay below. But logic told him that the safest course for him to take would be to follow the vanished evidence. Crooks had arranged the chute device to enable them to get rid of contraband evidence in a hurry. Somewhere in that darkness below, there must be a way of getting the stuff out of the mob headquarters in rapid fashion.

The Shadow prepared to leap to the slippery slant of the chute.

It was at this instant that Narvo's mobsters appeared. The sight of The Shadow brought a yell from the first thug to emerge from the hall closet. His gun spat flame.

But the mobster was too eager. Lead flicked past the face of The Shadow, a slug thudded into the plaster wall close to his face.

The Shadow fired in return. His bullet caught the thug in the leg. The crook staggered backward. His place was taken by two more of his pals. They fired as fast as they could jerk triggers of their guns.

No shots were returned by The Shadow. He had pulled the pin mechanism in the arson grenade which he had salvaged from Narvo's deadly collection. He threw the bomb toward his enemies.

There was an instant burst of flame. It was a white-hot brilliance that dazzled the eyes. No smoke came from it. The thing was evidently a thermite bomb.

BLUE FACE

The woodwork of the closet began to blaze vigorously. Wherever the deadly liquid inside the arson bomb splattered, more flames began to lick along dry woodwork.

A wall of flame roared and spread between The Shadow and his pursuers. The thugs flung themselves backward to escape from the hot inferno. The Shadow, too, was in danger of roasting to death.

He fled the flame by leaping feet first into the chute.

Downward into darkness he whizzed at terrific speed. He could see nothing. He braced himself for a bone-numbing crash.

But the end of that queer slide was as strange as its beginning. The Shadow found his fall broken by a padded floor. As he staggered to his feet in darkness, his forehead cracked against the sharp corner of a wooden case. On the padded floor in front of him he could feel a jumble of the cases and boxes that had slid down the chute ahead of him.

For a brief moment, The Shadow flashed his light. What he saw brought understanding laughter to his lips.

He had slid downward to the padded floor of a covered truck!

Climbing over the wooden cases, he reached the cowed front seat of the truck. It was empty. In front of the parked truck was only blackness. The Shadow switched on the truck's lights.

Ahead of the motionless vehicle was a long concrete tunnel. There was just enough clearance for the wheels of the truck. There was just enough headroom for its top.

The Shadow started the engine drove the truck onward through the tunnel.

He emerged where he expected. The Shadow was in a basement below the garage through which he had ridden earlier as a stowaway in Narvo's automobile.

AN elevator platform showed how the truck could be lifted to the garage for a quick getaway to the street. The Shadow drove the truck aboard the elevator. He started the mechanism. The lift rose slowly.

At the top, he found thugs waiting for him. The whine of the ascending cage had warned the garage pals of Narvo. Their guns snarled.

The Shadow, crouched low in the truck's seat, heard the whistle of bullets ripping dangerously close to his body. He gave his steering wheel a desperate whirl and fed the engine gas.

One of the thugs screamed as a heavy tire crunched over his foot. The rest ducked out of danger.

As his truck thundered toward the open front of the garage, The Shadow fired only a single shot. He fired at a crook who had raced to the side of the doorway. The thug was trying to lower the ponderous vertical door.

The Shadow's bullet ruined that smart idea. The man at the doorway toppled with a wounded leg doubled under him. Before the steel barrier could descend, The Shadow and the stolen truck were out in the street.

With a roar of power, The Shadow drove westward.

BLUE FACE

Shooting had attracted the attention of a patrolman. He blew his whistle and raced toward the garage. Back of the garage, a red stain was spreading across the black sky overhead. The Shadow's arson bomb had doomed the headquarters of Narvo.

Racing toward The Shadow, the cop thought he was dealing with a criminal. He fired as quickly as he could bring his gun into play. The Shadow, hunched low, drove his heavy vehicle in zigzags.

A ponderous rear wheel grazed the curb. The onrushing cop had to leap swiftly aside to save his life.

The Shadow swung around a corner. He fed gas to the powerful engine. The truck's speedometer needle climbed.

It was high time. Squad cars, warned by radio, were on the move. The sirens of fire apparatus were audible as the red glow in the sky began to assume more threatening proportions.

The Shadow had no further use for his stolen truck. He got rid of it in a spot where police would be sure to recover it. He drove it off the end of an open pier into the Hudson River.

Just before the truck leaped from the stringpiece, The Shadow jumped to safety. He raced into the darkness of a water-front street.

Soon he was in another car. He had a definite goal to reach. He drove as fast as he dared without attracting attention. He was heading toward the apartment of a man named Howard Blair.

The Shadow knew that James Whorter, one of the two surviving heirs of David Barfield, was visiting Blair tonight.

He knew that Barfield, using his "invalid" alibi, had sneaked secretly from his mansion. Barfield was in league with Narvo's mob. Barfield was also probably heading for the Blair home. Perhaps he was already there!

The Shadow had destroyed Narvo's stronghold, but his achievement had wasted considerable time. The stage was set for another appearance by Blue Face.

Was The Shadow too late to intervene?

CHAPTER IX. DEATH IN BLUE

HOWARD BLAIR wasn't exactly drunk. But neither was he exactly sober. He smiled owlishly at James Whorter, as he poured out more drinks from a bottle of very expensive whiskey.

"I am feeling no pain whatever," Whorter chuckled.

Their faces were flushed. They had been discussing topics that appealed to both of them. Race horses, yachts, polo ponies, lovely ladies.

Whorter was trying to interest Blair in a fishing cruise to the Gulf of Mexico. That was why he had called on his fellow playboy this evening. The living room of the apartment was filled with maps and guide books on tropical fishing. The rest of the apartment was dark.

BLUE FACE

It was from one of these dark rooms that an unlooked-for interruption came. A vase fell from a table and crashed to pieces on the floor.

"What the devil was that?" Whorter asked. "The wind must have blown something over."

"There's no wind to blow anything," Blair replied. "All the windows in there are closed."

Whorter yawned, and displayed no further interest. But Blair looked alarmed. He had drunk as much as his visitor, but he could hold his liquor better.

"Sounds like a burglar," he growled. "I'm going in and have a look."

He got to his feet. In his mind was an uneasy remembrance that there had been a lot of burglaries lately. The papers had been full of news about a marijuana-crazed criminal who had wounded a lot of people, and killed a few, too, in order to steal a few paltry dollars in loot.

Blair walked unsteadily toward a desk, where he kept a small automatic pistol. He never reached it. A voice from the doorway of the dark room beyond was rasping an ominous order.

"Stand still!"

Blair whirled. So did Whorter. Then both men uttered a choked cry of alarm. Their hands lifted in terror above their heads.

They were staring at a hideous-looking intruder. His head and face looked like the shriveled skull of an Egyptian mummy. A helmet of blue plastic material, like wrinkled Cellophane, fitted closely over the burglar's skull. Unlike Cellophane, it couldn't be seen through. It merely emphasized the sharp jut of nose and ears and chin behind the opaque covering.

Twin slits permitted the man to see. His hidden eyes gleamed like flame.

He wore dark-blue clothing. In one hand he gripped the gun that was aimed ominously at the two men he had surprised. In his other hand was a lighted cigarette.

The odor from the cigarette made Blair and Whorter sniff sharply. Their faces paled. They knew what sort of cigarette the burglar was holding. A "reefer"!

The identity of the burglar was clear to these two frightened nephews of David Barfield. They shuddered as they remembered the fate of their fellow heir, Charles Clee.

"Take it easy," Blue Face snarled, in a high-pitched whine that was obviously a disguise. "I want money!"

"We don't have much cash," Blair faltered. "Matter of fact, neither of us has more than a few dollars in our wallets."

Blue Face snickered.

"Your wallets will do. Don't you read the newspapers? I'm just a cheapskate. I don't bother about big money."

His voice changed to a menacing growl.

BLUE FACE

"Toss your wallets at my feet. And be careful. I shoot people who annoy me by trying to be smart!"

The wallets were tossed on the floor at his feet. Blue Face made no move to pick them up.

Not once had the lighted cigarette in his left hand touched his lips, where a narrow slit in the blue covering permitted Blue Face to breathe and to talk. Without removing his eyes from either Whorter or Blair, he dropped the cigarette on the expensive rug near where the wallets had fallen.

His foot crushed the cigarette flat, extinguishing it. He didn't pick up the butt. He allowed it to lie there.

His victims didn't realize it, but Blue Face was calmly waiting for something to happen that he wished to encourage.

BLUE FACE was aware of the exact positions of the two men who stood in motionless terror under the menace of his gun. Whorter stood almost in the center of the room, his face like chalk. He was still thinking of Charles Clee.

Blair was thinking of Clee, too. But Blair's position in the room was more favorable for defensive action. He stood almost at the edge of an open doorway. The doorway gave access to a little sitting room. In that room was a telephone.

Blair began showing a lot more terror than he actually felt. He swayed sideways. His side glance showed him that he was in a spot from which he could leap into the sitting room and slam and lock the door.

Suddenly, he whirled. His backward leap was swift. The door slammed behind him under the terrific jerk of his hand. The key turned on the inside of the lock.

Blair leaped for the telephone. His excited voice could be heard dimly outside the locked room. He was telephoning police headquarters to tip them off about Blue Face.

Blue Face knew this. It was exactly what he wanted. But he pretended otherwise.

He sent a couple of bullets ripping through the panel of the door. The fact that he fired much too high to hit a man inside the room, was lost on Blair. Blair was crouched over the telephone, in the inner room, yelling an excited call for help to the police.

Blue Face hadn't moved an inch since the moment he had so coolly mashed out the lighted marijuana cigarette he had dropped on the rug. He continued to stare out of slitted eyes at the rigid figure of James Whorter. There was something in that gaze that made Whorter's blood run cold with terror. He didn't move. He hardly dared breathe.

Blue Face's chuckle was like the rasp of a saw.

"Excuse the shots, please. That was just to prove to the police that my reputation as a jittery burglar is a deserved one. Actually, I prefer Blair to remain alive. You're the one who's going to die, my friend!"

"Why?" Whorter gasped.

"Because it's time for another accident to happen. You don't know it, but you tried to grapple with me, see? I was forced to shoot you in order to get away from the police, whom Blair has so conveniently summoned. Blair will tell the police that it was another robbery by a nervous hophead. You, of course, will tell them

BLUE FACE

nothing. You, Mr. Whorter, will be dead!"

Blue Face's breath hissed.

"And do you know why? Because I began planning to kill you a long time ago. Not for the contents of your wallet, either!"

Whorter moaned. He knew he was doomed. But the realization of his peril served to give him a kind of desperate courage.

It was a case of die like a rat – or like a man. In that last instant of his life, Whorter chose to be a man. He leaped toward the leveled gun of Blue Face.

He almost succeeded. He got one hand on the barrel of the gun and tried to twist it aside. Blue Face and his victim swayed together.

Then the gun roared.

Blue Face darted backward with quick agility. Whorter remained upright for a second, his face blurred. Then he toppled to the floor. There was a thud as his forehead hit the polished wood. He never moved.

WITH the death of Whorter accomplished, Blue Face changed to a dynamo of swift energy. The two wallets that still lay on the rug were picked up and stuffed carelessly into his coat pocket. He turned to flee.

It was high time. The shots which Blue Face had pumped through the closed door of the sitting room had attracted attention outside the apartment.

It was clear to Blue Face what was probably happening out in that corridor of the building. A tenant had notified the elevator operator. The operator had dropped his car swiftly to the street level to get a policeman.

The rear exit from Blair's apartment seemed like the best bet for a burglar on the run. Yet the choice made by Blue Face was exactly the opposite.

Walking almost as calmly as if he were taking a stroll in Central Park, he unlocked the front door of Blair's apartment and stepped out into the corridor.

There was no one in sight. The tenant who had given the alarm had ducked back into his own suite. But there was a tiny bit of movement in the corridor that did not escape the slitted gaze of Blue Face.

The arrow indicator at the door of the elevator shaft was moving. The elevator was rising from the street level at a fast pace.

Blue Face knew what to expect. A policeman from a nearby beat was coming up to shoot it out. Other police, summoned over the telephone by the barricaded Blair, were racing to the scene in swift squad cars.

Blue Face had planned on all of this – and more. He was ready!

When the elevator halted at the floor level, Blue Face was not in sight. He remained hidden until the door of the lift slid open.

A uniformed policeman sprang out with drawn gun, raced toward the door of Blair's apartment.

BLUE FACE

He never reached it. A bullet from the hidden killer struck him in the back, badly wounding him. The cop pitched to the tiled floor of the corridor. The gun slid from his nerveless fingers.

An instant later, Blue Face was inside the elevator. His leap carried him there before the terrified operator could slide the door shut.

"Down!" Blue Face snarled.

His voice and the horrible blue mask over his head brought prompt obedience from the terrified operator. Blue Face leaned closer. He brought the butt of his gun down on the back of the operator's skull. There was a sickening thud. The man collapsed to the floor of the swiftly descending car.

Blue Face took over the control handle. He stopped the car at the street level. Blue Face knew all about this building. He had scouted it beforehand, to be ready for just such an emergency.

He knew that the elevator shaft was in the rear of the lobby. The lobby itself was a long one; the switchboard desk was located at the front, as were the leather chairs for the convenience of visitors.

The elevator shaft at the narrow L-shaped rear of the lobby could not easily be seen from the street.

Blue Face added to the darkness by extinguishing a ceiling light.

His next move was utterly fantastic. There seemed to be neither sense nor meaning in it.

He reached up over the door of the elevator shaft. In the darkness, he could feel the shape of a small metal arrow – the floor indicator.

Blue Face gave that arrow a quick, muscular jerk. He broke the electrical contact that operated it. When he was sure the mechanism was broken and the arrow couldn't be moved except by a push of the hand, he set the arrow at a spot he wished.

He could feel the raised letter "B" on the darkness of the dial. "B" stood for "Basement." That was the location in which Blue Face left the broken arrow pointer.

HE tiptoed to the angle of the foyer and peered toward the front. There was only one dim light burning there. The light was in the ceiling over the desk where the switchboard man usually sat. The desk was now empty.

Blue Face had counted on that, too. He knew that at night, as in most other apartments, the switchboard man had to run the elevator, too.

Blue Face moved stealthily through this dimly lit area toward the street door.

There was no longer a gun in his hand. He had shoved the weapon out of sight with the two wallets he had stolen from Blair's apartment. He carried something else in his clenched right hand.

The manner in which he had transferred it from his pocket to his hand indicated that the object might be very fragile. It was small, too. It couldn't be seen in the crook of Blue Face's curled fingers, as he advanced toward the safety of the street.

Suddenly, Blue Face halted.

BLUE FACE

He had heard nothing, nor had he seen anything to alarm a normal person. But he was like a wild beast skirting the edges of a trap.

He sensed that a foe was waiting for him beyond the dim confines of the lobby. He turned suddenly, as if to retrace his steps.

The turn was pure fake. Blue Face had no intention of fleeing by the back exit from the building. He anticipated correctly that the rear exit would be one of the first spots reached by the police.

But the apparent retreat of the wily Blue Face accomplished its purpose. A figure appeared suddenly from the vestibule of the street lobby. It was a figure that seemed part of the darkness itself.

Twin .45s gleamed in black-gloved hands. Eyes that matched the power in the eyes of Blue Face stared at the half-turned criminal. A voice uttered a grim command:

"Stop!"

Blue Face froze in his tracks. His hands lifted above his mummified head in token of surrender.

He was facing the only foe he dreaded. It was the supreme foe against whom Blue Face had made so many cunning preparations.

The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. A CUNNING FOE

FOR what seemed an eternity, a master of evil and a master of justice stared at each other. The eyes of The Shadow were like molten steel boring into the slitted eyeholes of Blue Face's mask.

Blue Face's terror was only partly assumed. In spite of himself, he felt a chill of fear chase up and down his spine. His upraised arms quivered.

But his evil will conquered his fear. He had come prepared to elude The Shadow. Inside one of his clenched hands was the fragile pellet which he had palmed after he had left the elevator.

Under the menace of The Shadow's .45s, Blue Face didn't dare move either of his hands. But movement wasn't necessary to achieve the surprise he had planned. He merely opened his left hand.

The object of his grasp fell to the tiled floor of the apartment foyer. It smashed with a faint tinkle of shattered glass.

As it smashed, Blue Face leaped backward. He vanished instantly into a cloud of smoke that spread rapidly in a thick and blinding fog. The smoke was whitish-yellow. It gave off a choking, acrid odor. The fumes bit into the lungs of The Shadow and made him cough horribly as he leaped forward in pursuit of Blue Face.

It was impossible for The Shadow to see, to breathe. But he struck out fiercely with a clubbed gun. The blindly delivered blow found a mark. It landed with a glancing impact against the blue-wrapped head of the criminal.

Blue Face uttered a shrill cry. He staggered aside. The Shadow tried to clutch at him in the smoke fog, and

BLUE FACE

missed. The thick yellowish vapor was like the bite of flame in The Shadow's lungs. He coughed rackingly as he stumbled blindly ahead.

His eyes were useless. But his ears gave him a clue that his eyes denied him. He heard the slam of an elevator door at the rear of the foyer.

The sound galvanized The Shadow into action. He fought his way through the choking smoke to the elevator door. The shaft door was closed. It was impossible to tell whether Blue Face had fled upward or down in the car.

Using his sensitive fingers as a guide, The Shadow reached up over the door of the shaft and felt the pointer mechanism. The metal arrow that showed the position of the elevator in the shaft pointed all the way over to the left of the dial. Above the point of the motionless arrow was a raised letter. The letter was "B."

The Shadow made a logical deduction, that Blue Face had descended to the basement and had left the car there.

He raced a few feet farther along the rear foyer, to where a tiny red glow indicated the location of the fire stairs.

Down those steel-inclosed stairs, The Shadow ran. He hoped to head off Blue Face before the fleeing criminal could reach the rear court behind the apartment building. Once in that court, Blue Face had only to scale a fence. It was the last barrier between him and freedom.

Blue Face heard the mistaken pursuit of The Shadow, from a spot where he waited in grim silence. He was crouched against the darkened foyer wall, in an angle of the lobby that was not more than a few feet from the closed door of the elevator. His slamming of the shaft door had been, of course, only a sly trick to deceive The Shadow. Having slammed the door, Blue Face had merely retreated a few feet and held his breath.

Over his nostrils and mouth was a small cloth that had been dipped in something that smelled faintly of cloves. Its protective moisture kept him from revealing himself by agonized coughing caused by the dense smoke.

A moment later, Blue Face was walking with catlike silence toward the street door of the building. He opened the door cautiously, then slipped calmly to the dark sidewalk outside.

He glanced up and down the street.

There were four cars parked at the curb. All were empty. Blue Face ducked into obscurity. It was impossible to say whether he had entered one of the cars, or had faded down a flight of cellar steps near the fourth and last car.

That was the last time that Blue Face was visible. Minute followed minute. He did not reappear.

THE SHADOW, in the meantime, was far from idle. Unaware that he had been cunningly sent on a false trail, he raced to the cellar of the apartment building. He darted his flashlight into every nook and cranny where the elusive Blue Face might have hidden himself for a final desperate stand.

The flashlight showed nothing. The Shadow raced out the back door and into a concrete-paved court. It was the only place to which Blue Face could have fled from the basement. The other two doors of the cellar were locked on the inside.

BLUE FACE

The Shadow ran for the high fence at the rear of the court. An attempt had been made to beautify the court by a wide flowerbed, planted along the base of the rear fence.

Ignoring the flowers, The Shadow planted his feet firmly and leaped upward. His fingers caught the top of the fence and hauled him up. He sent the beam of his torch along the ground on the other side.

Instantly, he had an unpleasant thought in the back of his mind. The Shadow's senses were trained to detect the slightest trace of a fleeing man on a trail as fresh as this. He could discover nothing to show that Blue Face had vaulted over the fence to which The Shadow now clung.

For the first time since the yellowish smoke had hidden Blue Face, The Shadow began to suspect the truth.

He leaped backward to the courtyard. The ray of his torch flitted over the flowerbed at the inner base of the fence. It showed the deep imprints of The Shadow's shoes in the soft earth.

But it showed nothing else.

Blue Face would have had to stand in the flowerbed to make a similar leap upward. The fact that his prints were not there was proof that he had never entered the courtyard at all. Blue Face had not raced out of the building through the rear door in the cellar.

Having rectified his logical, but mistaken, first deduction, The Shadow wasted no time.

He knew now the cellar was empty. He questioned whether Blue Face had ever been in the cellar at all.

The Shadow darted swiftly through the basement, to the elevator shaft. He looked at the indicator arrow above the basement door of the shaft. The arrow pointed to the figure "1."

It meant that the car was still at the ground level. The arrow upstairs had lied. Blue Face had only seemed to enter the car!

The Shadow was at last certain of what had happened. He hurried up the fire stairs to the lobby. The place was still filled with the yellowish smoke from Blue Face's glass pellet. But the fumes were no longer so dense. The Shadow was able to breathe without agony.

It was still impossible to see the arrow pointer on this floor. But The Shadow didn't need sight to tell him what the situation was. He merely grasped the metal arrow, and it moved easily in his grasp.

The Shadow knew at once that the electrical connection had been broken by Blue Face. He understood, too late, why the arrow had pointed to "B" when the car had actually been at the ground-floor level the whole time.

Prying at the closed door of the car, The Shadow was able to move it aside, finally, in its oiled groove. Blue Face, forced to slam it from the outside, had not done a very good job of locking it. The door was meant to be closed by the operator from the inside. The mechanism had jammed before the door clicked.

The open elevator showed the unconscious and bleeding figure of the operator, whom Blue Face had slugged. All that The Shadow needed to know was now clear. He darted through the foyer and out the front door of the building, into the dark street.

As he expected, the street was empty.

BLUE FACE

Blue Face had made a bold getaway. His method of escape gave The Shadow added evidence of what he had long since suspected – that in battling Blue-Face, he was battling one of the shrewdest criminals he had ever locked horns with!

EVERY move Blue Face had made, since his first encounter with The Shadow, showed him to be a man of infinite cunning.

In regarding him a hophead with a nervous trigger finger, the police were badly underestimating a genius of crime. Blue Face never pulled a trigger without long calculations beforehand. Nor was he the cheap burglar that Inspector Cardona imagined.

Burglary, The Shadow knew, had nothing to do with these strange crimes. It was simply camouflaged to cover certain well-planned murders.

The real victims of Blue Face were the nephews of David Barfield. Charles Clee had died first. Now James Whorter was dead.

Was the third nephew, Elliot Peabody, destined to be the next victim?

The Shadow stared at a line of parked automobiles at the curb near the apartment house. There were three cars in the line. And yet The Shadow was positive that when he had entered the building, a short while earlier, the number of parked cars had been four.

Where was the fourth car now?

The Shadow examined the spot where the missing car had stood. He made a quick scrutiny of the asphalt. He looked at the marks of the turning tires. He studied the stone edge of the curb along which the car had stood.

A brief burst of laughter welled ominously from The Shadow's tight lips. It was impossible to tell from his face the nature of the information he had obtained.

He melted backward toward the line of the building. His sharp ears had heard the distant wail of a police car.

The Shadow knew how Blue Face always worked. Police had been tipped off by some "error" Blue Face had committed. They were on their way now to pick up a cold trail. They would find another marijuana cigarette.

It would be awkward if they found The Shadow.

Gliding from sight, The Shadow descended into a cellar opposite the apartment house where Whorter had been killed.

By the time police cars were screeching to a halt in the dark street, The Shadow was a good distance from the scene. He was spared the ironic sight of Inspector Cardona darting hopefully inside to capture Blue Face.

The Shadow had made a pardonable blunder. But he had also achieved a certain success. He was appreciably closer to a knowledge of the identity of Blue Face. Was Blue Face the driver of that mysterious fourth car that was no longer parked in the street?

Laughter from The Shadow indicated that perhaps he knew. His fade-out from the apartment house where Whorter had been killed didn't take him far.

Soon he was driving back to the murder scene in an expensive car. But not as The Shadow.

It was time for Lamont Cranston to make an appearance.

CHAPTER XI. THE FINAL CLUE

THE fourth car, to whose movements The Shadow attached considerable importance, was at no great distance from the apartment building where James Whorter had just been murdered.

It was parked at the curb of a street about a half mile to the north. Not far from where the car stood was a street intersection. There was a local subway station underground at this point. The exit was directly behind the parked automobile.

The man in the car kept watching the subway exit. He was David Barfield. The face of the millionaire real-estate owner was taut. His hands were clenched into angry fists. Oaths came in a low-toned mutter from his lips.

The man for whom Barfield was waiting was late.

Presently, there was a rumble underground. Another subway local was pulling into the station below. Barfield leaned forward eagerly. A few people emerged from the subway exit and scattered in the darkness.

After they were gone from sight, another figure appeared from below. It was Slug Narvo

Narvo lost no time sliding into the seat of the parked car. He looked as angry as Barfield. There was a sullen glow in his eyes as he faced the millionaire.

"O.K. I'm here. So what are you glaring about?"

"Is Whorter dead?"

"Yeah. Dead as a mackerel! You know all about it, pal. Why the hell do you have to ask me?"

The snarl of the mob leader touched off afresh the rage in Barfield. He didn't mince any words. He bawled out Narvo with a low-toned fury that made Slug's face darken.

"Take it easy!" Slug warned.

"Easy? What do you think I've been paying you for? What have you been doing tonight? Where have you been? I've a good mind to –"

Barfield's hand moved slightly. It might have been a move toward his hip pocket. Narvo didn't take any chances. His own gun leaped into view. Its muzzle prodded deep into Barfield's middle.

"Shut up! One more word out of you and I'll blast you! I'm getting sick of your big mouth!"

Barfield gulped. He licked his lips and forced an unpleasant smile.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to ride you. Let's cut out the argument and get down to facts."

"Any way you like. Only, don't think you can bulldoze me."

"You let me down tonight," Barfield said harshly.

"The hell I did!"

"If you didn't – where were you? And where was your blasted mob?"

"Wait a minute!" Narvo snapped.

Barfield continued to spit grim words.

"And what about The Shadow? The Shadow showed up at Blair's apartment. I warned you he would! I told you he had sneaked inside my home and found out it has a secret exit. Do you know what we missed tonight through your stupidity?"

"What?"

"A perfect chance to wipe out the damned Shadow! I wanted him wiped out. He's a nuisance. I thought I made that clear to you."

"Lemme make something clear to you, Mr. Barfield," Narvo rasped. As he spoke he watched the realty owner closely. "My gang wasn't around the Blair apartment tonight – because I haven't got any gang! It's been wiped out – liquidated! Get that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe you know already, wise guy!"

BARFIELD, listening with veiled eyes, heard the curt story of the events that had occurred earlier that evening at the headquarters of Narvo. He learned about the secret one-man raid of The Shadow. Narvo told him of The Shadow's escape, of the burning of the gang's hide-out by an arson bomb tossed by The Shadow.

Barfield made a sound of astonishment.

"Are you kidding me?"

"Kidding, hell! The building is a charred wreck! Half of my mob are croaked. The rest are on the run. Cardona has a warning out to pick me up on sight."

David Barfield blinked. He spoke rapidly.

"There's only one thing to do. You've got to lie low. Get out of town. Find some spot where you can spend a month or two under cover. Maybe somewhere up in the country."

"Yeah? And how about you?" Narvo sneered. He was regaining his composure.

"I don't have to sneak, my friend. My position is considerable better than yours, at the moment. Besides, I've got to remain in town to find out certain things. I've got to learn how much The Shadow knows."

Narvo's chuckle was nasty.

BLUE FACE

"Sometimes I get to thinking about all this Blue Face stuff. Sometimes I say to myself, 'Wouldn't it be funny if it turned out that Blue Face was David Barfield all the time?' Good joke, huh?"

Barfield didn't laugh. His expression, for an instant, was poisonous with fury. But the look faded swiftly.

"A ridiculous notion! I've told you who Blue Face is. He's John Shipton. The son-in-law of my rental agent."

"Maybe."

"Shipton was there tonight. I saw him! He sneaked into the building about ten minutes before hell broke loose in Blair's apartment. He sneaked out right after the killing."

"What were you doing?"

"Watching," Barfield said stonily.

"Yeah. Me, too. I watched the bust-up of my gang. I watched my headquarters burn down. The heat was turned on me tonight. I'd like to turn the heat on someone else."

"What do you mean?"

"This Shipton guy. Why don't you let me handle him?"

"No!" Barfield's tone was peculiar. "Shipton is tough."

"Nobody can be tough who has a wife he's fond of," Narvo growled. "I've handled tougher mugs than Shipton, by putting the heat on their wives."

"No! You'll do as I say. Get out of town and give me a chance to think things over."

Narvo shrugged. "How will I keep in touch with you?"

"Where will you go?" Barfield asked him.

Narvo named a small town upstate.

"You can reach me in care of General Delivery under the name of Albert Perkins," Barfield told him. "I'll arrange to have someone I can trust pick up any mail you send me. There'll be no way to trace any connection between us."

"Fine!"

Narvo got out of the parked car as quietly as he had entered it. Their conversation had attracted no attention. Narvo went back into the subway. Barfield drove away.

The moment the car had turned the corner, Narvo grinned. It was a nasty grin. He had no intention of obeying Barfield's order to skip town. There were certain ideas in Narvo's mind about Barfield that he wanted to investigate further.

But first, he wanted to do something about John Shipton.

BLUE FACE

He rode a short distance in the subway. When he emerged again, he headed for a discreet place where he could make a safe telephone call. He called up Shipton's home.

A woman answered. Her voice sounded panicky over the wire. Narvo knew who she was. It was Shipton's wife, Elaine.

He put on a gruff, official tone; asked to talk to Shipton.

"Who are you?" Elaine quavered. "It's late at night. What business do you have with my husband?"

"Police business," Narvo clipped "I'm a plain-clothes detective, working out of headquarters. I want to ask your husband a few questions. About this Blue Face case. Your husband is the rent collector in some of the buildings where Blue Face has made raids. He might know something that would help to solve the case."

"I... I see." The terror in Elaine's voice increased. "I'm afraid you can't speak to my husband now. Couldn't you see him tomorrow?"

"Why not tonight, madam? Isn't your husband home?"

"Oh, yes... yes! Of course he is!" She was lying. The tone of her voice proved that. "But I can't really rouse John to talk to you tonight. He... he has insomnia. I gave him a sleeping tablet. You understand?"

"O.K.! I'll talk to him tomorrow."

Narvo's grin was cruel as he hung up. He had found out all he wanted to know. Shipton was not at home. Nobody to worry about but the guy's wife.

The coast was clear.

JOHN SHIPTON was a long way from the bed where he was supposed to be asleep. He stood inconspicuously at the outer edge of a street crowd.

The crowd had gathered outside the apartment house where James Whorter had been murdered.

Shipton was less excited than the rest of the spectators bunched behind a line of uniformed police. He did more listening than talking. He was trying to find out if anyone in the crowd had heard anything definite about Blue Face or his method of escape.

No one had. The information produced no noticeable change in Shipton's expression. But he kept his face averted whenever a cop glanced over the crowd. Shipton didn't care to be noticed here tonight!

Presently, he slipped out of the crowd and went back to where he had parked his car. He drove swiftly away.

His goal was the garage from which he had originally taken the car. A night employee greeted Shipton with a smile.

"How are you, Mr. Jones? Have a nice trip tonight out to Jersey?"

"Yeah. But I sure am sleepy."

BLUE FACE

With a yawn, Shipton left the garage. But again he delayed his return home. He headed on foot to the rooming house where he had rented a room under the name of Jones. He unlocked the front door and went upstairs without anyone seeing him. Once he was safely in his room, his tension vanished.

He unlocked the door of a closet and took out a suitcase. From his pocket he produced a wicked-looking gun. The gun went into the suitcase, which was in turn locked inside the closet.

Shipton left the rooming house as stealthily as he had entered it.

He hurried along dark streets, keeping as close to the building line as he could. His face was no longer expressionless. There was cold triumph on it.

THE SHADOW, also, was triumphant. But he concealed his elation under the sleepy exterior of Lamont Cranston.

As Cranston, he had entered the building where James Whorter had been shot to death by Blue Face. He had a glib excuse for being in the neighborhood so late at night. His friendship with Inspector Cardona made it easy for him to get a look at the scene of the crime.

He found the apartment of Howard Blair in considerable confusion. Cops and plain-clothes men were on the job. Newspapermen waited out in the hallway, growling at the delay before they could be admitted.

The body of James Whorter had been photographed by a police photographer. It now lay, covered with a sheet, in Blair's bedroom. Fingerprint work had been finished. The report on that was a disappointment. Blue Face had left no prints.

All the clues the police had were the two bullet holes in the sitting-room door through which Blair had fled to telephone the police. And a crushed marijuana cigarette which Blue Face had left on the living-room rug.

Howard Blair, his face pale, was talking to another man who had been hastily summoned by the police. His companion was Elliot Peabody.

Peabody was more at ease than Blair. He talked readily to the police. He seemed anxious to please anyone who accosted him. The Shadow, in his role of Cranston, spoke to both Peabody and Blair. From Blair he obtained a complete picture of the crime as it seemed to the police. From Peabody he gleaned not much of anything.

Cardona, it was evident, had the same old theory of the "nervous burglar."

"Blue Face was lucky again," Cardona told Cranston. "We're sure to nab him. Look at those bullet holes in the sitting-room door. He fired miles too high to kill Blair. Too jittery even to aim straight! A hophead! And here's another of his damned reefers. Half smoked again."

The Shadow didn't point out to Cardona that although the marijuana cigarette had been half consumed, it had not been between the lips of Blue Face. He asked in the polite voice of Lamont Cranston about the effect of Whorter's death on his uncle.

"Poor Barfield is all broken up," Cardona said.

"You saw him tonight?"

BLUE FACE

"Not exactly," Cardona replied. "Barfield is an invalid. He was at home asleep when the crime here took place. I tried to reach him on the phone, but his phone is disconnected every night so he won't be disturbed. So I sent a cop over. The cop broke the news. Barfield took it pretty hard. It's tough to have two of your nephews accidentally killed."

"You think it was an accident?"

"Of course! Blue Face didn't even know that Whorter was here. He came to pull another of his two-bit robberies on this fellow Blair."

The Shadow moved about the room in his role of Cranston, apparently bored. But his eyes missed nothing. He saw the things that Cardona had seen, and a few other things that Inspector Cardona had missed.

After a while, he made a polite excuse and departed.

HE descended in the elevator to the street lobby.

There he managed to examine again the indicator arrow above the door of the shaft. Nobody had noticed that the arrow didn't work, although many people had ridden up and down since the murder had occurred. The Shadow suspected that considerable strength must have been exerted by Blue Face in order to break the metal arrow.

He checked on this belief by slipping unseen to the basement. There he deliberately broke the arrow at the shaft door. It took a quick jerk to snap the thing loose.

The Shadow laughed.

His visit tonight, in the role of Lamont Cranston, had been worthwhile. The arrow incident was interesting. So were the clues of the cigarette and the bullet holes in the door of Blair's sitting room. But the reason for the ominous laughter of The Shadow lay in an entirely different direction.

He looked at something that lay in the palm of his hand. It was a tiny fragment of smooth glass. The Shadow had found it on the floor of the lobby, close to the elevator shaft.

Blue Face had left that tiny fragment of glass behind him. Staring at the clue, The Shadow remembered every detail of his desperate encounter with the sly supercriminal. He knew what the fragment of glass was and where it had come from.

He knew, at last, the real identity of Blue Face!

But knowledge was not proof. A way had to be found to trap a criminal of infinite cunning. The names of various people flitted through The Shadow's mind. He considered Barfield and his nephew, Elliot Peabody. He thought about Richard Harrison and John Shipton. Nor did he forget the well-dressed and affable Dr. Mortimer.

One of these was Blue Face! Which one it was, was still The Shadow's secret. Ugly events were in the making, but The Shadow was ready to cope with them!

CHAPTER XII. SNATCH JOB

ELAINE SHIPTON was frightened.

She sat alone in the living room of her home, scarcely able to control the cold tremors that ran through her body. The room was lighted with every lamp she could turn on. But the brightness gave her little comfort. She had a feeling of impending danger.

Elaine glanced at the clock above the mantel. It was long past midnight.

She thought of the harsh-voiced detective who had telephoned to demand an interview with her husband. Elaine had lied to the detective. She had said John Shipton was asleep in bed.

Actually, Elaine had not the faintest idea where John Shipton was!

She wished that her father was at home to comfort her. But Richard Harrison was away, too. He had left the house immediately after Shipton had departed for his classes at the evening law school.

Harrison had kissed Elaine hurriedly, and taken up the trail of his son-in-law. He had promised to be careful, to run no risks of letting Shipton know he was under surveillance.

Elaine could have stood the loneliness of waiting for news in this empty house, if it had not been for that unexpected phone call from a detective. Had the police learned something suspicious about John? How could Elaine hoodwink the plain-clothes man, if he came to see her and insisted on seeing Shipton in bed?

Was her husband really Blue Face?

The more Elaine thought about how she might handle the detective if he called, the less she could make up her mind. She was no closer to a solution, when suddenly she heard a light tap at the front door.

She sat rigidly in her chair, both hands clenched tightly. She was unable to move.

The tap was followed by another sound. A key was turning in the lock of the door.

Elaine swayed to her feet.

Then the door was open and a man was coming toward the living room, with a hasty step. He stopped at the threshold of the room. Elaine gave a quick cry of relief.

It was her father, Richard Harrison.

The realty agent for David Barfield looked pale and tired. He put an arm about his trembling daughter and kissed her. He dropped into a chair as if his weary legs could no longer support him. Father and daughter stared at each other.

"Any... news?" Elaine whispered.

"Nothing. I tried to trail him. He went to a furnished rooming house in a car. Then he drove away. I followed him to Harlem, but he gave me the slip. It was afraid to get too close to him, for fear he would discover I was trailing him."

BLUE FACE

Harrison sighed. He took off his glasses and wiped them.

"God knows where he is now, and what he is doing!"

Neither of them mentioned John Shipton by name. Another name was in both their minds. An ugly name that terrified Elaine.

Blue Face!

She told Harrison about the phone call from a detective. Harrison tried to make light of it.

"Probably just a routine checkup," he muttered. "Don't forget it's long after midnight. The detective will probably not come here at all. He'll wait until morning. He'll never discover that you lied to him. It will give your husband a good alibi for tonight."

Elaine tried to smile. It was a ghastly attempt. Harrison could see that she was close to the breaking point. He stood up and put an arm around her. Gently, he forced her to walk with him to her bedroom.

"Get some sleep. You'll collapse, if you don't. I'll promise to wake you the moment John comes in. I'll sit up in the living room with a book. Forget about everything except your own health. You can't afford to tear your nerves to pieces like this."

IN the end, Harrison had his way. Elaine slipped on a robe and lay down. Harrison fixed her a glass of water. Before he gave it to her he managed to drop a mild sedative into it. It wouldn't drug her, but it would dull her mind a little. It would make it easier for her to fall into a natural sleep.

He put out the light and tiptoed out. In the living room, he picked up a magazine and tried to read.

The clock ticked monotonously. Harrison listened to its ticking as he turned over the pages of the magazine. Without realizing it, his head began to droop.

He removed his glasses and took a more comfortable position on the sofa. Soon he was dozing.

He didn't hear a faint sound from the rear of the house. It was not very loud. It sounded like a gentle scratching. Harrison, stretched on the couch, with his pince-nez glasses laid aside, continued to stare with nearsighted eyes at the blurred cover of the magazine he had let slide to the floor.

Then, suddenly, he realized something was wrong.

From the room behind him he heard the quick thump of feet. Someone was coming swiftly toward the living room from the rear of the house. A sudden draft of air warned the alarmed Harrison that one of the rear windows was open.

In an instant, he was bounding to his feet. He whirled toward the rear doorway of the room.

"Quiet!" a voice whispered in an ugly undertone. "One sound out of you and I'll let you have it!"

A man was standing on the threshold of the door to the rear corridor. A gun was pointed at Harrison. The man had a tight mouth and sullen eyes. He hadn't bothered to mask his face.

It was Slug Narvo.

BLUE FACE

Harrison stood frozen in watchfulness. He could tell death when he saw it. He knew that the armed thug who confronted him meant what he had said.

"Don't shoot!" Harrison begged. "I won't make any noise. Take whatever you want. My money is in my wallet."

"The hell with your money," Narvo snarled. "Keep that trap of yours shut! Back up toward me. Slowly, pal! And keep those hands high – just the way you got 'em."

Harrison obeyed. Narvo moved aside with a pantherish motion. He was in front of Harrison, now. His gun was like a steady rock. The muzzle pointed at Harrison's heart.

"Keep backing up slowly along this corridor. Stop when you get to the third doorway on your left."

The third doorway led to a bathroom. The door was open. Narvo had noticed all this on the way in. He had cut a pane from a rear window and made his entrance that way.

The grim parade halted outside the bathroom. Not a sound reached the ears of the girl who was fast asleep in the bedroom beyond.

"Face inside," Narvo whispered. "Take one slow step into the bathroom."

As Harrison slowly obeyed Narvo stepped swiftly toward the back of his victim. The gun in his hand moved toward Harrison's skull. Harrison sensed what was coming and tried to dodge. The blow was a glancing one. But it cut his scalp and toppled him.

He fell forward. Narvo caught him before the realty agent toppled to the tiled floor. He lifted Harrison and laid him in the bathtub. The shower curtains were drawn swiftly together.

Slug Narvo grinned. He hadn't earned his nickname for nothing. He was an expert in putting people out of action without any fuss.

There was no mirth in Narvo's grin. He tiptoed from the bathroom and moved toward the nearby bedroom. His job was only half finished. Harrison didn't interest him. Elaine Shipton did!

He stared down at her bed, watching the slow rise and fall of her bosom. With his gun trained on her, Narvo reached quietly down and tapped her on the bare shoulder.

Elaine awakened with a start.

"Get up!" Narvo said.

For an instant, Elaine was too drugged with sleep to realize what was happening. Then suddenly she became aware of the gun pointing at her heart. She could see the wolfish gleam of Narvo's eyes, the cruel smirk at the corners of his lips.

She sat up with a terrified jerk. Her mouth opened to emit a scream. Narvo had expected this. His free hand clamped over Elaine's open mouth. The scream was suppressed.

Holding her tightly, Narvo swung the girl bodily from the bed and jammed her on her feet. He said in a deliberate and horrible whisper, "I'm going to kill you!"

BLUE FACE

It produced the effect he desired. Elaine's overburdened nerves gave way. Her body went lax in the grip of Narvo. She fainted.

NARVO picked Elaine up, with her dressing robe trailing and her bare feet dangling. He was an expert at snatch jobs. An unconscious girl was a lot easier to kidnap than one who was wide awake. That was why Narvo had deliberately frightened her into a fainting spell.

He dropped her to the ground from the open rear window whose pane he had cut. It was not much of a fall. The window was on the ground floor. But Narvo gave a grunt of relief when he picked Elaine Shipton up again.

From the crooked way her head lay on the ground, the thug was afraid for an instant that she had broken her neck. Narvo didn't want Elaine's neck broken. He wanted her alive to answer questions.

There were a lot of things Narvo wanted to know about her husband. He intended to force Elaine to tell all she knew about John Shipton, as soon as he could get her to the place he had made ready for her.

He shoved her into a dark sedan that was backed behind the rear of the house. He drove swiftly through silent streets without attracting any attention.

His goal was on the other side of town. Here was a region of cheap frame houses. Each house had its own individual garage in the basement. Narvo had bought one through a dummy purchaser, for jobs such as this.

He drove down a concrete incline into the garage. He had left the garage door open, so as to waste no time getting himself and his prisoner out of sight.

He locked the front door of the garage and removed Elaine from the back of the sedan. There was a small door at the side of the garage, and he headed for it with his burden. The door connected directly with the cellar of the frame house.

A certain room upstairs was soundproof. A girl in that room could scream for hours and not be heard outside. It contained a chair that looked like a dentist's chair, but wasn't. There were some ugly tools on a side table, that were useful in making stubborn prisoners talk.

The upstairs room was where Narvo intended to question Elaine.

He shifted his grip on her. His free hand fumbled with the lock of the small door that connected the garage with the cellar of the house.

It was then that he heard the car. It seemed to be racing up the quiet street outside at a terrific pace. In barely an instant, or so it seemed to Narvo, the unseen car was outside his garage. It halted above the slant of the concrete entrance, with a loud screeching of brakes.

Footsteps raced recklessly down the slanting ramp to the locked garage. A fist pounded cautiously on the door.

"Open up!" a low voice whispered.

Narvo was like a snarling beast at bay. He dropped his unconscious captive to the floor of the garage. Standing beside her, with drawn gun, he faced that locked door, uncertainty on his face.

BLUE FACE

The cautious whisper outside was repeated.

"Hurry up, Slug. Let me in! I couldn't get back to my own place. The cops are watching it."

The voice was urgent. It sounded like David Barfield's.

Barfield had told Narvo not to make any move against Shipton. There would be a nasty scene when Barfield caught a glimpse of the kidnapped Elaine. But Narvo knew how to handle trouble with a client – even a client who paid as much as Barfield.

With a cold grin, Narvo unlocked the garage door.

The moment the door opened, he was given a violent thrust. It sent him staggering backward against the bumper of his parked car. With a quick bound, a figure leaped inside and slammed the garage door shut.

It was a figure that made Narvo utter a strangled yell of fear. He tried to whip his gun upward.

His visitor was Blue Face!

BLUE FACE was like a horrible automaton. Not a sound came from behind the ugly plastic covering that swathed his head and face. Before the paralyzed Narvo could recover his wits, Blue Face was at grips with him.

His strength was prodigious. A blue-gloved hand caught at the barrel of the half-lifted gun in Narvo's grasp and wrenched it away. The twist was so ferocious, it almost dislocated Narvo's arm.

He fell sideways to the floor, dizzy with the pain of his wrenched shoulder socket – and Blue Face fell with him.

A terrible battle started. It was all the more terrible because of its utter silence. Slug tried to use every ugly trick he had learned in a lifetime in the underworld, to beat off the deadly assault of Blue Face. It was in vain. The gun that Narvo had dropped lay out of his reach. Blue Face had kicked it, skidding, under the car.

There was a knife in Narvo's inner coat pocket, tucked inside a leather scabbard. He twisted away from Blue Face, trying to draw the weapon. But he was unable to tug the knife free.

His rolling jerk played into the hands of Blue Face. Crouched on top of Narvo, battering at him with sledgehammer blows, Blue Face was able to twist with more ease than his victim underneath. He succeeded in the same stratagem which Narvo had failed at.

From beneath his blue suit came the flash of a drawn knife.

It had a long, narrow blade, not much wider than the shaft of an icepick. Each side of that knife had been honed to a cutting edge of murderous sharpness.

The knife lifted upward. It struck deep into the body of Slug Narvo!

Narvo died without uttering a sound. Even the expression of his face didn't change. The long point of the blade had pierced deep into his heart.

BLUE FACE

Very little blood welled from the tiny wound in Narvo's breast. Blue Face took only a single look, to make sure that the knife had gone in where he intended it to. Then he darted to the crumpled body of Elaine Shipton.

He snatched her up into his arms. The swift jerk roused her. But the sight of the blue mummy-like face peering into hers robbed Elaine of every thought except the terrible knowledge that she was a captive of Blue Face.

Her body went limp. Blue Face darted with her to the door of the garage.

His car was parked outside, its engine still throbbing. In a moment, the rescued girl was in the machine. Blue Face drove away with her as swiftly as he had arrived.

He headed back to the home of John Shipton. He parked his car in the same spot from which Narvo had kidnapped the girl. The sight of the cut pane of the rear window drew an ironic chuckle from Blue Face. Soon he had the limp figure of Elaine inside that window. He carried her to her bedroom and laid her on the bed.

Then he raced back to the rear of the house, dropped out of the window. The sound of the car motor indicated that Blue Face was getting rid of an automobile in some nearby hiding place.

Silence enveloped the house. Elaine Shipton lay on her bed like a dead woman. But after a long time color began to come back into her paper-white face. Slowly, she began to rouse from her faint.

She lay, half conscious, hearing the slow tick of her bedroom clock, without realizing where she was or what had happened.

Then, with shocking swiftness, a horrible memory came into her mind. She remembered the blue mummy-like mask of Blue Face!

With a cry of fear, she sat up in bed, began to tremble. She remembered, now, all the horrible events that had happened. She could see again the ugly thug who had forced her to leave her bed at the point of a gun. A merciful blank had followed that. She must have fainted, Elaine realized.

Then Blue Face had rescued her. Blue Face had killed Narvo! That much, she was certain of. She had caught a dazed glimpse of Narvo's bleeding body on the floor of the garage before she had fainted again.

Why had Blue Face rescued her? Was it because Elaine was his wife?

A moan came from her lips.

THE moan was echoed by another sound. A man was groaning in another room of the silent house. The groan seemed to come from the direction of the bathroom.

It changed Elaine's thoughts to her father. What had happened to him? She had left him sitting in the diving room, waiting for her husband to return from his mysterious prowling. Had Blue Face harmed him?

Before she could force her trembling legs to carry her down the hall, she heard the click of a cautious key at the front door. White-faced, she swung about. The dark folds of a drape hid her from a direct view of the man at the door. She could see him, but he couldn't see her.

It was her husband!

BLUE FACE

Shipton's face was like granite. He sneaked in cautiously, making no sound. He removed his shoes, started to tiptoe toward the bedroom.

With a sob, Elaine stepped suddenly from behind the curtain to confront him.

He gave a clipped cry. His hand jerked toward his pocket. Then he recognized his trembling wife. He tried to smile, but it was a dreadful imitation. His eyes were like hot coals.

"What's happened?" he demanded. "Why are you not in bed?"

Her glance dropped to his hand. There was a fresh cut on it. From it was welling a slow flow of blood.

Shipton muttered a vague excuse about the cut on his hand. He continued to question his wife about what had happened in the house. He made Elaine repeat everything she could remember before he allowed her to accompany him to the bathroom.

Harrison was still lying in the bathtub where Slug Narvo had placed him after knocking him over the head. Like Elaine, there was little Harrison could tell Shipton, after his son-in-law had completely revived him with some cold water from the bathroom faucet.

It was Harrison who asked Elaine the question that Shipton had avoided asking:

"Are you sure you recognized this man who rescued you in the garage?"

She shuddered.

Harrison put his arm about her. He avoided looking at his silent son-in-law.

"Who was it?"

"Blue Face," Elaine whispered.

Shipton's lips parted. He spoke sharply.

"That's nonsense! You must have imagined it. Blue Face is a criminal! Why should he save you from another crook?"

Elaine looked at her husband, but she didn't dare voice a reply.

There was an uneasy silence in the room. Father, husband, wife stared at each other wordlessly.

"You'd better lie down," Shipton told Elaine, finally.

He leaned forward and kissed her. The touch of his lips made her shudder. They were like ice.

CHAPTER XIII. RIVER PIRATE

THE SHADOW was in his sanctum.

On the polished desk in front of him, the blue light beat downward, forming a concentrated oval of brilliance.

BLUE FACE

Into that light projected the face of The Shadow.

His beaked nose was hawklike. His eyes flamed with an inner light of their own. There was calm intelligence in those eyes, the reflection of an indomitable will.

Never had The Shadow tasted complete defeat in any of his countless battles against criminal brains of the underworld. He had no intention of allowing Blue Face to mar that record.

Newspaper clippings and reports lay in a neat pile close to his sensitive fingers. The Shadow was mentally fitting together the last pieces in a dangerous criminal puzzle.

He read the newspaper clippings first.

They all dealt with the mysterious death the night before of Slug Narvo. All the newspapers had the same solution. They asserted that the murder of Narvo was undoubtedly the result of a mob quarrel.

The mob leader's death had occurred only a few hours after the destruction of his headquarters by fire. A search of the hide-out, after the blaze had been finally quenched, proved that the fire had been incendiary. Police stated that there had been fierce gunfire near the house at the height of the blaze.

A truck had fled, driven by a rival mobster. This unknown fugitive had driven the truck into the Hudson River and fled. When the truck had been hoisted from the river, police found that it contained a veritable arsenal of lethal weapons.

Judging all this evidence, Inspector Cardona announced his theory of civil war in the underworld. A rival mob had attempted to raid Narvo's mob. The murder of Narvo that same night was added proof, according to Cardona, that crooks were preying on crooks.

The laughter of The Shadow made a mocking whisper in the silence of his sanctum. Only The Shadow was aware of the truth. He alone knew that the murder of Slug Narvo was the work of Blue Face!

A report from Cliff Marsland, an agent of The Shadow and a specialist in affairs of the underworld, lay on The Shadow's desk. The report had been forwarded to The Shadow through Burbank. The Shadow's laughter was ominous as he read it.

Marsland's report concerned a small-fry crook named Dolan. Dolan had seen certain things that had scared him, the night before. He lived in a shabby rooming house on the street where Narvo had been killed. The window of Dolan's room was directly opposite the house owned by Narvo.

Dolan, in hiding because of a stick-up he had committed, was on a nervous watch for plain-clothes men that night. He was wide awake when Narvo's car rolled up to the private garage opposite. He saw Narvo drive into the garage with a woman prisoner.

Dolan had watched carefully from his darkened room opposite, because he sensed there might be a chance to blackmail Narvo, later, on the basis of what he saw.

But soon Dolan's greed changed to terror. A second car sped up to the closed garage at a terrific pace. A man leaped out. It was Blue Face. Dolan heard Blue Face gain admittance to the garage by using the name of David Barfield.

BLUE FACE

He had seen him emerge later carrying the girl whom Narvo had kidnapped. He saw the blood-smeared blade of a long knife. Then Blue Face had driven off through the darkness with the rescued girl.

Dolan had related these secret facts to other crooks in his confidence. It was this way that Cliff Marsland managed to get the information. Cliff had excellent underworld connections.

Crooks like Dolan thought that Cliff was a criminal. They didn't realize the truth – that, having paid his price to society for previous crimes, Cliff was now on the level. He was one of the most trusted agents of The Shadow.

A final report from still another agent completed the news, and made the eyes of The Shadow flash with triumph. This report came from Rutledge Mann, The Shadow's expert on business and financial affairs.

Mann had found out that David Barfield was leaving New York. The millionaire owned a luxurious yacht, which was now anchored in the Hudson River, ready to depart. It would remain at its anchorage tonight. Tomorrow, at the turn of the tide, Barfield's yacht was scheduled to head southward, headed for the Gulf of Mexico for some tropical fishing.

Barfield was already aboard the yacht. So were a couple of guests he was taking with him. One of them was Elliot Peabody, the last legal heir of the millionaire realty owner. The other was Dr. Mortimer, who had been caring for Barfield during his recent period of "invalidism."

That period of "invalidism" seemed to be over now. Dr. Mortimer had issued a statement that Barfield was much improved. Electric massage had aided the muscles in his legs. His heart, too, was better, according to Mortimer. To complete the "cure," Dr. Mortimer had prescribed a fishing trip to the Gulf of Mexico.

Elliot Peabody was going along because he claimed that the recent deaths of his cousins had unnerved him.

The Shadow laughed. Peabody was not the nervous type. The Shadow, in the role of Lamont Cranston, had observed him on the previous night, at Blair's apartment. Peabody, in spite of his show of grief and worry at Whorter's death, had been as calm as Cranston.

The blue light vanished suddenly above the desk in the silent sanctum. The Shadow was ready to depart.

A moment later, he was gone without a single betraying sound from the concealing blackness of the sanctum.

It was just as black in the spot where The Shadow presently reappeared. High over The Shadow's head was a night sky in which but few stars gleamed. Below him and all around him was the inky surface of the Hudson River.

The Shadow was in a rowboat. The oarlocks were muffled, to prevent any sound of his rowing from being heard. The boat was an old one. It looked fit for little more than scuttling.

Scuttling was exactly what The Shadow had in mind. But not quite yet.

He allowed the fast ebb tide to help carry his rowboat along in utter silence. The boat seemed part of the dark surface of the river. The black cloak and the lowered brim of The Shadow's slouch hat helped to merge his figure with the invisibility of his small craft.

He was headed toward the anchored yacht of David Barfield.

BLUE FACE

The easiest place to board the yacht was close to the bow. The surge of the tide had swung the motionless yacht to the end of its heavy chain. It made a taut ladder of heavy links up to the hawsehole at the bow of the yacht.

The Shadow had no further use for his rowboat. He pulled a plug. Water gurgled faintly into the craft. It filled and sunk rapidly. The Shadow had fastened the oars tightly to the boat. He had made certain that the rowboat would sink completely to the mud bottom of the river, by weighting it with a few heavy chunks of iron.

Climbing up the slanting line of the anchor chain, The Shadow reached the dark peak of the bow and surveyed the spot. He was in luck. There was no sign of life on deck.

Light from an open porthole of a starboard cabin showed the probable location of Barfield and his guests. The Shadow faded quickly, to do a little preliminary spying.

He was aided by a narrow ornamental ledge that ran along the dark hull of the yacht from stem to stern. It was an easy matter to lower himself on the starboard rail and inch a slow and cautious way amidships along the ledge, toward the lighted porthole of Barfield's cabin.

Reaching the porthole The Shadow was able to hear the voices of Dr. Mortimer and Elliot Peabody, as well as the gruffer voice of David Barfield.

By turning precariously on his narrow ledge, The Shadow was able to move his eye close to the rounded edge of the opening. Black-gloved hands anchored him in his dangerous perch above the blackness of the river.

He could see Barfield pacing up and down the lighted confines of the cabin. Barfield showed no trace of leg weakness. Dr. Mortimer and Peabody sat lazily in comfortable wicker chairs.

Mortimer didn't seem astonished by the amazingly quick recovery of his patient. There was a slight smile on his heavy lips. He seemed amused by some inner joke.

Peabody's face, as usual, betrayed no hint of what he might be thinking. He looked boyishly handsome.

"When do we sail?" Mortimer asked.

"Tomorrow at dawn," Barfield said. "We ought to have some nice tarpon fishing."

"It will do you good," Mortimer said. "Plenty of tropical sunlight. Plenty of sleep and relaxation."

"It will do us a lot more good," Peabody remarked gently, "to get away from the attentions of the gentleman who calls himself Blue Face."

He said it idly, almost as a joke. His companions turned to stare at him. But Elliot Peabody continued to gaze serenely across the cabin.

The line of his gaze brought his vision close to the rim of the porthole outside which The Shadow clung so precariously in darkness. But Peabody's face remained unsuspecting. He didn't seem to have a care in the world.

"DO you believe the deaths of Cleo and Whorter were deliberately planned murders?" Dr. Mortimer asked him.

BLUE FACE

Peabody didn't answer. It was Barfield who replied.

"I'm sure of that! I'm certain that Blue Face is after big game, instead of the little burglary profits that Inspector Cardona talks about so much. Blue Face killed Clee to get rid of one of my heirs. He killed Whorter for the same reason. All the rest is bunk!"

"Then why didn't he kill Peabody?" Mortimer asked.

"Didn't have time, I suppose."

"I can't see any motive for Blue Face," Mortimer asserted. He didn't seem to want to drop the subject of the master criminal. "According to your arrangement, as I understand it, the money of your three legal heirs comes to you in the event that they die first. All Blue Face has done is to make you richer."

"Granted." Barfield gave his physician a cold stare that was not entirely friendly. "But can't you see what Blue Face is up to? With Clee and Whorter dead – and Peabody, too, perhaps – the estates of four wealthy men would be concentrated in one person. Me! Blue Face would have only to kill me in order to –"

"To what?" Dr. Mortimer said irritably. "How could Blue Face inherit, assuming he did kill you? All your legal heirs would be dead!"

"Not all," Barfield rejoined. "You forgot John Shipton, the man Peabody and I suspect."

Peabody didn't turn his head. He seemed inattentive, half asleep.

"Shipton is not my heir, but he is my nephew," Barfield said. "With no other blood relatives alive, Shipton would collect all. My guess is that Shipton is Blue Face. Why else do you suppose he married the daughter of Harrison, my rental agent?"

"I wouldn't know," Peabody murmured softly.

"Because Shipton wanted the job of rent collector. He wanted an opportunity to study the layout in those buildings where most of the Blue Face robberies have occurred. Do you know something that Inspector Cardona hasn't had the sense to figure out? Most of the Blue Face crimes have occurred in buildings owned by me!"

"Forget about Blue Face," Dr. Mortimer muttered. "Why don't we sail tonight? The tide is favorable. Why wait?"

"I have to," Barfield said. "By delaying, I shall make a neat profit. Harrison has dug up a client from Chicago who wants to buy a white elephant of an office building that I foreclosed on during the depression. He wanted to close the deal last night, but I was – not well."

"Harrison talked this purchaser from Chicago into staying over one more night. He finally got the fellow's signature to the contract. He's coming out to the yacht tonight to get my signature."

Barfield chuckled.

"Otherwise, we'd be on our way to the Gulf of Mexico right now – and to hell with Blue Face!"

BLUE FACE

Peabody yawned. He put down the drink he had been toying with, and lighted a cigarette. He got lazily to his feet.

"It's stuffy in here. I'm going out on deck for a spot of fresh air."

On the narrow ledge beyond the open porthole of the cabin, The Shadow stiffened. He had seen a peculiar expression in Peabody's sleepy eyes. That expression warned The Shadow to beat a quick retreat.

Peabody was smart! He had spotted the presence of an intruder. He was slipping outside very quietly to nab The Shadow.

SWIFTLY, The Shadow inched along the ledge. He vaulted over the rail, moved aft to the darkness beyond amidships. He had little time to fade. He could hear the swift patter of Peabody's feet hurrying up the companionway from the cabin below deck.

A canvas-covered lifeboat was close to where The Shadow stood. He vanished into what he knew was, at best, but a precarious hiding place. From beneath a crack at the edge of the canvas, he watched Peabody emerge on deck.

Peabody jerked a gun from his pocket, began a grim search of the deck. He was a cool, efficient searcher. He wasted only a brief glance over the side of the ship in the direction of the porthole of Barfield's cabin. Then he began to work his way aft. His beady eyes missed nothing.

Bit by bit, he approached the lifeboat where The Shadow lay tensely quiet. Finally, his left hand reached out to pull the canvas loose.

The Shadow felt grim anger. He didn't want to be discovered at this premature juncture. His plans for the proof of Blue Face's real identity had not yet matured. He stiffened himself for a silent battle with a man he knew was dangerous.

Then, suddenly, The Shadow's muscles relaxed.

Fate had taken an unexpected hand. Elliot Peabody whirled away from the dark outline of the covered lifeboat. He had heard a sound, that reached The Shadow's ear also.

The sound came from the stern of the yacht.

Peabody raced silently aft. Just before he reached the stern, he ducked out of sight behind a projecting bulkhead of the yacht's superstructure. He waited, gun in hand.

A figure squirmed over the rail at the stern. A man began to tiptoe forward. He, too, was armed. He headed along the starboard passage toward the companionway that led below to Barfield's cabin. To do this, he had to pass a shielded light on deck. The light illumined his features for a second.

The intruder was John Shipton!

An instant later, Shipton sprang backward. His gun muzzle lifted, spat flame and lead.

Peabody, who had tried to sneak up behind Shipton, uttered a snarl of rage that was drowned out by the bark of his own gun. Neither bullet found a mark. Both men were keyed to a nervous pitch that ruined their hasty aim.

BLUE FACE

Shipton struck savagely at Peabody with the barrel of his gun. The blow sent Barfield's nephew staggering. Shipton fled toward the darkness of the stern.

A moment later, there was a heavy splash. Shipton had dived overboard!

Peabody, a bit groggy, reached the rail a moment later. He pumped bullets into the dark water in a blind effort to kill the escaping intruder. But he had no visible target. The black water was like a dense curtain. Darkness hid everything more than a few feet from the rudder of the yacht.

The crash of gunfire and the yells of Peabody brought help quickly. Dr. Mortimer and David Barfield raced aft. With them came a couple of sailors. Mortimer was gripping a heavy flashlight. He sent its beams stabbing over the black surface of the river, while Peabody gasped out an account of what had happened.

Peabody told of his suspicion that someone had crouched outside the porthole of Barfield's cabin. He identified the fugitive as Shipton. He began to shudder. Peabody was suddenly very unlike the ruthless manhunter of a few moments earlier.

Mortimer soothed him.

"Forget it! It's all over now. Fortunately, you took prompt action. Shipton got away, but I don't think he'll be back. He'll be lucky if he isn't drowned in that treacherous ebb tide before he reaches shore."

"I told you Shipton was Blue Face!" Barfield muttered.

He kept saying it over and over again. He seemed afraid his two companions might not believe him. Finally, the three men went forward, descended the companionway to Barfield's cabin.

An instant later, The Shadow stepped lightly from the covered lifeboat.

THE SHADOW wasn't as positive as the others that John Shipton was in danger of drowning. He knew that Shipton had not dived into the black Hudson.

Near the stern of the yacht was a heavy wooden kit of tools. There had been two kits of tools near the taffrail when The Shadow had made his preliminary inspection of the deck. Now, there was only one. Where was the other?

The Shadow had no hesitancy answering that question. The missing tool kit was at the bottom of the river. It was this that had made the splash at the moment that Shipton seemingly had disappeared over the stern.

Lowering himself over the stern rail, by hanging precariously with his hands, he was able to peer below the sharp slant of the hull. He didn't see any sign of Shipton. But he did see the method Shipton had used to make his getaway.

A rope was suspended below the inward slant of the stern. By hanging invisibly to that rope, a man of muscular ability could easily swing himself sideways. The pendulum swing of the suspended rope could carry a man to the port side of the stern. There, the ornamental ledge began that ran forward along the dark hull on either side of the ship.

The Shadow alone knew the truth. While Barfield and his two companions were stabbing the water vainly with a flashlight beam, the cunning Shipton had inched swiftly forward toward the bow of the yacht on a ledge The Shadow had already made use of.

Shipton was still aboard!

A moment later, The Shadow, watching from a sheltered spot, saw a hand grasp the dark rail near the bow. Shipton climbed noiselessly inward to the deck. He flitted toward a narrow companionway just to the rear of the entry that led to the fo'c'sle.

Shipton ducked downward.

The Shadow waited a moment or two longer. Then he, too, was on the prow. His black cloak protected him from discovery. The brim of his slouch hat shielded the watchful flame of his eyes. He went down the narrow flight of steps that Shipton had taken.

At the bottom, The Shadow found a narrow corridor. There were two closed bulkhead doors, one opening forward and one aft. Opening the doors gently, The Shadow peered through the darkness in either direction.

The forward corridor led to a large chain locker. The rear passage led directly past storage space toward the engine room of the yacht.

Moving with utter stealth, The Shadow took the rear passage. He began to creep toward the engine room.

CHAPTER XIV. HIDDEN FOE

THE SHADOW'S disappearance along a narrow and unlighted passage that led to the engine room was not noted. No one on the yacht was even aware that he was aboard.

His skill in eluding the sly search of Peabody had borne fruit. Peabody had been convinced, at first, that he had seen The Shadow hiding on the narrow ledge outside the cabin porthole of David Barfield. But the unexpected appearance of John Shipton had swiftly changed the direction of Peabody's suspicion.

Peabody was satisfied that he had been mistaken about the presence of The Shadow.

A second wrong deduction completed an entirely false picture in Peabody's mind. He assumed that John Shipton, having been caught in an attempt to hide aboard the yacht, had leaped overboard.

It was a dangerous swim toward the dark shore against a swift ebb tide. The odds against Shipton reaching the shore safely were considerable. The yacht was anchored well out in the middle of the Hudson. Shipton was not much of a swimmer.

Peabody grinned. There was little mirth in his expression. His teeth showed in that twisted smile. He didn't descend to the cabin with Dr. Mortimer and Barfield. He murmured a brief excuse and remained on deck.

As soon as Barfield and the doctor were out of sight below deck, Peabody began to move stealthily toward the bow of the yacht.

He disappeared down a narrow flight of steps. It was the same route that Shipton had taken after his fake leap overboard.

It was the route also taken by The Shadow!

In Barfield's cabin there was seemingly no knowledge of these fresh developments. Barfield and Mortimer sat

BLUE FACE

in comfortable chairs, enjoying a highball.

Barfield's hand shook a little as he held his glass. He drained the drink quickly, then glanced toward the bottle and the small bucket of ice cubes on a side table. Dr. Mortimer smiled indulgently.

"Have another one, if you like."

"I was afraid you were going to say 'no,' doctor."

"You've had a bad shock. Gunfire doesn't do nervous people any good, particularly people with heart trouble. The liquor will stimulate your heart. I'd be a poor physician if I didn't use common sense about things like that."

He fixed a second highball for Barfield. Mortimer was still sipping his first drink. He didn't seem to be in any hurry to finish it.

"Do you think Shipton meant to kill me?" Barfield whispered.

"Try to forget about it, and calm down."

Mortimer's tone was evasive. He shrugged, and stared out the porthole. But in spite of the advice to his patient, he kept to the subject of Shipton.

"Are you sure Shipton is Blue Face?" Mortimer asked.

"I'm positive!" Barfield growled.

"In other words, you believe," Mortimer continued smoothly, "that Shipton has faked all these burglary attempts in order to cover up his real objective? Your opinion is that Shipton killed Clee and Whorter in order to eliminate them as heirs to your estate?"

"Yes."

"That sounds bad for Peabody!"

"It's one reason why I invited him on this cruise," Barfield said huskily.

There was a gleam in his averted eyes, which faded before Mortimer could notice it. Barfield continued to gulp his second highball.

"THE whole affair still seems queer to me," Mortimer persisted, after a while. "Blue Face is really doing you a favor by killing off these nephews of yours. Under the terms of their wills, I believe, the estates of Clee and Whorter went to you because their deaths preceded yours. Isn't that a fact?"

Barfield turned his head. His gaze at the physician was calm. His fingers were tight on his highball glass.

"There is nothing odd about such an arrangement. The same thing holds true for Elliot Peabody. There is entire confidence between all of us. Why should my nephews not make out their wills in favor of me, since I have made mine in favor of them?"

Mortimer didn't reply for a moment. When he did, his voice was casual.

BLUE FACE

"If I understand your suspicions correctly, you believe that even if Peabody should be killed by Blue Face, the murders would still not be at an end?"

"Correct," Barfield growled. "Blue Face is after big game! He'd like to inherit the total wealth of myself, plus that of my three legal heirs."

"But John Shipton is not an heir. If he were really Blue Face –"

"He's not an heir," Barfield grated, "but he's my nephew, damn him! The only son of my fourth sister. If Peabody and I were murdered, all our combined family holdings might go to Shipton, regardless of the fact we don't want him to possess them. He might force the issue in court, and collect as my sole living relative."

Barfield drained his drink.

"But let him try to follow this yacht to the Gulf of Mexico! He'll get short shrift! Don't forget that once we are on the high seas, I shall have complete maritime authority over everyone, including any rat who sneaks aboard without permission. I shall be judge and jury and prosecutor! Shipton will find out what I can do to him, if he's fool enough to try a Blue Face appearance outside the three-mile limit!"

"Of course," Dr. Mortimer said soothingly.

The silence on the deck above was profound. The few deck lights cast only a feeble glow in the darkness. The river was like a velvet blanket stretching toward the dim glow of Manhattan's shore and the black heights of the Palisades on the opposite side of the river.

Through that river darkness a light began to grow. It moved steadily toward the half-invisible shape of the anchored yacht. The chug of a motor became audible.

Presently, the approaching craft swung closer to the yacht. A voice shouted through cupped hands: "Yacht ahoy!"

The shout was heard down in the cabin. Mortimer's face jerked with an expression that was like a grimace of disgust. He got to his feet. So did Barfield.

They went up on deck. For a moment, both men stared at the craft alongside. Then Barfield grunted.

"I forgot. It's Richard Harrison, my rental agent. He's coming aboard with those contract papers I promised to sign before we sailed."

Harrison's figure was visible now. He stood up in the motorboat while it was made fast. Then he sprang to the accommodation ladder of the yacht and climbed nimbly to the deck. He shook hands with Barfield and nodded pleasantly toward Dr. Mortimer.

"I've brought the realty-transfer papers to be signed," he said.

"Thanks," Barfield murmured. "Your client from Chicago isn't making any mistake in buying that office building. It's a good piece of property. The building hasn't been profitable for the past couple of years only because of a trend in real estate to the midtown section. A trend which, in my opinion, is merely temporary."

Barfield's tone was oily. He was getting rid of a white elephant, and he knew it. So did Harrison. It made his voice edgy with annoyance.

BLUE FACE

"Perhaps. At any rate, the deeds are here. And small thanks to you, if I must say so, Mr. Barfield! If I hadn't used infinite persuasion and tact on the client, he would have taken a plane back to Chicago last night and allowed the deal to fall through. I must say, I don't appreciate such co-operation from a man for whom I'm trying to save money."

"The loss would have been mine, had the deal fallen through," Barfield growled, his face red.

"I don't give a damn about that," Harrison rejoined. "There's such a thing as business prestige. I can't afford to keep red-ink property like that on my books. Other clients might decide that I don't know my own business! Had this Chicago deal fallen through, I should have been forced to end our association and ask you to hire some other agent to attend to your real-estate holdings."

His face was angry. Behind the lenses of his pince-nez glasses was a glare of cold anger. Barfield forced a soothing chuckle. He patted Harrison mildly on the shoulder.

"I'm sorry. I've been ill, as you know. I am considerably better now, eh, Dr. Mortimer? Bring the papers down to the cabin. They shall be signed immediately, and I'll give you a drink. I promise you I shan't be so stubborn in the future."

HARRISON shrugged. He went down to the cabin with Barfield and the physician. The millionaire signed the papers. The signature was witnessed by Mortimer and Harrison. Harrison accepted a drink. He seemed mollified. But his face twitched when Mortimer asked him a casual question.

"By the way, how is your son-in-law doing at law school?"

"Very nicely indeed," Harrison replied, after a pause. "He's an ambitious young man. As a matter of fact, he's at his evening law classes right now."

"That's odd," Mortimer said.

"Odd? What do you mean?"

"Shipton was aboard the yacht a short time ago!"

Harrison looked startled. There was apprehension on his face. He took off his pince-nez glasses and slowly polished them. He replaced them on his nose with an unquiet hand.

"You must be mistaken, Dr. Mortimer. I have told you where Shipton is."

Barfield explained what had happened aboard the yacht. The news of an armed intruder who had leaped overboard to escape a hail of bullets produced a quick reaction on Harrison. Apprehension changed to anger. For a moment, the eyes behind his twinkling glasses were flamelike. Then he shrugged.

It was a case of mistaken identity, he declared. Someone had impersonated Shipton. Or perhaps the intruder was a thug who looked superficially like Shipton.

"If you wish to delay your sailing for twenty-four hours," Harrison concluded in a steady voice, "I can easily rid your mind of this wrong notion. I can have fellow members of Mr. Shipton's law class testify that he was there tonight studying with them in the classroom."

"I can't delay my sailing," Barfield said. "Perhaps we were mistaken. It's quite dark up on deck."

Harrison's face showed relief. His bluff had been successful. He knew that he could not produce any alibi for Shipton. He had counted on Barfield's eagerness to get the yacht under way in the early morning.

He shook hands with Mortimer and the millionaire realty owner and prepared to take his departure. But before Harrison could leave, there was a grim interruption.

A voice was shouting excitedly up on deck. Feet came racing down the companionway toward the cabin. A wildly excited man burst into view.

It was Elliot Peabody.

"Quick!" Peabody shouted. "Down to the engine room! There's a killer aboard!"

CHAPTER XV. THE SHADOW KNOWS

BARFIELD leaped to his feet. So did the other two men. Mortimer ducked out of the cabin and into his own adjoining room, came back with a gun.

"The engineer!" Peabody gasped. "He's been knocked on the head! I found him lying near the engine gratings, unconscious!"

"What were you doing down there?" Mortimer snapped.

"I didn't believe that Shipton actually had left this yacht," Peabody muttered. "I decided to make a quiet search below decks. I sneaked into the engine room and found the ceiling lights had been extinguished. When I turned them on, I found the unconscious body of the engineer, with blood streaming from a gash in his scalp."

He turned and led the way to the engine room. Barfield and Dr. Mortimer followed him. So did Harrison.

The slugged engineer was lying motionless near the silent machinery of the big engines. He had been dealt an ugly blow on the head from behind. But his skull had not been fractured, and the hurt was not a mortal one. Evidently his assailant had struck hastily and with a poor aim. A torn scalp had made the injury bleed badly. But in a few minutes Dr. Mortimer was able to revive the man.

He groaned. Mortimer's curt voice rallied his wits and made him talk.

There was little the engineer could tell. He had found the engine room in total darkness when he had descended from his quarters to make a routine inspection. He had turned on the light switch. A moment later, he was slugged viciously from behind and dropped. That was all he knew.

Mortimer helped the victim to his feet. Barfield started to walk toward the switch that controlled the lights. Harrison moved along with him, but Barfield shook his head.

"Better wait right here until we can discover if the criminal is still down here. Maybe he hasn't had a chance to get away."

He moved along toward a dark corner of the engine room, a gun glinting in his hand. Elliot Peabody moved away, too. So did Mortimer. The engineer stood by, swaying a bit on his feet. He started to say something, but what he had intended to say was never finished.

BLUE FACE

With startling suddenness, the engine room was plunged into pitch-darkness.

Someone had slyly turned off the current that fed light and power to this steel chamber deep in the bowels of the yacht.

Barfield yelled out in the darkness, his voice shrill with panic.

"Who has a light? Strike a match, someone! Find the switch!"

"Where is it?" Mortimer shouted.

"Over here somewhere."

"Are you sure?" That was Harrison's scared voice. "I thought the switch was on the other side of the engine room, where you were heading, Barfield! Wait! I think I have it! Yes – here it –"

His voice ended as if someone had cut through the shouted sentence with a sharp knife. There was an ugly thud, followed by a groan. A body struck the invisible deck of the engine room.

Dr. Mortimer cried out in the blackness:

"Harrison! Are you all right? Where are you? Harrison!"

There was no answer. Silence filled the black room. It was broken by a strange noise. The clang of metal broke the silence for an instant. It sounded like the slam of a steel door. Then the silence returned.

A few seconds later, the engine room was flooded with light. The bulbs in the ceiling had come on again.

Mortimer was standing only a few feet from the injured engineer. Peabody was across the room, near the humming dynamo. Barfield stood in a seeming daze halfway toward the corridor door that led forward to the bow of the ship.

Their eyes jerked with one motion to the light switch that controlled the flow of current in the engine room. A man was standing there. An ugly-looking gun jutted from his hand.

It was Blue Face!

HE looked unreal and horrible in the dimness of the engine-room lights. Over his skull was the plastic mask that looked like wrinkled blue Cellophane.

Under that opaque covering, his nose and ears showed like those of a blue-faced corpse. He seemed like a dead mummy risen from a tomb. Dark-blue gloves concealed his hands. His eyes stared through slitted openings in the mask.

Harrison had vanished. There was no trace of him.

"Don't move, gentlemen!" Blue Face warned.

His voice was a metallic whine. It sounded lifeless and dead, fitting in with his corpse-like appearance.

BLUE FACE

"I'm sorry to startle you," Blue Face snarled. "If you stand where you are, and make no foolish moves, only two of you will perish! I have a little murder campaign to finish. That was why it became necessary to remove your overly smart friend, Harrison, and toss him into the bilge-pump compartment!"

Blue Face's eyes didn't move. But the eyes of the rest did. They could see the outline of a metal door in the steel bulkhead directly behind the jeering criminal. The wounded engineer knew where that door led. Behind it was an inclosed space, used by sailors to clean and oil the mechanism of the bilge pump. It was the slam of that metal door that had made the clanging sound a few moments before Blue Face had switched on the lights again.

Blue Face gave a horrible chuckle. His penetrating gaze above the barrel of his gun kept the engineer and Dr. Mortimer motionless. But it was at Barfield and Elliot Peabody that the killer's gun really pointed.

"I want each of you two gentlemen to lower his uplifted left hand," he told Peabody and Barfield. "Do it slowly. Barfield first. Then Peabody. Each remove your watch from your pocket. Toss it over here on the deck, close to my feet."

"Don't shoot!" Peabody moaned.

Barfield didn't say anything. His lips were like gray putty.

"I don't really want those watches," Blue Face sneered. "But I always like my murders to look like burglaries. For that reason, I shall take your timepieces with me when I leave. It would be a shame to disappoint Inspector Cardona. Cardona is so positive that I'm a nervous hophead with a desire to commit cheap burglaries!"

His mocking whine changed to a snarl.

"All right, Barfield! You first."

Awkwardly, Barfield detached his watch with his lowered left hand, tossed it to the deck of the engine room. The impact smashed the crystal and delicate works inside the gold case. Blue Face chuckled as he heard it.

"Peabody! Your watch, please."

The last remaining legal heir of Barfield obeyed.

The muzzle of Blue Face's gun swerved a hairbreadth. He made no attempt to pick up the watches at his feet. The steady gun muzzle pointed straight at the heart of David Barfield.

Blue Face pulled the trigger.

There was no explosion. No flame leaped from the muzzle of the murder gun. In the dreadful silence of the lighted room, the only sound audible was the harmless click of the gun's hammer.

Blue Face snarled an oath. In a split second, the muzzle swerved toward Peabody. Again the trigger was pulled.

No bullet ripped into Peabody's heart. Swaying with terror, Peabody heard only the click of a useless weapon.

BLUE FACE

The paralyzed victims of Blue Face recovered their wits. With a single motion, they swayed forward on their toes, to make a concerted rush for the criminal with the defective gun.

Laughter stopped them before they could take a step toward Blue Face.

It was an ominous sound. There was amusement in it, and challenge. It came from a dark corner of the room. Out of that darkness, a moving patch of blackness appeared.

The Shadow!

TWIN .45s gleamed in hands that were covered by black gloves. Fierce eyes stared with a flamelike scrutiny toward the stiffened figure of Blue Face over near the light switch.

Through the slits of his ugly headgear, Blue Face peered as if he couldn't believe the evidence of his cloudy vision. He recoiled against the steel bulkhead at his back.

"Surrender!" The Shadow intoned. "Resistance is useless!"

It was a fact that Blue Face realized. The gun in his grasp had been emptied by a foe who took nothing for granted. The Shadow had been secretly in that engine room earlier.

He had not wasted his time. A patient search had disclosed the hiding place where the mask and the gun of Blue Face had been cached, in readiness for a murderous appearance.

Blue Face quivered. His hands lifted above his helmeted skull, in token of surrender.

"Unmask!" It was a stern command from The Shadow.

Blue Face hesitated. In the deathlike silence, the strained faces of his victims watched the cornered criminal. Barfield found his tongue.

"Shipton!" he screamed. "It's John Shipton!"

"No!"

The Shadow silenced Barfield with that curt word. He spoke another name. It was a name that brought astonishment to every face in the engine room that was turned toward the blue-swathed criminal.

The name that The Shadow intoned like a knell of doom was – Richard Harrison.

The Shadow proved the truth of his assertion by forcing Blue Face to rip the ugly covering from his head. The eyes of Richard Harrison glared at The Shadow from behind a pair of glasses fitted to lie perfectly flat against his face behind the blue mask.

The laughter of The Shadow deepened. It was like a trumpet call of victory. He ordered Blue Face to remove his glasses, forced him to dash them to the concrete deck, where they shattered into pieces.

Harrison blinked. Without the glasses, his shrewd eyes looked dull and bulging. Blue Face was nearsighted!

The Shadow had known this fact ever since he had picked up a broken sliver from a polished lens near the elevator door of the apartment house in which Whorter had been murdered. The Shadow had struck Blue

BLUE FACE

Face a blow in the face that night before the criminal had fled to safety under cover of the choking smoke screen. The blow had shattered Blue Face's glasses beneath the plastic mask.

Harrison was the only man among The Shadow's list of suspects who wore glasses. That sliver of polished glass had given The Shadow his final clue. Now the unmasked face of Richard Harrison had given The Shadow his final proof!

He began to glide cautiously toward the captured criminal.

BUT Harrison was not yet manacled. He was a nervy and desperate criminal. He had been prepared for danger ever since he had discovered that The Shadow had taken up his trail. He had expected possible disaster, and was ready for it.

"Stop where you are, damn you!" Harrison snarled.

One of his upraised hands uncurled a trifle. He was holding something which he permitted The Shadow to see. It was a small, fragile sphere of glass. It looked similar to the smoke bomb that Blue Face had shattered on the floor of the apartment-house lobby.

But this wasn't a smoke weapon. The crazy triumph in Harrison's snarl warned The Shadow. He halted, his automatics still aimed at the tense body of the trapped criminal.

Harrison had turned slightly. He was facing the fuel tanks. He stood with his deadly little pellet poised ready to throw.

"If you move an inch," he cried, "I shall smash this liquid bomb at the fuel tanks! I'll blow everyone to pieces, including myself! I intend to escape, do you understand? Either you allow me to back out of this engine room alone, and lock the door behind me – or I'll take everyone in here to hell with me!"

His words were a strident shriek. Harrison meant what he was saying. There was no doubt of that.

"It won't help you to try to shoot me!" he snarled at The Shadow. "Go ahead and fire your guns. You can't prevent me from smashing this bomb, even if you plug me. If you don't believe that, pull your triggers!"

The Shadow didn't answer. He was checkmated, and he knew it. The life of every man in the room depended on his obedience to a dangerous criminal. He stood where he was, his eyes bleak.

The trump card was in that uplifted hand of Harrison!

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW LAUGHS

THE SHADOW allowed no hint of his dismay to reach the desperate man a few feet in front of him.

Derisive laughter came from his lips. The Shadow's laughter in the face of mortal danger puzzled Harrison. So did the words which he whispered to a desperate and cornered criminal.

They were taunting words. They told Harrison that his game was up, that he had made too many serious errors to hope to escape from a foeman of the caliber of The Shadow.

Harrison didn't believe that. And yet he hesitated. The Shadow had known who Blue Face was before the

BLUE FACE

mask had been ripped from Harrison's face. Harrison's gun was useless; The Shadow had cleverly taken the sting from those bullets, unknown to a shrewd criminal who had fancied himself completely unsuspected.

The Shadow continued to talk. His words were addressed to the terrified victims of Blue Face, as well as to Harrison himself. The Shadow acquainted them with the clue of the broken eyeglasses. He disclosed for the first time that he had penetrated to the engine room of the yacht well in advance of the attack on the engineer.

Then The Shadow mentioned something that made Harrison stiffen with rage. He described the cunning cache where Blue Face had hidden his disguise and his gun aboard the yacht. It was the discovery of this cache that had enabled The Shadow to render the gun harmless.

All the while he was talking, The Shadow kept edging imperceptibly forward.

There was clever psychology back of this apparently infinitesimal advance. No step that The Shadow took was big enough to cause Harrison to hurl the deadly glass sphere he held so nervously in his upraised hand. Yet every move The Shadow made, during his mocking speech, brought him nearer to his foe.

"Keep back!" Harrison screamed.

Elliot Peabody's face was like a sheet of dirty-white paper. Sweat stood out on his forehead.

"Let him escape!" he begged The Shadow. "He means what he says. He'll kill every one of us, along with himself!"

Barfield added his plea to that of his nephew. So did the suave Dr. Mortimer. Except that Mortimer was no longer suave. Terror made his jaw sag. Mortimer was a good-enough physician to recognize the signs of madness when he saw them.

Harrison had reached the point where his taut nerves had begun to crack. Without his glasses, his eyes glared cloudily at the black-robed foe who was fearlessly edging closer to him.

This very lack of fear on The Shadow's part induced a growing wave of terror in the cornered criminal. His teeth ground together. Saliva trickled from his lips.

Harrison had reached the emotional point where he was satisfied to die himself, if only he could take the hated Shadow along with him.

"You can't talk a bomb out of existence," he snarled. "You can't kill me quick enough to prevent my throwing it!"

The calm laughter of The Shadow applied more mental pressure to the tortured mind of Blue Face.

Suddenly, The Shadow spoke again. His gaze lifted to the glass sphere in Harrison's grasp. He uttered a single contemptuous word.

"Useless!" he said.

"You're crazy!"

"Not I. The madman is yourself!"

BLUE FACE

As patiently as if he were addressing a slow-witted child, The Shadow made explanations. He had discovered the secret gun cache of Blue Face, he pointed out. The proof of that was the fact that the gun had clicked harmlessly when Harrison had tried to murder Barfield and Peabody.

He had also ruined the potency of the glass bomb, he declared.

"You're a liar!"

Harrison spat it venomously. He knew The Shadow's statement was a lie. The bomb had not been cached with the gun and the plastic disguise. Harrison had carried the deadly thing on his person, wrapped in a wadded cotton nest to guard against a premature jar that might explode his horrible missile.

But the clever psychology of The Shadow had already built up the mental effect he desired. In spite of his knowledge that The Shadow had lied, Harrison was uneasy. His mind, dominated by The Shadow's, was no longer sure of itself.

Despite himself, Harrison stole a quick, instinctive glance at the bomb before he threw it.

In that split second of time, The Shadow leaped!

HIS leap carried him forward over the lessened distance that separated the two deadly antagonists. The Shadow dropped both his guns. He dared not risk shooting. The strength in his fingers and wrists and arms were all that separated The Shadow and the victims of Blue Face from destruction.

One of The Shadow's hands clamped like a steel vise around the upraised wrist of Harrison. The other whipped off the slouch hat from his, The Shadow's head.

Harrison struggled like a wild beast. The fragile bomb tightened in his grasp, as he tried to throw it. But he was unable to. The bone-wrenching grip of The Shadow on his wrist prevented Harrison from moving a muscle in that tortured arm.

He opened his convulsive fingers, let the glass vial drop toward the concrete deck!

It was then that The Shadow swung his slouch hat forward. He had turned it upside down. The falling glass bomb dropped into the soft open crown of the hat.

There was no earth-shaking explosion of pent-up fury.

The Shadow whisked the hat backward before Harrison could make a blind, desperate grab for it.

Behind The Shadow, a pair of frightened hands reached for the hat as it was held to the rear at arm's length. Hat and bomb were taken gingerly by Elliot Peabody.

Peabody darted swiftly away from the foaming lunge of Harrison. He leaped to a sheltered spot behind David Barfield. At Barfield's side stood the wounded engineer of the yacht. Blood was still staining his face from the scalp wound that Harrison had dealt him earlier.

But this engineer was a man of courage. He had seized a spanner. He held it in a tight grip, ready to dash out Harrison's brains if the screaming criminal tore loose from the clutch of The Shadow.

BLUE FACE

An instant later, Harrison was free! He had bent his frenzied head suddenly, had sunk his teeth deep into The Shadow's wrist. Agony made The Shadow release his grip. The teeth of the furious murderer had almost met in the flesh of The Shadow.

Harrison fled toward the exit door of the engine room. But his lack of eyeglasses was a fatal hazard to his hopes. Unable to see clearly, he darted toward the square outline of a steel door which he mistook for the exit.

He discovered his fatal error only after he had thrown open the door. It led into a shallow paint-storage closet.

That was the end of Harrison's bid for freedom. With the threat of the bomb eliminated, The Shadow was able to battle Blue Face without risking the lives of the other men in the engine room.

He fought fiercely with the maddened criminal. Back and forth they struggled, over the steel confines of the room. Harrison's furious attack prevented The Shadow from reaching his dropped guns. But by the same token, the criminal was prevented from drawing the sharp steel knife which had pierced Slug Narvo's heart on the previous night.

Presently, Harrison groaned. The Shadow, master of jujitsu, had achieved the hold he wanted. He increased the pressure. Harrison's groan changed to a scream. For an instant, he stiffened. Then there was a sharp crack, like the snapping of a twig.

Harrison toppled to the floor. Above him, his face streaked with sweat and exhaustion, was The Shadow. From beneath his black cloak he pulled a stout length of cord. It was tied tightly around the wrists of the captured criminal. The wrists were doubled downward and trussed to the ankles.

When The Shadow rose to his feet, Harrison was as helpless as a chicken ready for market.

THE SHADOW paid no attention to the pale faces of Barfield and Peabody and Dr. Mortimer. He leaped past them, approached the bulkhead at a point near the light switch.

Close to that switch was the outline of a steel door that was set flush in the bulkhead wall. It was the entrance to the bilge-pump repair chamber. It was the slamming of this door that had made the clanging sound in the darkness a moment before Harrison had vanished to become Blue Face.

The Shadow opened the barrier, entered the chamber. He was gone only a short while. When he strode back again into view, The Shadow was carrying the limp figure of a man.

There was a gasp from the other men in the engine room when they recognized the pale features of the hidden victim of Blue Face.

The rescued man was John Shipton!

Obedying a curt order from The Shadow, Dr. Mortimer revived Harrison's son-in-law. Shipton was helped to his feet. There was terror in his wide-open eyes as he saw the black-robed figure of The Shadow. But his terror changed to grim understanding when he turned and saw the trussed body of Harrison on the concrete deck of the engine room.

"You knew?" The stern question came from The Shadow.

"I suspected him," Shipton whispered. "I couldn't prove it."

BLUE FACE

"Is that why you tried to trail Blue Face, night after night?"

Shipton's face was ghastly. He nodded. Haltingly, gasping for breath, he disclosed everything he could.

Shipton had first suspected Harrison when he had found the package of marijuana cigarettes at home. That finding was pure chance. He had gone into his father-in-law's room to get something he thought he had left there. Looking unsuspectingly into the bureau, he had found the "reefers."

It was then that the ugly truth had burst upon him. For along with the unmarked package of dope cigarettes, Shipton had found a damning document written in his father-in-law's hand.

It was a complete financial statement of the entire holdings of Barfield. With it were three other statements, listing the assets of Barfield's three legal heirs – his nephews, Charles Clee, James Whorter and Elliot Peabody.

At that instant, Shipton realized why Harrison had been so eager for him to marry his daughter. Harrison wanted to profit from murder without having an apparent motive. He knew that Shipton would possibly inherit everything if Barfield and his three nephews could be killed. If Shipton proved hard to handle later on, Blue Face would have committed one last "robbery" and murdered him.

If anything went wrong beforehand, Shipton was an excellent fall guy. That was why Harrison had so cleverly helped to build up his own daughter's suspicion of her husband.

Shipton had no proof of all this. He was afraid to go to the police. He was also afraid to confide in his wife. So ever since he had found the evidence that pointed to his father-in-law as Blue Face, he had been conducting a desperate one-man hunt to put the guilt squarely where it belonged – on the shoulders of the hypocritical, murderous Harrison.

The Shadow's face swung toward Barfield. He asked a curt question.

Barfield admitted his "illness" had been a fake. He had suspected Shipton. He had played invalid in order that he might slip from the house every night in an effort to catch Shipton red-handed. He had hired Slug Narvo and his mob for added protection in what he realized was a dangerous task.

It was a foolish thing to do, and Barfield realized it now. He hung his head as he listened to the biting reproof of The Shadow.

ON the deck of the engine room Harrison, fettered and helpless, knew that his game was up. He laughed harshly. The madness was gone from his staring eyes. He knew now that he had made fatal mistakes. It made him the more eager to brag of the clever things he had actually accomplished.

"You may as well give me credit for the death of Slug Narvo, along with the rest of them," he sneered. "It was a neat job. I had no idea Slug intended to kidnap my daughter. But I was too smart for him. I ducked when he struck me down in the bathroom. The blow didn't knock me out. I only pretended that.

"As soon as Narvo drove away with Elaine, I sped after him in the fast car I used as Blue Face. I killed Narvo, rescued Elaine, and was back in the bathroom, unconscious, before Shipton arrived home after his unsuccessful attempt to catch me in the act of murdering James Whorter."

There was horror in Shipton's eyes. David Barfield turned to face him.

BLUE FACE

"I owe you an apology. I was wrong about you."

Shipton glared at his uncle. "I never wanted a penny of your damned money! You hounded my mother to death! You hated her, and I hate you! I –"

"That is not true," Barfield whispered. He looked worn and tired. "I was wrong about you. You have been wrong about me. I never harmed your mother. I had nothing to do with her death. I'd have advanced her money when she needed it, but she was too proud to ask for help. I couldn't locate her until it was too late."

He took a deep breath.

"There has been too much hate in this family. I'm going to make a new will. I want to divide everything I have between you and Elliot Peabody. Will you shake hands with me, John?"

Shipton's eyes bored into those of his uncle. What he saw there made the harsh tightness leave his jaw. He uttered a choked sound, gripped the hand the older man was tremulously holding out to him in friendship.

The Shadow nodded.

A moment later, there was a hail from a boat approaching the anchored yacht. The Shadow glided aloft to the deck. The others followed.

The hail was in a voice The Shadow recognized. It was Inspector Cardona's. A moment later, Cardona was aboard the yacht. With him came Clyde Burke, star reporter for the Daily Classic.

The Shadow had melted backward into the gloom of the deck. Cardona didn't see him. But he saw David Barfield.

Cardona explained quickly. He had received a telephone tip from Clyde Burke that something was amiss on the Barfield yacht. According to Clyde, someone had phoned the tip in anonymously to the newspaper. The tipster promised that a valuable clue to the whereabouts of Blue Face could be obtained by a quick visit to the Barfield yacht.

Clyde didn't reveal that the alleged phone message was a myth. Nor did he tell Cardona that he was acting on a time schedule furnished him in advance by The Shadow himself! That Clyde Burke was also a secret agent of The Shadow.

Cardona listened to the excited gasp of Barfield. He raced swiftly below to the yacht's engine room.

When he returned, his face held a delighted look.

Blue Face was at last in the hands of the police. All the credit for the capture would go to Inspector Cardona.

Barfield explained that the capture of Blue Face had been the work of The Shadow. But The Shadow was not to be found when dazed eyes glanced around the dark deck. The Shadow had faded. He was satisfied to let Cardona take the credit.

Results were all that interested The Shadow!

He would remain shrouded by darkness, until fresh challenges from the forces of evil brought him back to battle anew for the cause of justice.

THE END