

DOUBLE DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. THE MASKED MAN

THE crook on the rooming-house roof lay flat on his stomach. So rigidly quiet was he that he seemed like a corpse.

But Bump Wilson was very much alive.

According to New York underworld whispers, Bump was a free lance – a cunning and resourceful trigger-man who sold his services to the highest bidder.

Bump peered over the dark edge of the roof, his lips curved in an evil grin. This was the queerest murder job he had ever pulled in his entire wolfish career.

Bump Wilson had been hired, by a man whose identity he did not know, to assist in the killing of a man who already had been dead for twenty-four hours!

The alley in the rear of the rooming house was a narrow ribbon of night darkness. It lay four stories below Bump's watchful eyes. Across the alley was the towering brick wall of a warehouse. Every window was dark. But Bump kept his eyes riveted on one of the warehouse windows.

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It was lifting. No visible hand moved it. Yet Bump knew that a human being was framed invisibly above the blackness of the narrow rear alley.

Bump descended the ladder that led downward from the roof to the rear fire escape of the rooming house. He was now directly opposite the opened warehouse window. Darkness seemed to swirl forward against the sill. A figure was disclosed.

It was a man without a face. He was black from head to foot. His eyes glared through the slits of a mask that completely covered his face and head. Gloves concealed his hands. His clothing was black. So were his rubber-soled shoes.

He uttered a complacent chuckle as he watched Bump's swift movement. Bump had turned toward the fire escape window behind him. It was unlocked; he raised it without sound.

The masked man across the alley had expected that. The room had been hired a week earlier by a shapely, red-haired girl who called herself Peggy Madison. She had described herself to the landlady as an actress.

Peggy Madison had sneaked quietly away earlier that evening, taking with her a small suitcase that contained her few belongings. She would never return. Her name was as phony as her red hair. She was the third angle in a grim murder triangle conceived by the masked supercriminal at the warehouse window.

THE man in black had vanished briefly from sight. Now, he reappeared. He was holding a long wooden plank in his gloved hands. He slid the plank outward over the deserted rear alley, tilted it forward until its quivering end dropped noiselessly toward Bump's grasp.

The plank exactly bridged the narrow gulf between the two buildings.

A moment later, a grisly-looking object appeared through the warehouse window. It was a stuffed sack almost six feet long. The masked man grunted with exertion as he slid the sack to the plank. It bulged at either end, as if something stiff and angular were crammed inside.

With monkeylike agility, the masked man crawled over it. He seized the end of the sack and began to inch forward along the plank. He dragged the inert sack behind him. It moved easily. Its bottom surface had been greased beforehand.

Bump Wilson helped his sinister employer lift the sack over the fire-escape railing. It vanished into the apartment that had been hired by the shapely Peggy Madison. Then Bump crawled across the plank.

As soon as he was safely inside the warehouse, he drew the plank after him, closed and locked the warehouse window.

Across the narrow alley, the shade was now drawn on the top-floor window of the rooming house. Light gleamed behind the shade. Inside the lighted room, the masked man was working swiftly. He had pulled a zipper in the sack, splitting it open from one end to the other.

A layer of smaller rubberized bags became visible, each one crammed full and icy cold to the touch. When they were removed, they revealed the body of a dead man.

The corpse was a tall, rather thin man. He had been shot to death. There was a small blue hole in his forehead and a larger, uglier wound in the back of his head. He had long since stopped bleeding.

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The masked man lifted the body from the sack and laid it on the floor. Then he removed an under layer of waterproof bags that had been underneath the corpse.

All the containers were filled with chunks of ice. The masked man emptied them into a wash basin in the corner of the room. He knew the ice would melt down the drain, leaving no trace. He gathered up the empty ice bags and the sack that had contained the corpse. Snapping out the light, he slid like a black wraith to the fire escape outside and dropped the stuff to the alley.

Bump Wilson was waiting. He picked up the discarded bags and vanished toward a side street. The sound of an automobile motor was briefly audible. Then it faded into silence. Bump had finished his part in one of the easiest criminal jobs of his career.

The masked man in the top-floor furnished room still had grim work to do. He had successfully planted the dead man where he planned for the police to find him. But there were two more things to accomplish before the job would be a perfect crime.

CHUCKLING, the masked man approached a cabinet of polished wood that stood close against the wall of the room. It was an expensive combination radio-and-phonograph. The shapely Peggy Madison had installed it there.

There was a record lying on the turntable of the phonograph half of the set. The masked man examined it and made sure that it was the record he had prepared. The title was that of a hot jazz number. But there was something grimmer than swing music recorded on this apparently innocent disk. It was the counterfeit voice of murder!

The masked man drew from his pocket two long lengths of thin wire. He made a double connection with a tiny metal lever in the front panel of the cabinet. The lever controlled the playing of the machine. A click to the left turned on the radio. A click to the right switched off the radio and turned on the phonograph.

Testing, the masked man found his two attached wires worked as perfectly as he had anticipated.

Part 2 of the perfect crime was now ready.

The masked man turned on the radio half of the set. He controlled the volume so that the music was not too loud. But the masked man knew that the sound would easily pierce the thin wall that separated this room from the one adjoining.

Dance music welled softly from the loud-speaker. Its hot rhythm contrasted grotesquely with the sprawled figure of the cold corpse on the floor.

Holding in one gloved hand the two wires that were still attached to the control lever of the radio set, the masked man backed to the door of the room and unlocked it. He stepped into the dim corridor outside and relocked the door. Music was faintly audible through the panel.

The wires from the set extended through the frame of the badly hung door without any difficulty. The crack was large enough to permit the criminal to manipulate his control of the machine inside. His hand pulled steadily.

Suddenly, the radio music ceased.

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For nearly a minute, there was silence. Then, abruptly, voices echoed inside the apartment where the corpse lay. Two men were apparently quarreling. Their voices rose higher and higher. A threat was uttered. It was followed by an oath. Then, with a sudden muffled impact, came the bark of a pistol shot. There was a faint cry, the dull impact of a falling body – then utter silence.

Outside the door, the masked man's wrists pulled gently. The machine inside switched back to the radio. Once more, dance music took up its slow, rhythmic beat.

The killer, crouched against the door frame, raised both hands with a sudden, quick jerk. The wires inside came loose from their anchorage. They were drawn swiftly through the door crack.

Noiselessly, the killer tiptoed along the darkened hall to the top of a flight of stairs. The electric light bulb in the ceiling had been unscrewed. In the darkness, the masked man waited.

A MOMENT later, the door next to the murder apartment opened with a quick thrust. A young man emerged, eyes staring with excitement. His name was Arthur Drake. He had heard the sound of a grim quarrel and the bark of a pistol shot through the wall of his room.

He darted to the adjoining door and listened. All he could hear was the rhythm of radio dance music. His knock at the door went unanswered.

"Miss Madison! Are you all right?"

No reply came. Arthur Drake hesitated, wondering if he had imagined the quarrel and the pistol shot. But he knew he hadn't. And the thought that the pretty red-haired Miss Madison might be in peril spurred him to action.

He had barely moved forward, when a figure bounded from concealment to confront him. Arthur Drake had a momentary glimpse of a tall, menacing figure dressed entirely in black. He saw the mask, the gloved hands, the glitter of a gun that swung, clublike, toward his skull.

Something else, he saw in that split-second of peril: One of the gloved fingers on the left hand of the masked man flapped as if it were empty. The index finger of the killer was maimed!

Before Drake could yell, the clubbed gun struck with grim impact. One blow was enough; Drake fell to the floor, unconscious.

WHEN Drake recovered consciousness, he was in an automobile speeding through the darkness. His head ached horribly. A gag distended his jaws and there was adhesive tape bound tightly across his lips. His hands were tied behind his back. But his legs were not bound.

He was lying on the floor of the car. The car stopped presently, and Drake heard a faint chuckle. Cold with the fear of death, he tried to pretend unconsciousness; but his masked captor prodded him brutally to his feet.

The car had halted in a weed-grown driveway inside a high board fence. Peering dazedly about him in the darkness, Drake saw that he was in a deserted junkyard. It was evidently some place near a river, for the dank smell of water was strong in his quivering nostrils. He could hear boat whistles, too.

Piles of rusted scrap iron rose in the darkness like man-made mountains. Drake was prodded ruthlessly forward by his armed captor.

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"All right – far enough! Stand still!"

Drake obeyed. A thump sounded against the earth just behind him. Then:

"Get down that ladder!"

A square hole yawned in the earth. A trapdoor had been opened. The thump of its lid against the ground was the sound Drake had heard.

It was impossible for Drake to descend with his hands tightly tied. He lost his footing and pitched headlong into darkness. A moment later, his ankles were seized in a powerful grip. There was a click, and steel leg–irons clamped on his ankles. He heard a faint chuckle in the darkness, as his captor climbed the ladder from the pit. The trapdoor dropped closed.

That was the last sound Arthur Drake heard for twenty–four hours! That was the length of time that elapsed before his captor returned.

He brought with him neither food nor water. His laughter was mocking. He leaned over Drake and the young man felt the sharp prick of a needle in the flesh of his throat.

"I have decided to turn you loose," his captor said, in a harsh, grating voice. "If the cops want to know who I am, tell 'em all you know – which will be nothing!"

Drake's senses were fading from the sharp prick of the drugged needle. But with a last effort, his gaze swung toward the gloved hands of the masked crook. Again he noticed that one finger of the left glove was partly empty. The killer was maimed; his left index finger was cut off at the second joint.

It was Drake's only clue to the man's identity. Then, abruptly, his drugged brain went blank. He lapsed into unconsciousness.

THE killer picked Drake up, carried him out of the pit. The trapdoor dropped flat. It was camouflaged on the outside with a cunningly cemented layer of earth and pebbles.

Dumping Drake into a sedan, the masked man removed his disguise, drove away through a gate in the junkyard fence.

He turned into upper Park Avenue and headed south under the gloomy overhang of the railroad structure. Behind him, the smell of the river faded. The killer was coolly certain that his victim would never be able to identify the junkyard, near the Harlem River, in which he had been held prisoner for twenty–four hours.

The sedan sped through the darkness toward a slum neighborhood far downtown near the East River. Slowing as he passed the gloom of a vacant lot, the kidnaper opened the car door and pitched his limp victim to the pavement. Then he sped away.

His entire scheme had worked like a charm. Hours earlier, he had removed the telltale phonograph disk from the music cabinet in the rooming house. A corpse had been "murdered" twenty–four hours after his actual death. Alibis would be without value. But only the killer knew that!

Ten minutes after the fleeing sedan had vanished from the East Side, a policeman found the moaning figure of Arthur Drake.

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Drake was already coming out of his drugged stupor. The injection he had received had been deliberately diluted to produce only a temporary effect. He gasped out feeble words that sent the cop darting to a call box. Presently, there was a wail of sirens in the darkness. Squad cars rolled up.

Under the guidance of Arthur Drake, police sped swiftly toward the rooming house from which he had been kidnapped the night before.

The radio in the locked rear room was still monotonously playing. Blue-coated shoulders crashed the door in. The sprawled body of the dead man was on the floor. A cop darted to the window. It was locked on the inside.

No attempt had been made to hide the identity of the corpse. A tailor's label in his coat revealed that he was George Clifford. Instantly, the case took on a more important aspect. George Clifford was a prominent and wealthy man. He was a well-known capitalist and investor.

"How long has he been dead?" a police voice rasped.

"Impossible to say," the medical examiner replied. "After rigor mortis ends, my opinion of the time would be mere guesswork. He probably was killed late last night, when your witness heard the quarrel and the shot."

A phone call whizzed over the wires to police headquarters. It brought Acting Inspector Joe Cardona to the scene.

But Joe was going to find this case hard sledding. A criminal of superior intelligence had committed a perfect murder. There was only one man in New York capable of accepting this challenge to the law:

The Shadow!

CHAPTER II. THE BLACK RAY

EARLY the next morning, a long, expensive chauffeur-driven sedan halted in front of police headquarters.

The man who alighted was tall, distinguished-looking. Lamont Cranston passed into the spacious lobby. He had come to make a call on his friend, Police Commissioner Weston. They met often at the Cobalt Club, where Cranston lived when he was in New York.

Weston was the soldierly, masculine type. Cranston, a millionaire sportsman, was one of the best known big-game hunters in the world.

This morning, Lamont Cranston suspected crime! The queer disappearance of a friend of his puzzled him. He had decided to bring the matter to the attention of the police.

He was admitted promptly to the office of Commissioner Weston. Weston, a shrewd man, guessed at once that something was wrong. There was a tightness to Cranston's cheery smile. His handshake was hurried. He refused a cigar, and plunged at once into the reason for his early morning visit.

"I'm worried about a man named George Clifford."

"George Clifford!"

Cranston didn't seem to notice the commissioner's quick ejaculation.

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"Mr. Clifford had an appointment to meet me, two nights ago. He didn't keep that appointment. In fact, he seems to have disappeared."

"Wait just a moment," Commissioner Weston said abruptly.

He pressed a buzzer on his desk and murmured a crisp order into a square, black annunciator. In less than a minute, a stocky, dark–featured man hurried into the room. This was Acting Inspector Joe Cardona, the ace detective of the police department. He knew Lamont Cranston and shook hands genially with him.

"Mr. Cranston suspects that something may have happened to a man named George Clifford," Weston said, with a sharp, warning glance at his assistant.

Joe's reply was a grunt. But his eyes narrowed under his black brows.

Lamont Cranston explained. George Clifford had been uneasy about an investment he had made recently. He had sunk \$25,000 into the ambitious scheme of an inventor named Doctor Jasper Logan. The device was a machine on which Doctor Logan had been working for more than five years.

Logan expected it to revolutionize modern warfare. But he ran out of funds before he could complete his experiments. He appealed to investors, and George Clifford loaned him \$25,000 for a quarter interest in Logan's device. The experiment had failed.

Clifford suspected fraud. He had made an appointment forty–eight hours earlier with Lamont Cranston, to seek advice about what to do.

"Why should Clifford ask you about it?" Cardona inquired.

Cranston explained. He, too, had been asked to invest in the scheme, but had declined. So he readily agreed to meet Clifford at the Cobalt Club. Clifford never appeared. Cranston telephoned his apartment the next day.

Clifford was still missing and his valet sounded worried. So Cranston had decided that he ought to visit police headquarters and have a quiet alarm sent out to locate the missing man.

"Perhaps I'm acting foolishly," he said. "Mr. Clifford may be perfectly safe. But I thought –"

"You thought right," Cardona rasped. "George Clifford is dead – murdered! He was shot to death, the night before last, in a cheap rooming house!"

AT Cardona's crisp words, Cranston's face underwent an amazing, momentary change. His eyes held a piercing flame; the nostrils of his strong, beaklike nose quivered like a hound's on a fresh scent. His hand moved quickly to conceal this involuntary exposure of his real personality. Neither Weston nor Cardona realized that they had unwittingly flung a challenge into the very face of The Shadow.

Lamont Cranston was The Shadow!

The Shadow never appeared in sunlight. He was a creature of darkness and mystery, his life dedicated to ceaseless warfare against crime – the sort of crime that baffled the police and defied ordinary methods of detection.

Commissioner Weston had often discussed the mystery of The Shadow's identity with Lamont Cranston. Never, however, had an inkling of the truth ever crossed Weston's mind – that, at times, The Shadow adopted

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the identity of the millionaire sportsman, Lamont Cranston.

Cranston's polite voice sounded dismayed.

"Clifford murdered! But, really, that's ridiculous! There wasn't a thing about it in my morning paper."

"The killing was discovered too late last night to make the morning papers," Cardona explained.

He continued brusquely. He told about young Arthur Drake, who had heard a quarrel and a shot. He described the appearance of the masked killer who had kidnapped Drake and held him prisoner for twenty-four hours. He mentioned the red-haired actress named Peggy Madison, who had rented the murder room. The police had been unable to find any trace of her. The whole thing was obviously a perfectly planned crime.

"Tell me about this guy Doctor Logan," Cardona growled. "Do you happen to know if he has a finger missing on his left hand?"

Cranston nodded.

"Part of his left index finger is missing. I noticed that the only time I ever talked with him, although I have never actually seen his hands. Logan always wears gloves. I think he wears the gloves because he is conscious of his deformity and wants to hide it."

"That settles it," Cardona snapped. "I'm gonna pick up this crooked inventor and sweat the truth out of him!"

"Wait a minute," Commissioner Weston said. "We haven't a shred of proof to justify an arrest of Logan. Let's hear first what Mr. Cranston knows about him."

CRANSTON'S knowledge of the inventor proved to be favorable, rather than unfavorable. Doctor Logan had not claimed that his new war invention would work. He had been absolutely honest in his proposition to Cranston. He was working on light rays. He had discovered a ray of cold-black light which he believed could be made to melt steel. If it worked, it would mean the end of battleships, fortresses, tanks – all the modern means of defense in warfare. But Logan had used up all his own money. That was why he had approached investors.

"Sounds phony," Weston said.

"Not the way he presented his proposition," Cranston replied. "I must admit that Doctor Logan laid his cards honestly on the table, when he offered me a quarter interest in his invention for \$25,000. Logan warned me there was more than an even chance that his invention would fail. In that case, my money would be lost. That was why Logan was approaching only rich men – men who could afford to gamble for big stakes.

"For Doctor Logan claimed that if his black ray worked, every nation in the world would bid high to buy it. A quarter interest for \$25,000 would return literally millions in profit. I turned the offer down because I never speculate. George Clifford, however, invested."

"What did Clifford say when he telephoned you for an appointment?" Weston asked.

"He had an idea that Logan had secretly succeeded in his experiments and was trying to freeze Clifford out of the profits. He said Logan had threatened him with death, if he made any trouble. That's why I became worried when Clifford disappeared."

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Commissioner Weston's mouth tightened. Cardona looked grim as he arose. He asked Cranston to accompany him to the inventor's home.

"Surely, you're not going to arrest Doctor Logan on such flimsy evidence?" Cranston said.

Joe grinned. "Not yet. I expect to get a phone call from the detectives I sent out with young Arthur Drake. Drake is my ace in the hole! Let's go."

JASPER LOGAN'S home was a brownstone house in a decayed neighborhood on the west side of Harlem. The door was opened by a tall, good-looking young man who smiled pleasantly at Cranston. But the sight of Joe Cardona's grim face and the uniform of the policeman who accompanied Joe made the young man frown.

"This is Walter Starr," Cranston said, quietly. "He's Doctor Logan's technical assistant. We'd like to see Doctor Logan, if we may."

"I'm sorry. He's very busy."

"Yeah?" Cardona flashed his badge. He shoved through the doorway. "Go tell this Doc Logan it's a police call, and we got no time to waste!"

The inventor emerged presently from the rear of the house. He was tall and lean, like his assistant. But that was the only resemblance between them. Logan's face was seamed and old. The smile on his lips was a mere grimace. His eyes were cold, with a hint of mockery in their cloudy depths.

But Joe Cardona was used to handling tough birds like this. His voice was deliberately harsh.

"Take off your gloves! I like to see the hands of the guys I shake with!"

There was quick fury in Logan's eyes. Then caution conquered his rage. Bowing sardonically, he removed his gloves.

The index finger of his left hand was maimed. It had been cut off at the second joint.

"I presume it's not a crime to be crippled," he said, suavely.

"Where were you last night, doctor?"

"In this house. Working in my laboratory."

He glanced at Starr, his assistant, and the young man confirmed the alibi. Starr had been working in the front room. Logan couldn't have gone without passing him. But on further questioning, the alibi weakened. Starr, obviously loyal to his employer, was forced to admit that there was a rear basement exit.

"When did you last see George Clifford?" Cardona asked Logan.

Logan readily admitted that Clifford had called on him two nights earlier. He admitted that Clifford had denounced him as a swindler. But he insisted that he had placated the angry investor. Clifford, he said, had left convinced that his suspicion of fraud was unfounded. That was the last that Logan had seen or heard of him.

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"As I understand it," Lamont Cranston said mildly, "you sold a quarter interest in your invention to three investors at \$25,000 apiece."

Cardona took the cue.

"Let's have the names of those other two men, doctor."

Logan's grin vanished.

"You can go to hell before I'll tell you! If you think I have broken the law, it's your privilege to arrest me. But there's such a thing as false arrest, don't forget that!"

"I'm not forgetting anything," Cardona said shortly. He shot the next question with abrupt suddenness.

"Do you own any real estate?"

The query caught Logan unprepared. His eyes blinked.

"Why – I own this house, of course."

"How about other property?"

"No."

Logan had regained his poise. But Cardona had questioned enough suspects in his career to know when a man was lying.

The telephone bell rang suddenly. Walter Starr answered the call. It was from headquarters, for Cardona.

JOE strode across the room. He talked a moment, then hung up with a jubilant bang. He turned toward the uniformed policeman who had accompanied him to the inventor's home.

"Mr. Cranston and I are leaving, Rafferty. You stay right here. Doctor Logan is not under arrest. But if he attempts to leave this house" – Cardona's voice crackled – "pinch him and bring him straight to police headquarters. The charge is first-degree murder!"

The inventor's face flushed red. His mouth opened, but he made no comment.

Cardona and Cranston departed. Joe explained the reason for his hasty departure, as Cranston's car sped northward.

"That phone call came from Detective Spence. He's the guy I sent out with Arthur Drake to try and locate the spot where Drake was held while he was kidnapped. And they've found it! The killer made a bad mistake when he didn't bandage Drake's eyes. The young fellow remembered that the gate in the junkyard fence was painted black and had a rusted tin cigarette ad tacked on the wood.

"The junkyard is at the upper end of Park Avenue, right smack on the Harlem River. Detective Spence says he's found the pit in the ground where the marked guy held Drake a prisoner for twenty-four hours!"

The pit was open when they got there. The camouflaged trapdoor had been located, after a patient search by Drake and the detective. The owner of the junkyard, a swarthy little Italian in torn overalls, was almost tearful

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in his protests that he knew nothing of the trapdoor or the hidden prison underground.

"What's your name?"

"Tony Garfaldo."

"You own this joint?"

"No. Ees cost too mucha money. I joost paya da rent."

"Who's your landlord?"

Tony Garfaldo suddenly lost his fear. A look of grim pleasure came over his swarthy face.

"I hope you putta da bum in jail! He raise da rent, he make me pay da month in advance, he make me pay da tax, he no fixa up notheeng."

"What's his name? Doctor Jasper Logan?"

Tony Garfaldo shook his head.

"Heesa name Julius Herzog. A leetle guy weeth a long nose and a bald head."

Cardona looked baffled at the news that Doctor Logan didn't own the junkyard property. But Lamont Cranston, who had been listening quietly, made a low-toned suggestion.

"Perhaps this Julius Herzog is merely an agent. Of course, I'm no detective, but it might be a good idea to locate Herzog's business address and question him."

Tony Garfaldo hunted through his office shack until he found the greasy business card of his landlord.

A HALF hour later, Julius Herzog was peering foxily through horn-rimmed glasses at his two callers. He was bald, thin-nosed, ferret-eyed as Tony Garfaldo had said.

At first, he refused to talk. But a flash of Cardona's police badge and the threat of jail changed Herzog's tune. He was not a fool. He knew that the identity of his unknown real-estate client could not be kept secret in the face of police investigation.

He admitted reluctantly that the junkyard property was owned by Doctor Jasper Logan.

That was all Cardona wanted to know. He gave a growl of pleasure as he picked up Herzog's phone. He called the home of the inventor. He had ample evidence now to make an arrest. Logan's missing forefinger, his ownership of the junkyard, the testimony of his kidnapped victim, was enough to secure a grand jury indictment for murder.

Cardona's confident bellow changed to shrill disbelief, as he heard the reply to his phone call. When he hung up, his dark face was as hard as granite.

Herzog was smiling faintly, as if at some inner joke. Lamont Cranston listened to Cardona's swift explanation of what he had just heard on the wire. But eyes watched the bald-headed Mr. Herzog.

"Logan pulled a fast one," Cardona growled. "He slugged Patrolman Rafferty over the head and made a getaway. Rafferty is in the hospital with a fractured skull. Starr, the doe's assistant, is in jail as a material witness. The brownstone house is overrun with cops now – but it's too late to do anything about arresting Logan."

"That's too bad!" Julius Herzog said.

His laughter purred with unmistakable triumph.

CHAPTER III. CRANSTON DRINKS

LAMONT CRANSTON had promised Joe Cardona to accompany him back to the home of Doctor Jasper Logan. But when he reached the street, he suddenly changed his mind.

Out of the corner of his eye, he had noticed a girl in a flashy roadster at the curb.

She was a honey-colored blonde, and she was gorgeously beautiful. She was wearing a knitted blue sports costume that clung tightly to her rounded figure. Her hat was blue. So were her eyes.

It was the hard stare of those eyes that warned Lamont Cranston of danger. He pretended to be completely unconscious of the girl's surveillance. But he knew her eyes were stabbing into his back as he talked with Joe Cardona.

Joe was puzzled by the abrupt way Cranston got rid of him, but he made no objection. He shook hands, hurried to the corner and took a taxi.

Cranston walked the other way. He passed deliberately close to the parked roadster in which the blonde sat. He wondered what the girl's game might be.

As Cranston, The Shadow had been approached in Logan's war-machine scheme. There were two other investors, whose names Logan had refused to divulge. Were all of them, including Cranston, in danger of meeting the same fate that had happened to the unfortunate George Clifford?

Cranston remembered the mysterious Peggy Madison who had rented the murder apartment in the rooming house. True, she had red hair. This girl in the roadster was a blonde. But a transformation wig could easily explain that.

The girl's blue eyes were no longer hard. They were demure and innocent as she smiled at Cranston. He smiled back.

"I wonder if you could help me," she said. "My car is parked here so tightly that I can't back it out. I hate to trouble you."

"No trouble at all," Cranston said.

The girl slid over and he got behind the wheel. The girl's side movement had hitched her short skirt above her knees. She was wearing rolled silk stockings. She made no effort to lower her skirt. Cranston was conscious of the warmth of her body as she sat close to him. A provocative perfume drifted into his nostrils.

He had little trouble extricating the roadster from the parking space at the curb. He knew the girl's request had been a bluff to entice him into the car. As he swung the wheel, he waited for her next move. It came almost

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instantly.

Her hand rested warmly on his arm in a pretty little gesture of amazement.

"Aren't you Lamont Cranston?"

"I am," he said, smilingly.

"How thrilling! I – I recognized you from your pictures in the Sunday rotogravures. My brother Tom admires you immensely! He's done some big–game shooting himself. Oh, I forgot – my name is Pearl Crawford. I'm an artist's model."

"I envy the lucky man who paints you," Cranston said.

"Thank you! That's a nice compliment. Where can I drop you off?"

"I was thinking of returning to my hotel for a cocktail."

Pearl Crawford's manner became careless.

"Why not have one with my brother Tom and myself? He'd love to meet you. My apartment is only a short distance away. Will you?"

Lamont Cranston permitted himself to be persuaded.

THE apartment was in a swanky building in the fashionable East Side, not far from Sutton Place. Pearl Crawford opened the door herself with a latchkey. She led Cranston into a gorgeous living room. There was no sign of her brother.

"Tom will be back in a few minutes," Pearl said. "Excuse me, please."

She vanished into another room. Cranston stared at the living–room wall, where an extraordinarily good painting hung. It was a full–length nude done in oils. It was signed by Mortimer Temple, a well–known figure painter. There was no mistaking who had posed for the picture. Pearl Crawford's lovely face smiled coyly from the canvas.

The girl returned from her bedroom while Cranston was still examining the painting. She gave a giggle of pretended modesty and turned the nude painting toward the wall.

She had changed into a negligee. It was sheer and lacy, with wide sleeves that fell away from the girl's smooth arms. The deep throat of the garment allowed Cranston a glimpse of Pearl's half–concealed bosom.

"I'll mix the cocktails while we're waiting for Tom," she said.

The moment she vanished toward the kitchen, Cranston tiptoed toward the bedroom. His movements were swift and noiseless. He knew exactly what he was hunting for, and where he thought he would find it.

He went straight to the garment closet of Pearl Crawford.

The object he was hunting for was on the top shelf, cleverly concealed under a wide–brimmed hat. The object was a wig. The wig was beautifully marcelled. Its color was copper–red!

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Instantly, The Shadow knew that his suspicions concerning Pearl Crawford were correct. The discovery of the red-haired wig explained her eagerness to invite Lamont Cranston to her apartment. She was the mysterious Peggy Madison!

Her victims were the investors in the war machine of the fugitive Doctor Jasper Logan. The Shadow, in his role of Cranston, was in a dangerous trap.

CRANSTON tiptoed noiselessly back toward the living room. He could hear the click of Pearl's high-heeled slippers hurrying from the kitchen.

With a noiseless bound, The Shadow reached the nude painting which Pearl had turned toward the wall with mock modesty. He turned it about a scant second before she entered the living room.

There was a foolish grin on Lamont Cranston's lips. Pearl thought that he had been unable to resist taking another look at the painting.

She giggled, set down her tray with the two cocktails. She slapped Cranston's wrist gently. There was a provocative lure in her blue eyes.

"You men are all alike! Try one of these cocktails. They're delicious!"

Cranston noticed that she selected her own glass. He took the other, but saw that the rim of the glass in Pearl's hand had a slight nick on it. Her glance had dropped swiftly toward the tiny imperfection before she made her selection. It was enough to warn The Shadow.

The cocktail in his own hand was drugged!

"Here's to the most attractive artist's model I've ever had the good fortune to meet," he said, smilingly.

The Shadow had turned slightly. His gaze moved about the room. Then he drained his glass.

Pearl watched him, her blue eyes tense. For an instant, Cranston stood motionless. Then his body swayed. His face was quite red. The hand that held his empty glass dropped sluggishly at his side. The glass slipped from his fingers.

He staggered backward, then recovered himself. Whirling, he tried to reach the mantelpiece to support himself. His legs gave way. He fell full length on the rug, with his limp head almost at the edge of the fireplace

For an instant, his outstretched hand clawed feebly, then the fingers relaxed. He lay face downward, as motionless as a dead man.

Pearl hadn't uttered a sound. Now she sprang forward, her blue eyes blazing with triumph. She kicked Cranston viciously in the ribs with the pointed toe of her slipper. Cranston never moved.

With an oath of delight, Pearl raced from the living room.

"O.K., boys! Hurry it up! The fool is out cold!"

Cranston heard the echo of her voice down a rear corridor. His head lifted. His face was still red, but he was completely conscious. The flush had come from his efforts to hold his breath while he kept from swallowing

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the drugged liquor behind his closed lips. The smallness of the cocktail glass had made the feat easy.

He spat the liquor into the dead ashes in the fireplace. The Shadow resumed his limp pose. He knew that he was deliberately courting death. He expected to be tied up and kidnapped as a prelude to his murder. But he had a method to cut his bonds. And he was determined to find out who was the murderous chief of this treacherous artist's model.

Two men came racing back to the living room with Pearl. One of them wore the uniform of an elevator operator. Pearl called him Martin. He had a dark, sullen face and greedy eyes.

The second man was a different type entirely. He was stamped with the ugly expression of a professional killer. Cranston recognized him the moment he heard Pearl call him Bump.

Bump Wilson! One of the most dangerous criminals in the underworld! A crook who sold his services only to master criminals! Was Doctor Logan his employer – or was it someone still unguessed?

CHAPTER IV. LAMONT CRANSTON DIES?

THE SHADOW allowed himself to be bound tightly hand and foot. He was carried to the service elevator. Martin was its regular operator, employed by the apartment house. He was also in the crooked scheme.

Pearl went ahead to act as lookout. A car was waiting outside the basement exit. It drove smoothly away with The Shadow, a helpless bundle in the rear, covered by a laprobe.

Nothing was said except one grim interchange between Bump Wilson and Pearl.

"Did you arrange about the newspaper item, babe?"

"Yeah," Pearl said. "It's a cinch! The society editors ate it up! I told them I was Lamont Cranston's social secretary."

The speeding car slowed presently, stopped. A moment later, the faint toot of a river boat was heard.

The Shadow was lifted from the car into the dimness of a covered pier. The pier was empty, except for a furtive figure guarding the gate. Either the pier watchman was a member of the gang, or some thug had managed to take the real watchman's place by subterfuge.

As The Shadow was lifted over a stringpiece to a small cabin cruiser, a glance through slitted lids showed him the East River.

Bump Wilson was already busy with the engine. Pearl cast off the line. The boat headed downstream at a good speed.

By this time, The Shadow's situation was desperate. A heavy weight had been attached to his feet. To have allowed Pearl or Bump to suspect that he was in full possession of his senses, would have brought him a swift knife–stab in the heart before he could release his fettered hands by the device on which he was depending.

Besides, he had decided upon a more daring plan. He intended to let Lamont Cranston be "drowned"! With Cranston "dead", the crooks would report to their unknown leader that a second murder had been successfully carried out.

DOUBLE DEATH

Already, The Shadow knew the identities of three of the unknown leader's gang. He would use that knowledge to lead him to the supercriminal himself!

There was not even a quiver of his eyelids as his body was lifted from the cruiser's cabin and rolled close to the rail, ready to be dumped overboard. The boat had veered out far in the center of the East River. The broad span of the Brooklyn Bridge cast a deep shadow on the water.

On the left, a string of barges was passing close to the Brooklyn shore. But the boat's cabin screened the two murderers who bent over The Shadow's fettered figure. With a grunt, they shoved him overboard.

THE splash made a dull roaring in The Shadow's ears, as his body sank from sight almost instantly.

His fettered hands bent sharply upward at the wrists, fingers touching the left sleeve of his coat. Inside the sleeve edge was a cunning concealed zipper. It tugged open and the handle of a small knife dropped into the crevice made by The Shadow's opened palms.

He forced the sharp blade downward against the tight cords that bound his wrists together. The cords parted like a snapped bowstring. The Shadow bent double toward his weighted feet.

His lungs ached with the agony of holding his breath. The pressure of deep water made thunder in his ears. But the danger that he feared most was the soft, black ooze of the river bottom, toward which his weighted body was plunging.

The knife blade ripped viciously, the weight dropped away from his ankles. There was a sudden sickening sensation of greasy mud tugging at him – then The Shadow was popping upward like a rising cork.

He broke the surface with a tiny plume of spray. His almost bursting lungs sucked in air. Turning, he stared down the river. The cruiser's impetus had carried it well downstream after The Shadow had been dumped overboard. It was curving about to return to the spot where the victim had vanished.

Bump Wilson was a methodical murderer. He took no chances.

Nor did The Shadow! He swam under water toward the string of barges he had noticed earlier. By the time the cruiser was slowing under the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge, Lamont Cranston was on the other side of the barges.

He made shore without discovery. His dripping figure climbed a vertical ladder to a Brooklyn pier, where it disappeared.

THAT very same day, a famous man registered at a midtown hotel in Manhattan.

The visitor was Kent Allard. Allard, famous aviator, many months before had returned from the Central American jungles, where he had seemingly sojourned many years, following an air crash.

In reality, he had been in New York most of the time. Kent Allard was the true personality of The Shadow! This was completely unknown to the world.

The first thing Kent Allard did, when he found himself alone in his expensive suite, was to read the society page in every Manhattan newspaper. He remembered the strange conversation he had heard between Pearl Crawford and Bump Wilson. He expected to find something interesting. Nor was he disappointed.

DOUBLE DEATH

Lamont Cranston, it was reported, had just left town on another big-game-hunting expedition. His return was not expected for several months.

The sibilant laughter of The Shadow parted Kent Allard's lips. He picked up the telephone and whispered a number unlisted in any directory. It was the number allotted to his secret agent Burbank, contact man in the crime-smashing organization built up by the genius of The Shadow.

For a moment there was silence. Then:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report on Clifford murder!"

"Police accuse Doctor Jasper Logan. Logan still a fugitive. His assistant, Walter Starr, released from jail as material witness. Bail provided by man named Julius Herzog. Amount pledged comes from junkyard property. That is all."

Again, laughter welled from the compressed lips of Kent Allard. The sly Julius Herzog was still cooperating with the vanished Doctor Logan. George Clifford was dead. Lamont Cranston was dead – as far as crooks were concerned.

But The Shadow still lived!

His vibrant voice gave an additional order. He notified Burbank to get in touch with Clyde Burke and arrange an interview between Burke and Walter Starr, the frightened assistant of Doctor Logan. He wanted complete details gathered concerning the vanished inventor and his war invention.

Clyde Burke was the ideal man for the job. He was the smartest reporter on the Classic. Like Burbank, he was a trusted agent of The Shadow.

Meanwhile, The Shadow was prepared to strike at the heart of this baffling tangle of crime – by moving in a new and utterly different direction! The shapely Pearl Crawford was due for a surprise!

CHAPTER V. CHIRP OF A CRICKET

CLYDE BURKE'S step slowed a trifle as he approached Jasper Logan's home. A car was parked diagonally across the street. It wasn't the car that excited Clyde's suspicion. It was the man inside.

Though the man's chin was sunk on his chest, and his hatbrim drooped low over his forehead, Clyde knew that the man's eyes were wide open and alert.

Clyde was too clever a reporter to betray his awareness of the situation. He continued to the Logan doorstep.

Walter Starr opened the door of the brownstone in response to Clyde's ring. He smiled at sight of his visitor. Clyde had been there before in his capacity as a Classic reporter, and he had made himself agreeable and sympathetic.

Starr shook his head as Clyde asked him if he had any news from the missing inventor. Doctor Logan had vanished completely after his slugging of Patrolman Rafferty. His guilt of the murder of George Clifford seemed certain.

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Yet Walter Starr stoutly defended the doctor's innocence of Clifford's mysterious death.

"If that's the case," Clyde said, "why did Logan refuse to disclose the names of the other two investors?"

Starr smiled.

"He has a quick temper. He was probably annoyed by the curt questions shot at him by the police."

"Any objection to telling me the names of those two men who paid twenty-five grand apiece to back his invention?" Clyde asked.

"Not at all. One of them is Carl Ragland, a Wall Street broker. The other is Mortimer Temple, the well-known artist. What motive could Doctor Logan have to kill either of them?"

"Plenty – if his war machine actually works!" Clyde said. "Suppose Logan made one last secret experiment – and succeeded! In that case, the war device would be worth literally millions, perhaps billions! Wouldn't he be tempted to get rid of these partners who had cut in for a measly twenty-five thousand apiece?"

Walter Starr smiled sadly.

"You wouldn't say that if you saw the machine demonstrated. It just doesn't work, I'm sorry to say. Would you like to see a test of it?"

THEY descended to the basement laboratory. A steel-barred window looked out on a rear alley. There was a formidable lock on the door. The hum of an electric fan made a steady buzzing. The place was crammed with apparatus. But Clyde's interest centered on the machine that stood near the inner wall of the room.

The invention looked a lot like a movie projector, but larger, and with a square opening for a lens. Starr explained the machine as he fiddled with knobs and levers. It projected a ray of cold-black light toward an experimental chrome-steel plate, although, at times, because of atmospheric conditions, the light took on a yellowish tinge. Starr lifted the heavy plate with difficulty and clamped it in a holder opposite the snout of the huge lens.

Theoretically, the invisible ray was supposed to melt the tough chrome steel like wax. By all the laws of mathematics and optics, Doctor Logan had succeeded. Yet, when he had made the final crucial test, the ray had failed! Some minor flaw in either lens or design had robbed the ray of its power.

But Clyde Burke interrupted Starr's explanation with a sharp exclamation. He saw something that brought quick tension to his body. A round hole was gouged in the smooth surface of the wall opposite. A bullet hole!

Starr's laugh sounded strained when Clyde pointed.

"It's the mark of a ballistics test we made here weeks ago. One of the test bullets went wild."

His voice was hesitant. It was plain that he was lying. Clyde proved it by touching his finger to the baseboard under the bullet hole. He showed Starr the faint white film of powder on his finger tip. Some of the plaster had eddied downward from that strange bullet hole in the wall. The shot had been fired recently!

Walter Starr admitted it, finally. But he refused to explain what had happened, until Clyde Burke pledged himself to secrecy. Then, with a frightened look on his handsome face, Starr walked quietly to the barred window and, to Clyde's amazement, removed the steel bars.

DOUBLE DEATH

They had been sawed through!

Starr's story was grimly brief. An intruder had sneaked through those sawed bars, after cutting them, into the locked laboratory. Starr had surprised him examining the war machine. The stranger had fired at Starr, narrowly missing his head. The slug buried itself in the laboratory wall. The burglar fled through the same window.

"Did you get a good look at the burglar?" Clyde queried.

Starr shook his head, looked ill at ease. The burglar, he explained, had been masked. There were gloves on his hands. He wore black clothing that made him practically invisible the moment he had fled to the rear alley.

"Did you notice whether this burglar had a finger missing on that gloved left hand of his?" Clyde asked, tonelessly.

Starr sounded angry.

"I know what you're thinking. It isn't true! Why should Doctor Logan sneak in to examine his own machine?"

"O.K. Let's see the machine work."

STARR forgot his anxiety in his zeal to demonstrate, the invention. At his touch, a faint hum was added to the buzz of the electric fan. Starr held his hand between the lens of the projector and the chrome-steel plate. Instantly, Clyde gasped. Starr's hand was becoming transparent. The flesh seemed to fade away. The entire skeleton of his hand was exposed with the fidelity of an X-ray picture.

Starr grinned. He explained that the action of the invisible ray was entirely harmless to human tissue.

Hesitantly, Clyde tried it himself, saw the bones of his own hand exposed.

"Now watch the steel plate," Starr said, when Clyde drew back.

Slowly, it began to glow. It turned a bright, rosy red. The glow spread across the entire surface of the chrome steel. Then, as slowly as it had come, it faded.

Walter Starr sighed like a man staring at a profoundly disappointing failure. He explained why the ray had failed. According to all of Doctor Logan's preliminary calculations, the ray should have changed the chemical composition of the tough steel, making it brittle at first, then dissolving it completely.

Starr unclamped the heavy steel plate and carried it back to its rack with a grunting effort.

"It's just as heavy as when we started," he admitted. "The rosy glow you saw made no atomic change in the steel plate. We can't melt the metal at a range of six inches, let alone six miles. That was the range we had hoped to use the projector under wartime conditions."

He turned off the machine. Now, the only sound in the laboratory was the drone of the electric fan. Its buzz made talking a bit difficult. Clyde wondered why it was in use at all.

"I hope I've convinced you of two things," Walter Starr said, with his wan smile. "First, that the ray doesn't work. In other words, there is no reason for Doctor Logan to freeze out his partners by murdering them."

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Starr drew a deep breath.

"Second, that there is no sane reason for Doctor Logan to be the mysterious burglar who tried to murder me when I surprised him. He built the machine and understands it perfectly. Therefore –"

Clyde Burke wasn't listening. He was staring at the whirring electric fan. A queer look had suddenly come into the eyes of the shrewd Classic reporter.

"Why is that fan running? Did you turn it on?"

Starr looked startled. "To tell you the truth, I didn't even realize it was running. That's funny!"

"It's damned funny!" Clyde snapped.

He reached up and turned off the fan. Silence filled the laboratory. And yet – not a complete silence. There was a strange, tiny monotonous sound that was almost inaudible.

"What the devil's that?" Starr whispered.

"I don't know, but I'm going to find out!" Clyde growled.

BURKE began to circle the laboratory, his ears rigidly alert to trace the source of the strange sound. He located it finally. It came from the floor. It seemed to be hidden under one of the boards near the base of the machine that projected the invisible black ray.

It was a rhythmic ticking. Clockwork was concealed somewhere in an opening beneath the floor!

Swiftly, Clyde pried up the loose boards. An oblong hole was disclosed, in which lay a small leather suitcase. It was from within this suitcase that the ominous ticking was audible.

Clyde's face paled.

"A bomb!" he gasped. "An infernal machine – planted here to blow you and the laboratory to hell!"

While Clyde held back the the boards, Starr lifted the suitcase gently from the hole, laid it down softly. He filled a large tub with water and placed the suitcase into it, so that the water entirely covered it.

Presently, the ominous ticking ceased.

But Starr wasn't fool enough to open the clasps of the sealed leather bag. He picked up a sharp-bladed knife and sliced through the soaked leather like cheese.

The bomb was a heavy cylinder of steel, tamped tightly at both ends. It was connected by wires to a cheap alarm clock. Starr took one look at the alarm hand of the clock and his face became ghastly. The explosive had been timed to detonate within twenty minutes.

That was the time when Starr customarily entered the laboratory to check on the progress of other experiments on which he was engaged.

"What does it mean?" he asked, huskily.

DOUBLE DEATH

"It means," Clyde told him, "that we've found the motive for that 'burglary' you interrupted last night. The masked man wasn't interested in the death-ray machine. He came here to blow you up and destroy the laboratory! He's the one who turned on the electric fan. He had to have something to deaden the sound of that ticking under the floor."

Clyde's lips tightened.

"You're a damned fool, if you let loyalty to your employer run away with your common sense! Did the masked man have an empty glove finger on his left hand?"

A long pause. "Yes," Starr said, faintly. There was unbelieving horror in his eyes.

Clyde talked to the trembling assistant, promised to keep the news of the infernal machine a secret. He advised Starr to do the same. He warned him that there was a possibility of more murder attempts – and told of the mysterious man outside in the parked car. Clyde intended to discover that watcher's identity.

Walter Starr was utterly crushed by the realization that his employer had attempted to murder him. He agreed to cooperate with Burke's plan.

Clyde tiptoed to the window from which the bars had been cut. He squeezed carefully through to the paved courtyard in the rear. He waited, crouched outside, until Starr had replaced the sawed bars and had closed the window and drawn the shade.

Then Clyde Burke moved toward the exit of the alley.

BURKE intended to sneak up on the mysterious car from behind. But a man behind a pile of ash cans at the head of the alley spoiled Clyde's scheme. He rose with a tigerish leap a split second after Clyde noticed his crouched figure.

A gun butt crashed against the reporter's skull. Clyde sprawled to the pavement. Blood trickled into his glaring eyes.

There was an echo of racing feet and the thug was gone.

Clyde felt a fierce surge of excitement as he swayed drunkenly to his feet. The blow had been too hastily delivered to knock him out; and the trickle of blood across his eyes had not impaired his trained reporter's vision.

He had recognized that fleeing assailant! The man was a professional criminal whose name, as far as Clyde was aware, had not yet been brought into the investigation of George Clifford's death.

The thug was Bump Wilson!

Wiping the smear of blood from his forehead with a handkerchief, Burke advanced at a quick run toward the front street. The parked car was already in motion. Clyde didn't attempt to pursue it. He caught a clear glimpse of the license plate. His trembling hand fished for pencil and notebook and wrote the number down.

By that time, the speeding car had vanished. There had been no sign whatever of Bump Wilson. It was merely a guess on Clyde Burke's part that Bump and the man in the car were partners. Bump could easily have fled in some other direction. But he could just as easily have dived into the automobile and flattened himself on the floor, before the driver put the car into swift motion.

DOUBLE DEATH

Clyde walked to a near-by drugstore and had his cuts fixed up with adhesive tape. Then he closed himself in a phone booth and called the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

His call got quick results. What he learned brought amazement to him. The name of the owner of the vanished car was Mortimer Temple!

Mortimer Temple, the famous artist! Mortimer Temple, one of the investors in Doctor Logan's war machine.

Clyde dropped another nickel into the phone slot and called an unlisted number. There was a brief wait while the line hummed. Then:

"Burbank speaking."

Into the attentive ear of The Shadow's contact man, Clyde poured out his grim story.

Five minutes after Clyde had left the drugstore, the telephone bell rang in Kent Allard's hotel suite.

The Shadow picked up the receiver with a sibilant laugh.

CHAPTER VI. MR. HUGO SLADE

A TAXICAB was parked near the employee's entrance of the swanky apartment house in which Pearl Crawford lived. It was almost time for the elevator men to change shifts. The man in black cloak and slouch hat in the taxicab was interested in the personality of one of those elevator operators. He intended to trail the shifty individual who called himself Martin.

The Shadow had left his hotel immediately after receiving the report of Clyde Burke, in a taxi driven by one of his own agents, Moe Shrevnitz.

The Shadow was now waiting patiently for the appearance of Martin.

In fifteen minutes, his vigil was rewarded. The elevator operator left the rear of the building. He glanced uneasily up and down the street. Then, apparently satisfied, he hurried to the corner and walked a block or two to a cross-town bus.

To trail the bus without making his pursuit too obvious was child's play for the experienced Moe. The suspect alighted far over on the west side of town, near the Hudson River. It was not a very prepossessing neighborhood, and it became rapidly more slumlike as Martin hurried south.

His goal was a three-story brick building. Tough-looking characters hung around the sidewalk in front. Strident dance music issued from the open windows on the second floor. The figures of dancing couples were visible as they twirled past the windows, the men in peak caps and tightly belted suits, the women in cheap finery.

Martin entered the open lobby of the building. But he didn't climb the wide wooden stairs to the dance hall. Instead, he walked down a narrow corridor on the ground floor.

A man in a boxlike office just inside the front entrance gave Martin a sharp glance, but made no effort to stop him. The elevator operator entered a room at the end of the dark ground-floor hall.

DOUBLE DEATH

The Shadow missed nothing of this. Moe Shrevnitz had slowed his taxi. But the moment he passed the building, Moe increased his speed. Behind him, the voice of The Shadow gave a quiet-toned order from the blackness of the rear seat.

Moe directed his attention toward the cheap shops that lined both sides of the avenue. Presently, he saw what he wanted, and halted. He disappeared into a second-hand clothing store. When he emerged, a few minutes later, he was carrying a paper-wrapped parcel.

Sliding open his glass panel, Moe dropped the package into the cab's rear. His gaze remained straight ahead.

The Shadow's voice was crystal clear: "Five blocks. Drive slowly. Then stop. Await further orders."

Silence followed. Inside the darkened rear of the slowly moving taxi, a quick transformation was taking place. Using the contents of Moe's package, The Shadow now became something utterly different.

A cheap, narrow-backed suit made the broad shoulders of The Shadow seem sloping. His chest was suddenly pinched. A peaked cap gave sullen hardness to a pale, tight-lipped face. Moe's passenger had become a typical tenement thug.

When Moe Shrevnitz halted obediently at the end of five blocks, the taxicab's rear was empty! Somewhere along that route The Shadow had noiselessly departed from the slowly moving vehicle, carrying a briefcase.

A folded slip of paper on the rear seat told Moe exactly what to do. He followed those instructions.

FIVE minutes later, The Shadow emerged from behind a board fence that surrounded a vacant lot.

A cigarette dangled from his thin lips. The Shadow was certain that he looked the part he had deliberately assumed – that of a sullen and dangerous thug.

The Shadow watched the steady stream of people entering the dance-hall building. In a few moments, he noticed a peculiar fact. Not everyone was climbing the broad stairs. Occasionally, a man would duck past the office cubby on the ground floor and pass down the narrow corridor to the rear room where Martin, the elevator operator, had vanished earlier.

As he mingled with the crowd, The Shadow watched five of them do the same thing. All five were in uniform. All five were elevator operators!

The Shadow waited until the beady-eyed man in the office turned away to answer the ring of a telephone. Then he pushed through the crowd at the foot of the stairs, walked quietly down the dim corridor.

Cautiously testing, he found the door to the room where the elevator men had vanished was unlocked. The room itself was empty – not even a stick of furniture in it. There was one window, but it was covered by metal bars. Obviously, Martin and his companions had left the room by some other exit – a secret one

Fingers of The Shadow probed with the sensitive skill of a cracksman. He found a tiny knoblike projection in a wall panel and a hollow alongside it. Both were so small that they were invisible to the eye. But the pressure of The Shadow's finger produced a slight click.

The panel slid aside. Narrow steps were disclosed, leading downward. Darkness shrouded the bottom of those steps.

DOUBLE DEATH

From the blackness beyond his vision, came the hum of low-pitched voices. The Shadow, however, never entered blindly anything that might turn out to be a trap.

He tiptoed back to the barred window of the bare room. By squeezing forward and straining his vision downward, he was able to see that there was a similar window below.

The sibilant laughter of The Shadow made a rustling sound in the stillness of the upper room. Suddenly, it ceased. With a quick bound, The Shadow darted toward the wall panel and closed it. He had heard the cautious sound of footsteps in the corridor outside!

Suddenly the door was flung open. A man stood grimly on the threshold. He was the beady-eyed man from the front office.

The Shadow hiccuped as he turned to face the doorway. A quick thrust of his hand had knocked off his cap and had tousled his hair. He had swallowed a mouthful of liquor from a flask in his hip pocket – carried deliberately as part of his cheap, thuggish role. His breath was eloquent of alcohol as he lurched drunkenly forward.

"Who the hell are you?" the man growled. "What are you doing in here?"

The Shadow swayed. There was a blurred grin on his loose lips. He explained with drunken gravity that he was looking for the men's room.

"Upstairs, dope! You're on the wrong floor. Get out of here!"

Suspicion faded from the manager's hard eyes. His hand left the outline of the hidden gun in his pocket. He led the unsteady drunk to the stairway at the front of the corridor, grinning as he watched him ascend.

The Shadow, however, didn't stay long in the men's room. Watching his chance, he descended presently to the street, taking care to avoid the notice of the manager.

THE SHADOW melted into the darkness outside. Walking rapidly, he made his way back to the vacant lot where he had secreted his briefcase. Having found it, he made his way back to the dance-hall building.

This time, he approached it from the rear, found himself in the darkness behind a barred basement window. It was the one he had noticed when he had peered out the window of the upper room.

No longer was he garbed in the cheap pinch-back suit of a tough gunman. A slouch hat shaded the flame of his deep-socketed eyes. Black gloves and an enveloping black cloak made him seem part of the darkness itself.

He reached for the bars of the window, was not surprised to find they were a fake. They swung open like a small gate, leaving the window pane an easy task for the resources of The Shadow.

A diamond cutter took care of the glass. Through the square opening went The Shadow's hand, and unlatched the window. He glided inside the building. His gloved hands reached back and swung the hinged bars back into place.

SIX men dressed in the uniforms of elevator operators sat on hard wooden chairs in a brilliantly lighted room. The chairs were ranged in a semicircle, so that each of the six men faced a small platform on which sat the extraordinarily ugly leader of this group.

DOUBLE DEATH

He had a dozen different aliases, but it was as Hugo Slade that these elevator operators knew him. Other groups of picked men served Slade also. Taxi drivers, hotel doormen, waiters – all of them came on different occasions to this cunningly hidden basement room.

They were spies, protected and well paid by a superspy. Slade was a man without a country – and yet a man with poisonous roots in every nation in the world. The secrets he dealt in had made him rich. Police of a dozen countries had tried in vain to catch him. So far, Hugo Slade had been too clever for them.

As though in mockery of the country in which he now plotted, there was an American flag draped across the wall behind the platform. From behind its folds, Slade had entered the room a few moments before.

He was a man with a fat-cheeked face and pouchy eyelids. A brown beard covered his cheeks and chin. It might have been a disguise, like the brown curly hair on his large-domed head. His mouth was the most unpleasant part of him. An undershot jaw exposed prominent white teeth that gave him a shark-like look when he smiled.

A smile was on his face as he listened to the report of the elevator operator who called himself Martin.

Martin was explaining what had happened to Lamont Cranston. He told how the millionaire sportsman had been lured by Pearl Crawford to her apartment. He told of Cranston's death by drowning in the East River, a murder successfully covered up by a fake social item printed in every New York newspaper.

Hugo Slade uttered a harsh chuckle.

"That makes two fools who are now out of the way," he murmured. "Clifford, who invested in the war invention. Cranston, who did not. We still have two others to take care of. Carl Ragland and Mortimer Temple, the well-known artist who is so partial to painting young ladies without any clothes on. Proceed with your report!"

Martin continued.

"Pearl Crawford is working in cahoots with a thug named Bump Wilson. Both she and Bump think I'm loyal to them. My personal opinion is that they are working for Doctor Logan. I think that –"

"Leave the thinking to me!" Slade snarled, suddenly. Savage anger glowed in his bulbous eyes, then quickly faded. His fat, bearded face quivered with silent laughter.

"I don't want Logan harmed. Understand that, every one of you! As for the charming Pearl Crawford and the very tough Mr. Bump Wilson –"

Slade didn't finish the sentence. There was no need to. He rose to his feet.

"Each one of you will return to the apartment houses where you are employed as elevator operators. Continue with the spy assignments already given you. Please remain here in your seats for the usual ten minutes before you leave by the stairway and panel in the room above. That is all!"

THERE was a jeer on Slade's bearded face as he turned toward the draped flag on the wall. He had no suspicion that his voice and his entire appearance were under the shrewd observation of a man whose life was dedicated to the suppression of crime.

The Shadow was behind that draped flag that covered a hidden exit in the wall.

DOUBLE DEATH

A tiny hole permitted The Shadow to observe Hugo Slade and to mark accurately the faces and figures of the six spying elevator men. He had seen and heard all he wanted to know for the present. His purpose now was to avoid discovery.

He retreated noiselessly as Hugo Slade strode toward the flag. A quick turn and The Shadow vanished through the barred window. The hinged bars swung back into place.

The Shadow ran to a board fence behind the dance-hall building, vaulted the fence and dropped to the opposite side – into the desperate embrace of a man with a drawn gun!

The gunman made a bad error. He tried to club The Shadow with his weapon, to avoid gunfire that might bring the police. The Shadow was unable to dodge the quick blow, but he managed to miss its full force.

Blood streamed down his face from a gashed temple. One of his gloved hands clutched at the gun. The other caught the thug in a grip of steel that forced the killer to gasp with shrill agony.

The gun roared as the thug tried to blast his opponent to death. The Shadow, however, twisted sideways with an agile motion that pulled his body out of line with the jerking muzzle. Flame spurted past his face. The crash of the shots made a thunderous sound in the darkness.

Yells sounded from the dance hall overhead. From the rear street a police whistle echoed in a shrill blast. The Shadow knew it was time to get away – and to get away fast! A jujitsu hold dropped the groaning gunman in a paralyzed huddle on the ground. The Shadow sprang away. He vaulted another fence and raced down the alley that led to the rear street.

He was too late! A policeman was pounding into view from the street.

The Shadow had no time to be gentle. He saw the cop's gun leap level toward his heart. His life hung in the balance. Then his clenched fist struck the policeman's jaw, tumbling him backward. He leaped over the prone body, vanishing to the sidewalk as the cop struggled bravely to his feet.

As The Shadow rounded the corner, a taxicab stood at the curb opposite the front entrance of the dance hall. The cab was that of Moe Shrevnitz's. The orders he had received from The Shadow had been explicit. He had parked at the spot directed and he had left his engine running.

The next instant, Moe's eyes bulged with wonder. He had heard a rear door slam. Now, a hand was extending itself from the rear seat toward him in a swift gesture. On the finger of that hand was a rare, sparkling gem. A girasol. A perfect specimen of a fire opal, the only one of its kind in the world. One glance at it and Moe knew that The Shadow was aboard.

Moe's foot crammed down hard on the gas pedal. The cab slithered around the corner with a scream of skidding rubber. Moe was a cunning driver in an emergency like this. He proved it long before he finally parked in a private garage miles away from the uproar on the lower West Side.

The taxicab was empty by this time. The Shadow had left it somewhere along the route uptown.

Once more, he was the dapper figure of Kent Allard. He looked very handsome as he drove in a private car toward the swanky studio of Mortimer Temple.

The Shadow had not forgotten Clyde Burke's report. Kent Allard was about to pay an important visit to the celebrated painter.

CHAPTER VII. THE SPANISH CABINET

MORTIMER TEMPLE was doing his best to control his temper.

Brilliant bluish–white electric lights gleamed from the lofty ceiling of his studio. It gave an effect of clear daylight. On one side of the room was a model's empty platform. Closer to Temple was an easel on which rested an unfinished nude painting. Even in the blurred outline of the partially finished job the face of Pearl Crawford was easily recognizable.

It was about Pearl that Mortimer Temple was quarreling with his daughter Evelyn.

Evelyn shook her head impatiently, said:

"Dad I know that you've been secretly paying Pearl Crawford large sums of money. More money than she's entitled to for her posing. Why? Is it – blackmail?"

The daughter put both arms around her father. She looked sweet and lovely, and Temple was very fond of her.

"You're right" he admitted in a low voice. "The girl is blackmailing me! I can't explain. But I give you my word that I'm innocent of wrongdoing."

"If you're innocent you have nothing to fear!" Evelyn replied. "Why don't you get rid of her?"

"You don't understand. Pearl has it in her power to ruin my career!"

There was a false ring to his words. His voice lacked sincerity. He looked relieved when a trill of laughter sounded across the big studio.

A door had opened in the opposite wall. It was the door of Pearl's dressing room. She stood on the threshold, dressed in a filmy robe, one hand resting lightly on a lovely hip. There was hard mockery in her blue eyes as she advanced with a swaying walk toward the artist and his daughter.

She stood alongside Evelyn Temple conscious that the comparison was all in her own favor. The thin dressing gown candidly outlined every curve of the model's perfect figure.

"You don't like me do you, Evelyn?" she purred.

"My name is Miss Temple" the girl flashed, angrily.

"Well don't be too proud about it! You may find yourself in the gutter some day if you're not damn careful!"

Temple uttered a quick cry of remonstrance. But Pearl ignored him. She kept her gaze on Evelyn and it was flinty with hate. Then slowly insolently, she walked to the model stand.

She unfastened the jeweled clasp of her robe and allowed the garment to fall from her. It lay in a shimmering circle at her feet. Lifting her bare arms she froze into a rigidly lovely pose. Except for the faint rise and fall of her controlled breathing she was like motionless marble.

"Please go," Temple told his daughter gently.

DOUBLE DEATH

He was no longer a man but a machine. His fingers were itching to pick up brush and palette. From the undraped Pearl came a purr of amused laughter. Evelyn's face flamed. But she turned silently and left the studio.

Fear replaced her anger. What was the hold Pearl Crawford had on her father? Evelyn was determined to solve the mystery. She walked slowly toward her own room.

But a ring at the front door bell of the apartment interrupted her. At sight of the debonair handsome-looking visitor, Evelyn smiled with quick pleasure. The visitor was Kent Allard.

LIKE everyone else in town who had any pretense to social standing, Evelyn Temple had already met the famous aviator. She led him to a small reception room, where Allard explained the reason for his call. He had decided to have a portrait of himself painted. He wanted Mortimer Temple to do the painting.

Evelyn nodded. She explained that her father was busy right now. Would Mr. Allard mind waiting a few minutes?

Allard smiled. Delay was exactly what he wanted. The business of the painting was merely a bluff. His real intent was to get a definite line on Mortimer Temple and the lovely Pearl Crawford.

He was not afraid of Pearl connecting the identities of Kent Allard and the "drowned" Lamont Cranston. The two roles of The Shadow were utterly dissimilar. Clever as Pearl was, she would be unable to fathom the truth.

As soon as Evelyn left Kent Allard alone, he closed the door of the small reception room. Laying his briefcase on the table, he moved noiselessly to the window and raised it. It was a rear window, facing a blank brick wall across a narrow court. The court itself was pitch-dark, exactly suited to the dangerous activity The Shadow had in mind.

Temple's studio was not more than fifteen feet distant from the window where The Shadow peered. He could see bluish-white light shining outward through a narrow gap between the thick studio curtains.

There was a tiny ornamental stone balcony outside the studio. Another one projected below the window where The Shadow watched. There was a dangerous gap between them – leading downward to the black abyss of the courtyard far below. But Kent Allard had come prepared for such danger.

He locked the reception-room door on the inside. Climbing on a chair, he slid one hand through the narrow transom overhead and allowed the key to fall to the corridor outside.

A moment later, Kent Allard disappeared. In his place stood a figure robed in blackness, his forehead shielded by the brim of a broad slouch hat. Sibilant laughter echoed softly.

The Shadow slid across the sill of the opened window, closing the sash softly behind him. Far below him the depths of the courtyard stretched sheer and dizzy like a canyon. But The Shadow's gaze remained level.

A coil of light, strong rope unwound from beneath his robe. He made a noose, looped a cornice on the roof above, then swung himself from the stone balcony where he stood to the one adjoining. It was slow, dangerous work, but The Shadow made it.

Crouched outside the heavy drapes of Mortimer Temple's studio, he peered through the tiny gap in the curtains. The Shadow could see the busy figure of the artist, painting deftly at his canvas.

DOUBLE DEATH

Pearl Crawford stood like living marble in the same rigid pose she had assumed when she had first mounted the model stand. Not a muscle of her white body quivered.

The Shadow watched her, not as a woman, but as a shrewd and dangerous criminal. He saw her lips move, knew she was speaking. To overhear the conversation, he attached a small portable microphone to the window with a suction cup. Attached earphones brought voices.

"How about the rest period?" Pearl said. "I'm getting tired."

She didn't wait for an answer. With a graceful swoop, she picked up her gauzy robe and fastened it about her. Smiling, she walked to where the painter stood. It was evident to The Shadow that Temple was annoyed. Pearl was doing her best to placate him.

"Are you angry at me for what I said to Evelyn?"

"You were very impudent! I know you don't like my daughter, but I wish you'd control yourself."

"I'm sorry," Pearl said. Her voice was sugary-sweet. "Maybe I better apologize to Evelyn."

"It wouldn't hurt," Temple growled.

The thinly covered figure of the model swayed close to the frowning painter. Pearl was doing her best to vamp Temple. The Shadow wondered what Pearl's real game was. There was cunning in her averted glance. Suddenly, she threw her arms around Temple in a quick embrace.

He didn't like it. Pearl's voice was a wheedling murmur in the artist's ear.

"I don't want to cause any trouble between you and your daughter."

"That's not the truth."

"I wouldn't try to fool you," Pearl said, demurely.

But she already had! The Shadow, watching from his unseen post on the stone balcony outside, had been an interested witness of the smooth trick Pearl had pulled.

Her quick embrace had given her an opportunity to let the fingers of her left hand dip for a brief moment into the pocket of the painter's smock. She took a small key from the wide, flapless pocket. The theft was so gently done that Temple had no suspicion of what had happened.

Pearl stepped back a pace. Her red lips smiled demurely. Temple frowned, said:

"Do you mean what you said – about apologizing to Evelyn?"

"Every word of it! Please bring her here."

Temple gave his model a searching scrutiny. Then, apparently satisfied, he turned abruptly on his heel and left the studio.

The moment he was gone, Pearl's smile whipped away from her face like a withdrawn mask. She ran with soft, barefooted haste to a beautiful antique Spanish chest that stood in a far corner of the studio.

DOUBLE DEATH

Pearl swung open the doors of the Spanish cabinet, disclosing a more solid door behind the ornamentation of the hinged front. This second barrier was chrome steel. The stolen key opened it. Her hand thrust itself into the safe and began to explore with purposeful haste.

The Shadow missed nothing of this. Screened by the heavy curtain of the studio window, he opened it noiselessly, slipped over the sill

The Shadow divined exactly what Pearl was up to. She was searching Temple's safe to find a certain document. What that document was, made no mystery in The Shadow's mind.

Pearl was trying to steal the legal evidence that Mortimer Temple had invested \$25,000 in the war machine of Doctor Logan. The fugitive inventor seemed to be the guiding spirit in this whole conspiracy of death and intrigue. Was the shapely Pearl Crawford the agent of Doctor Logan? Had the inventor perfected his war machine, unknown to Walter Starr, his deluded assistant?

The Shadow's hand lifted to part the window curtain. But a sudden sound interrupted the girl crouched in front of the opened safe. The Shadow had not made that sound. It came from a door at the far end of the studio.

Mortimer Temple was returning!

INSTANTLY, Pearl closed the safe with lightning speed. She sped silently across the studio, her bare limbs gleaming as the thin robe fluttered outward behind her. Her goal was her own dressing room. She vanished a scant instant before a door at the other end of the studio began to open cautiously.

Inch by inch, the gap between door and wall grew wider. The Shadow watched from his place of concealment.

With a quickening of his pulse, The Shadow saw a figure revealed in the white glare of the overhead lights.

It wasn't Mortimer Temple!

It was a snarlingly alert intruder with a stringy brown beard that covered his fat, bulbous cheeks. A man with an undershot jaw in which prominent teeth gleamed with the mirthless grin of a shark.

Hugo Slade! The master spy for whom Martin, the elevator operator, worked!

Slade's ugly eyes surveyed the empty studio. His gaze rested on the heavy window drape behind which The Shadow stood rigidly. He took a step toward the curtains. Then, abruptly, he halted. With a faint hiss of his breath, he whirled toward the Spanish cabinet in the far corner.

It was evident that Hugo Slade was under terrific tension, afraid to waste a second of his precious time. With a gun jutting from his gloved hand, he tiptoed swiftly toward the safe which Pearl Crawford had already examined.

Hugo Slade knelt swiftly in front of the Spanish cabinet.

CHAPTER VIII. A SCRAP OF PAPER

SLADE had made a duplicate key. He shoved it into the lock and tried to turn it. Suddenly, he uttered an oath of dismay. The key refused to work! For an instant, the bearded spy was puzzled. Then he realized the truth.

DOUBLE DEATH

The safe door was already unlocked!

He swung it open. His greedy fingers plunged inside.

At almost the same instant, he heard the hiss of sibilant laughter behind him. His gun whipped upward as he whirled – to confront the blazing eyes of The Shadow!

The Shadow's gun was aimed and steady. Death stared unwinkingly at Slade from the round "O" of the muzzle.

"Drop it!"

The command of The Shadow was softly uttered. But it was instantly obeyed by Slade. His partly lifted gun fell to the rug with a soft thud. He backed toward the wall.

"Turn around!"

Again Slade obeyed like a man terrified by hopeless odds. But he was a shrewd and resourceful criminal. His fear was faked.

As he faced the wall, his brain was alert with a cunning plan to take The Shadow unawares. Imperceptibly, he pressed his upraised right arm against the side of his head.

The spy tensed his muscles for a quick spin.

Before he could put his desperate plan into execution, fortune favored him with unlooked-for aid. A woman's scream echoed from somewhere beyond the studio. It was a shriek of mortal terror.

"Help! Murder! Help!"

The Shadow recognized that shrill feminine voice in the split-second that his head flicked sideways.

Evelyn Temple!

At the same instant, Hugo Slade whirled around from his helpless pose at the wall. As his right hand dropped something slid from his sleeve into his palm. It was a short blackjack, and the spy wielded it with expert fury. He struck with terrific force at The Shadow's skull.

The blow landed partly on The Shadow's head, partly on the buffer of his upraised shoulder. But it was sufficient to send him plunging to the floor.

He rolled feebly over, desperately trying to retain his fading senses. He was aware that Slade had leaped across his prone body and was fleeing through the rear door of the studio.

By the time he was able to force his stiffened muscles to respond to his will, the spy had disappeared.

The Shadow raced through the same door through which he had seen Slade flee. He was passing the pantry door when a groan halted him. The Shadow threw the door wide, blocking the threshold with his robed body.

A wounded servant was leaning against the pantry table, blood streaming from his battered face. Supporting him, her face white with terror, was Evelyn Temple.

DOUBLE DEATH

She shrieked as she saw the black-robed figure of The Shadow in the doorway. Her scream cleared the fuddled wits of the wounded man. His groping hand found a wide-edged kitchen knife on the table. Seizing it, he leaped courageously forward. The knife made a hissing arc as it slashed toward The Shadow's throat.

Instantly, The Shadow retreated, for he wished to make no explanations at this time. Slamming the pantry door behind him, he raced back through the corridor to the studio he had left a moment before.

THE SHADOW locked the studio door, effectively ending the servant's pursuit. He darted toward the safe which had already had the attention of Pearl Crawford and Hugo Slade.

He never reached the safe.

A thudding sound behind him brought The Shadow whirling about. The sound came from the bare feet of Pearl Crawford. Pearl was still wearing the gauzy robe she had donned when she had ceased posing. She had leaped into view from the door of her dressing room. There was a tiny automatic pistol in her clenched hand.

"The Shadow!" she gasped, and fired instantly.

At the sound of Pearl's involuntary gasp, The Shadow flung himself downward. The rip of the bullet passed harmlessly above his falling shoulder.

His gloved hand reached out and caught the bare ankle of the scantily clad model, jerking her off balance. Her blond head struck the floor with a thump. Before she could recover, the gun was wrenched from Pearl's hand.

Clawing and spitting like a wild cat, she was picked up in The Shadow's powerful grip and carried to her dressing room.

He had no time to be gentle with a murderess. He threw her headlong, within. The dressing room door slammed shut as the almost nude model rolled to her knees, screeching with fury. The key turned in the lock.

The Shadow raced to the Spanish cabinet. His eyes scanned the array of pigeonholes crammed with letters and documents. One compartment attracted his immediate attention. It was in disarray, unlike the others. A letter had been partly withdrawn; or rather, an envelope with a heavy folded document was jammed in.

This was the magnet that had attracted the greedy fingers of Pearl Crawford and Hugo Slade. It was the partnership agreement which Mortimer Temple had signed with Doctor Jasper Logan. Legal proof that the artist had invested \$25,000 and was entitled to a fourth interest in Logan's invention.

Something else was noticed by the keen eyes of The Shadow. As he lifted the bulky envelope a smaller scrap of paper was exposed. There was nothing on it but a single typewritten line. It was the address of a house in Manhattan.

To an ordinary observer, the address would have meant nothing. But in the sanctum of The Shadow were accurate snaps of every section of New York. He knew instantly the nature of the neighborhood where this address was located. It was a rooming house in a cheap, rundown section of Manhattan.

George Clifford had been murdered in a similar spot. Was this scrap of paper, dropped by a hasty thief, a death warrant for another victim? Was Mortimer Temple marked for murder?

DOUBLE DEATH

The Shadow replaced the scrap of paper in the safe. The address remained indelibly in his memory. He knew he had no time to lose. He could hear battering blows from the servant whom he had locked out. He could hear, also, the screams of Pearl Crawford from behind the door of the dressing room.

Quickly, The Shadow retraced his steps to the reception room by the rope-and-cornice method he had used to gain the studio.

THE SHADOW entered the reception room window.

His garments of black were crammed swiftly into the leather briefcase on the reception-room table. Garbed as Kent Allard again, The Shadow closed the window and raced to the door he had locked. He began to batter on the inside panel with his fist.

"Help! Let me out of here!"

His yelling brought immediate attention. He heard the shout of a servant, the shriller cry of Evelyn Temple.

"Open that door!" The Shadow roared. "Who locked me in here?"

"It's Kent Allard!" Evelyn's voice gasped. "He was waiting to see father. I – I forgot all about him."

There was a hurried search outside for the missing key. It was found lying close to the corridor wall, where The Shadow had dropped it through the transom. There was a click and the door swung open.

Kent Allard pretended alarm and amazement as he heard the tale of a murderous intrusion by a bearded burglar. More servants had rushed to the aid of Evelyn. All of these took it for granted that the bearded burglar had locked Kent Allard's door before he had battered his way to Mortimer Temple's safe.

It was Kent Allard who took command of the situation. He led the way back to the studio and released the imprisoned Pearl. The blond model was stuttering with rage, but she gave Allard hardly a glance.

"There were two of them!" she shrielled fiercely. A man in a brown beard – and The Shadow!"

"The Shadow!"

Startled cries greeted this announcement. Pearl's quivering finger pointed toward the studio window.

"I tried to shoot him, but he overpowered me. Be careful! He's probably trapped on the stone balcony outside!"

Kent Allard jerked the heavy drapes aside. He pointed to the rope that dangled from the roof overhead. It was immediately apparent to all that the black robed fugitive must have climbed the rope and made his escape over the roof.

Kent Allard turned quickly toward Pearl.

"This bearded man you spoke of – what did he look like."

Rage flooded Pearl's lovely face. She described Hugo Slade with complete accuracy. It satisfied The Shadow of one important fact. Pearl and Slade were not undercover allies. They had made their attempts to rifle Temple's safe as rivals in crime, not partners.

DOUBLE DEATH

Temple was found lying crumpled and bleeding in the service hall outside. He had been dealt a blackjack blow on the head. Blood trickled from his forehead across his closed eyelids. He staggered dizzily to his feet, supported by two of his servants. He had been struck down as he tried to halt the fleeing burglar with the brown beard.

Kent Allard sprang toward the elevator shaft and pressed the call button. When the service car ascended, he spoke crisply to the operator. His curt questions brought no solution to the problem of how Slade had escaped. The operator had carried no passenger to the street, bearded or otherwise.

But there was a sly glint in his eyes. The Shadow knew why. The elevator operator was one of the men The Shadow had seen in the headquarters of Hugo Slade!

IN the excitement that followed the calling and arrival of the police, The Shadow did a little sleuthing of his own – and found what he thought might be a clue in the incinerator–hopper lid. It was a piece of absorbent cotton.

And when the police had inspected the safe in the Spanish cabinet and found everything in order, The Shadow guessed that Pearl had recovered the rooming–house number she had evidently dropped in the earlier excitement. Probably she had also managed to return the cabinet key to Temple's pocket without him being aware of it.

The Shadow departed

CHAPTER IX. TOP FLOOR REAR

WHEN The Shadow left Temple's apartment, he went directly to the rooming–house address dropped by Pearl Crawford. By renting a room, in the fictitious name of Albert Robinson, and slyly inquiring as to who his fellow roomers would be, The Shadow learned of an actress who had but recently taken a room; a redhead named Betty Gaylord.

The Shadow decided Miss Gaylord needed investigating, and sneaking into her room after the landlady had departed, the vague perfume of the woman's belongings – he remembered the scent Pearl Crawford used – made him certain that Betty Gaylord, Peggy Madison and Pearl Crawford were one and the same girl!

Also, in the room was a combination radio–and–phonograph!

About finished with his search, The Shadow heard someone approaching and took refuge in the clothes closet. A man silently entered. It was Mortimer Temple!

To The Shadow's amazement, Temple, with a lead–ended tape measure which he tossed through the air, measured the distance from the room to the building across the dark back alley.

Then as silently as he had come in, he departed.

Temple's goal was a small doorway in the rear of the building opposite. The Shadow saw, from the rooming–house window above, another doorway from which a man suddenly emerged in the white uniform and tall cap of a cook. The cook emptied a pail of garbage into a larger container, and went back into the kitchen. Evidently the place was a restaurant.

Temple entered the other door a scant moment before the cook appeared. That it was a cellar entrance, The Shadow knew by the descending blur of Temple's head.

DOUBLE DEATH

Having reached the cellar and disappeared beyond the range of The Shadow's vision, Temple stood stock-still. The cellar was pitch-dark. He took a small flashlight from his pocket and sent its beam ahead of him into the blackness.

The place was a storeroom, filled with food for the restaurant. At the far end, a flight of wooden stairs led upward. Temple tiptoed past the stairs toward a corner of the cellar.

Suddenly, he uttered a shrill gasp of terror. A figure had risen, pantherlike, from the blackness. In its hand was a murderous blackjack, which was swung viciously at the artist's skull.

Temple tried to veer his torch to blind his assailant. But his foe was too swift. The blackjack struck Temple a terrific blow, sending him sprawling on his face.

The flashlight fell to the stone floor. Its light still glowed. A black-clad arm extinguished it with a swift click.

Utter darkness filled the cellar.

Then a laugh sounded. The unseen assailant grunted as he picked up the unconscious Temple. His footsteps receded without hesitation.

There was a faint, bell-like clang. Then nothing.

THE SHADOW, gliding quietly to the fire escape outside the rooming-house window, was unaware of the deadly encounter in the cellar of the restaurant opposite.

He descended to the alley. With quick, noiseless strides, he gained the cellar doorway where Temple had vanished.

The Shadow's flashlight pierced the blackness of the cellar. It illuminated the shelves of canned goods, the wooden cases of supplies, piled one atop the other. There was no sign of Temple.

Suddenly, The Shadow bent downward, focused his light.

There was a smear of crimson on the stone floor. He touched it with a finger tip. It was wet and sticky. Blood!

There was no way for The Shadow to reconstruct what had happened. All he was certain of was that Mortimer Temple had encountered an unknown foe in the blackness of the restaurant cellar. Who the victor was, he had no idea.

The Shadow was straightening cautiously when he heard the door at the top of the wooden stairs open. Instantly, he doused his flash. Shrouded by utter blackness, He began to retreat.

He had taken barely two steps when the whole cellar leaped into brilliant illumination. The man at the top of the stairs had pushed a button that controlled the cellar lights.

He wore a white smock and a tall cook's hat. In his hand was a steel-pointed case hook. He was descending from the kitchen to rip open one of the wooden boxes for fresh supplies.

Suddenly, he saw the tall figure of Kent Allard vividly exposed in the bright light. A yell burst from the cook's startled throat. The flashlight in The Shadow's hand branded him as a sneak thief. The cook raced

DOUBLE DEATH

down the stairs, brandishing his steel hook.

The Shadow had no chance to flee toward the alley. The cook's swift attack had cut off his retreat. Whirling, The Shadow ducked under the fierce sweep of the bale hook. The point missed his throat as he dropped swiftly to his knees.

Again, the deadly hook whizzed at him. This time, it curved toward The Shadow's spine. He was fighting for his life and he knew it. His clutch at the stocky legs of his foe pulled the man off balance. The two tumbled in a writhing embrace on the stone floor.

The cook was yelling with rage and excitement.

"Help! Stop thief!"

His cries brought echoes from above. The alarm had been heard in the restaurant kitchen. Feet pounded overhead.

But The Shadow was working with superhuman speed to save himself from capture. His hands choked off the cry in his antagonist's throat. The hard fist of The Shadow delivered a short, mercifully–quick knockout blow on the point of the man's jaw.

INSTANTLY, The Shadow was in motion. He raced toward the alley exit, but not for the purpose of escape. He had heard racing feet outside! He picked up the unconscious cook. Dropping his victim on the outside steps, The Shadow darted back through the cellar. He slid quickly behind a pile of crates alongside the masonry wall.

He had barely vanished when pursuit reached the cellar from two directions. Men sprang down the wooden stairs from the kitchen. The men from the alley raced down the stone exit steps.

The cook lay sprawled at the bottom. He was no longer wearing his white smock. His tall white cap was missing. But the excited rescuers didn't notice that.

Their brains reacted as The Shadow hoped they would. They assumed from the position of the unconscious victim that his assailant had struck him down at the moment of escape. The alley above was the natural exit. The man who had entered from the alley decided that the thief had fled before he could cut him off.

Turning, he raced up the stone steps. The others followed.

All except one!

That last white–garbed employee was The Shadow. He had emerged quietly from his hiding place. He sped softly up the kitchen stairs.

A dull–faced dishwasher was standing near a huge pile of dirty dishes. The Shadow averted his face. His familiar garb excited no alarm. He moved quickly toward the serving pantry.

The dishwasher assumed that he was hurrying out front to summon the police.

But the moment The Shadow reached the swinging door of the pantry, he became a different personality. His cook's hat was whipped from his head. The white smock was tossed aside. Once more he was Kent Allard, dressed in a neat suit of expensive tailoring.

DOUBLE DEATH

He stepped calmly into the restaurant and approached the cashier's desk. Mumbling something about changing his mind about staying for dinner because of a forgotten engagement, he made his exit to the street with ease.

Not long afterward, he was ascending again the front stoop of the rooming house behind the rear of the restaurant.

Entering his room unobserved, he locked his door and removed the key. Now, he brought a chair across the room and sat down close to the inside of the door.

He sat in a comfortably relaxed position that allowed him to watch through the keyhole. His gaze crossed the length of the top-floor hall, and centered on the door of the room hired by Betty Gaylord.

His lean jaw clenched suddenly as he watched through the keyhole of his own closed door. Someone was ascending the creaky rooming-house staircase with slow, infinitely cautious steps!

CHAPTER X. DARK JOURNEY

THE brownstone home of Doctor Jasper Logan looked drowsy and dark. All the windows were shuttered. But a gleam of light on the ground floor showed that someone was at home.

Julius Herzog chuckled as he approached the entrance. It was the first time Doctor Logan's clever real-estate agent had visited his client's house in a long time.

The fact that Logan was a fugitive from the police did not worry Herzog. Herzog knew a lot more than the police gave him credit for. He knew that tonight, Walter Starr was going to be far more important than his missing employer.

Walter Starr admitted him. He seemed surprised at Herzog's visit. He looked pale and unhappy. But Herzog's smile lingered as he followed Starr into the diving room. He came to the point of his visit without delay.

"Do you believe in Doctor Logan's innocence?"

"Of course!"

"You're thoroughly loyal to him and want to help him establish his innocence?"

"Yes!"

"Very well. I know exactly where Doctor Logan is hiding! He has an important job for you to do. I'm going to take you to him right now!"

Starr gasped.

"You can't. It's impossible! That detective watching outside to see that the doctor doesn't sneak back, will trail us the moment we leave the house."

"Leave that part to me," Herzog chuckled. There was cunning in the twist of his thin-lips. "Get your hat."

They descended the front stoop together. The detective on duty outside had crossed the street. He stood in the shadow of a doorway. Herzog paid no attention to the dick. Taking Starr's arm, he walked rapidly up the

DOUBLE DEATH

street toward the corner, turned it and walked along the lighted avenue.

The detective followed the pair, keeping well in the rear.

There was an empty sedan parked at the curb midway down the block. Its engine was running softly. The car belonged to Julius Herzog. He stopped, however, before he came abreast of it.

The quick pressure of his hand on Starr's arm turned the young man toward the window of a shop. Herzog pretended to be interested in the merchandise displayed within.

A man moved aside slightly to make room for Starr and Herzog. The real-estate man's face didn't turn toward this third man. But his thin lips moved imperceptibly. Words spurted from the corner of his mouth.

"Everything is O.K. Start the show!"

The man to whom Herzog had whispered his queer warning moved away. Turning with a yawn, he sauntered up the street past Herzog's parked car. His clothes were shabby. His face was hard and watchful. So were his eyes.

He watched the other side of the street. A woman emerged suddenly from a doorway. She glanced briefly across at the hard-faced man. The man crossed the street and followed her, increasing his pace as he approached her.

The girl was very pretty. She carried a leather purse, swinging it carelessly on a long strap handle. There was a faint pallor on her rouged cheeks.

The detective trailing Herzog and Starr had no notion of what was going on. He had rounded the corner too late to witness the brief meeting of Herzog and the man at the shop window. He remained down near the corner, waiting for Herzog and Starr to move on.

SUDDENLY a shrill, terrified scream came from the pretty girl across the street. The hard-faced man had snatched her handbag.

As he fled, the girl pursued him. She was still screaming. The thug whirled and knocked the girl down. She was up in an instant, clutching at his coat tails.

"Help! Police! Stop thief!"

The thief tore himself loose. He darted down the dark steps of a tenement cellar. The girl raced after him, her screams dwindling as she pursued the man into the cellar.

Instantly, the plain-clothes detective who had followed Herzog and Starr was after the thief. He dived pell-mell down the cellar steps. Darkness and utter silence greeted him. He could find no trace of the thug or the pretty girl.

There was a simple explanation for this. The moment the pair had reached the cellar, the thug caught hold of the girl's arm and helped her to run faster. The two fled together through a narrow passage to a back door, out into an alley to a coupe parked there.

As they drove away, they smiled at each other. They were actors out of work. They had been hired by Herzog for one purpose: to get the dick off his and Starr's trail.

DOUBLE DEATH

Julius Herzog, too, was uttering sounds of mirth. He was already a half mile away from the scene of the fake holdup. He had shaken off the plainclothes dick. Walter Starr sat nervously beside him in the speeding sedan.

"I don't like it," Starr gasped.

"Don't like what?"

"Your criminal connections. How do I know that you're taking me to Doctor Logan, as you promised? That fake holdup is proof that you have underworld pals!"

Herzog chuckled. His tense grip on the wheel relaxed. He explained that the woman and "pickpocket" were in reality, actors out of work.

"All right," Starr said, after a moment's thought. "I'll trust you. Take me to Doctor Logan."

Herzog shook his head.

"It's not that easy, my friend. I don't trust you! You might squeal to the police later."

He had pulled up to the curb of a dark street in a secluded neighborhood. He took a black cloth from his pocket.

"Unless you're willing to be blindfolded, and obey every order I give you, the trip is off. We'll part company right here."

Starr thought things over amid a long, uneasy silence. Then he agreed. He allowed Herzog to blindfold him.

Herzog made coolly sure that Starr could not treacherously slip up the blindfold, by snapping a pair of handcuffs on the young man's wrists behind his back.

He helped Starr to get in the rear of his car. He made a comfortable place for him on the floor with a soft laprobe. Again, the car got in motion.

This time, it went more slowly. Walter Starr was taken on a long, rambling ride. He knew that the sole purpose of Herzog was to confuse him.

There was a long wait after the car finally stopped. Then, abruptly, the rear door opened. Herzog's hand grasped the young man by the shoulder.

They crossed a sidewalk, down steps which apparently led to an alley, for Starr could feel cool breezes blowing in his face as they hurried along.

"Stop here!" Herzog's tense voice rasped.

A key grated in a lock. A door opened. It slammed shut as Starr was pushed forward. Again, the key grated.

"Mr. Starr doesn't quite trust me," Herzog said to someone, with a clipped laugh. "Reassure the young man."

A familiar voice answered.

"You needn't be afraid, Walter. You're perfectly safe."

DOUBLE DEATH

It was the voice of Doctor Jasper Logan!

A MOMENT later, the handcuffs and the blindfold were removed. Starr could see his employer. Doctor Logan was smiling faintly. But his face was pale and haggard. He looked hunted. There was a sinister glint in his eyes that Starr had never seen before.

Logan's hiding place seemed to be the basement of an empty house. The floor was dusty. Only a few cheap sticks of furniture were visible. The air smelled close, musty.

Something about Logan's shrewdly unpleasant scrutiny worried Starr. For the first time, he began to wonder if he had been a fool to place himself in Logan's power. He forgot caution in his growing anger. Grimly, he accused his employer of trying to murder him the night before with an infernal machine hidden beneath the floor of the laboratory.

"Infernal machine?" Logan growled. "What are you talking about?"

Starr told about the visit of Clyde Burke, which had ended in the discovery of the bomb. It was Logan's turn to become angry. The news that Starr had demonstrated the unsuccessful war invention to a reporter infuriated Logan. He seemed more enraged by that than the attempt made on Starr's life by the masked intruder who had planted the bomb.

He denied indignantly that he was the intruder.

"I can prove my innocence," he said, grimly, "by letting you see exactly where I'm hiding!"

Herzog interposed a quick objection. But the inventor disregarded him. Striding to the wall of the basement room, he pressed a secret spring. There was a faint whirring sound. The wall began to open. A whole section slid horizontally aside.

Walter Starr's face reflected amazement as he stared through the opening. He was looking into the basement of Doctor Logan's brownstone home!

The inventor was hiding in the cellar of the empty house adjoining his own!

"If I wanted to kill you," the inventor said coolly, "you see how easily I could have done it. It wasn't necessary for me to saw the laboratory bars apart, or to dress up in a ridiculous mask. Your burglar was somebody else."

His voice dropped to a wheedling whisper.

"I want you to do something for me, Walter."

"What?" Starr asked.

"I want you to go to the hotel where Carl Ragland lives. He's one of the men who invested \$25,000 in my war machine. Offer him \$25,000 cash in return for his signed partnership agreement with me."

"Why?" Starr asked. His gaze remained grimly on his employer. "The machine is a failure. Why are you so anxious to return Ragland's money?"

Logan blinked.

DOUBLE DEATH

"For two reasons. First, I'm convinced that the machine may work after future experiments. Second, Ragland is in peril! He might be killed by the same criminal who murdered Clifford and attacked Temple. I've decided to take all future risks – and possible profits – for myself."

It sounded fishy. Starr shook his head, said, "I won't do it!"

Julius Herzog interposed his sly, silky voice.

"If you refuse, young man, I'll withdraw the bail that was put up to release you from prison as a witness. You'll go back to jail damned fast!"

"And I'll talk damned fast, too!" Starr threatened. "I'll tell the police exactly where Doctor Logan is hidden!"

"What good will that do you?" Logan said. "Long before the police get here to nab me, I'll be gone. I've got other places as good, or better, than this."

In the end, Starr agreed to help Logan. He gave his word to keep secret the inventor's hiding place. He promised to visit Carl Ragland and try to buy back his share in Logan's war machine.

A TAXICAB took Starr directly to the hotel where Carl Ragland, the broker, lived. Julius Herzog had given him Ragland's room number, had advised him to make the visit a secret one.

Starr took an elevator to the ninth floor, walked along the spacious corridor to Ragland's room. He rapped quickly on the door.

There was silence for a moment. Then a quick: "Who's there?"

Starr answered in a low voice. He told his name and as much as he dared concerning the nature of his visit. Reluctantly, the door was opened by Ragland.

He was a stout, sporty-looking man in a tuxedo. He had a bald head and fat, fleshy hands. He owned a brokerage seat on the stock exchange, and had a home and a wife in suburban New Jersey. But he spent a lot of his time in this Manhattan hotel. His face was flushed as he invited Starr inside.

"What's all this about?" he asked, quickly. "I haven't much time to waste."

Starr told him. Ragland didn't interrupt until Starr had finished. Then he quivered with laughter. It wasn't pleasant mirth.

"You tell Doc Logan he can go to hell! I don't believe that yarn for a minute! I don't believe my life is in danger. And if the invention is no good, why is the doc so eager to buy me out?"

Earnestly, Starr assured the broker that the machine was a failure. He told how he himself had tested it again and again.

"I'm still willing to take a chance on it," Ragland chuckled. "Maybe you don't know it, but I'm a sporting man. I've got plenty of money to play with. Twenty-five grand is nothing to me. I get a kick out of gambling! That's why I took a flyer in Logan's war machine. You can tell the doc I'm not selling out my share!"

Starr continued to try to persuade him, but he saw that further talk was useless. And Carl Ragland seemed to be in a hurry to get rid of his unexpected caller. He finally walked to the door and opened it. Starr had no

choice but to depart.

The moment Starr had dropped downward in the elevator, Ragland, stepped back into his hotel room, closed the door. He turned toward an inner room of the suite.

"False alarm!" he chuckled. "It's O.K., Rita. Come on out!"

A girl in evening dress came into the room. She was slim and beautiful. Deep-blue eyes contrasted with her gorgeous red hair.

"Who was it?" she asked, smilingly.

Kent Allard would have recognized Pearl Crawford's expensive perfume as she walked toward Carl Ragland with a slight sway of her hips.

The landlady of a certain rooming house would have called this girl Betty Gaylord.

Ragland knew her as Rita Munson. He had no notion of the danger that lay behind the lovely blue eyes of this charming girl-friend of his.

She leaned close to the broker, gave him a warm, languorous smile.

"Who was it, honey pie?"

CHAPTER XI. A TRIP TO HARLEM

RAGLAND laughed and slid an arm around Pearl's pliant waist. He drew her closer and kissed her.

"Just a man trying to sell me something," he said, carelessly.

Pearl, who had listened unseen to the talk between Ragland and Starr, knew exactly what the interview was about. But she pretended otherwise.

Pearl made no effort to slip from the broker's embrace. For entertainment, she suggested they visit a Harlem night spot where marijuana smokers congregated.

At first, Ragland wasn't so eager. But Pearl persisted with cute, giggling stubbornness. She had been once before to the joint, she said. It was a place where smart tourists went for the biggest thrill in Manhattan. No danger whatever – and lots of fun.

In the end, Ragland agreed to go.

They left the hotel by a side entrance, and took a taxicab.

Pearl gave the driver directions. She told him to stop at a certain corner in upper Harlem. On the trip uptown, she was gay and eager. Ragland had never before realized how alluringly beautiful she was. He forgot everything but the lovely girl who sat so close to him on the dark rear seat of the taxi.

But he looked puzzled, when the cab drove away and left them standing on a shabby street corner in a rather dismal section of Harlem.

DOUBLE DEATH

He was more puzzled when Pearl frowned, and admitted she was not sure if this was the right corner. Her glance had darted down the side street for a brief instant. She had expected to see someone. That person was not visible.

Pearl gave a soft laugh. She pretended to Ragland that she had forgotten the address of the marijuana joint.

"Let me think a minute. I'm almost sure this is the right street corner."

Suddenly, she gave a delighted exclamation. Her eyes, roving past Ragland's shoulder, had seen what she was looking for. A man had appeared suddenly on the sidewalk part way down the side street. He lit a cigarette. The match flare showed his lean profile. A moment later, he backed out of sight.

Pearl's laughter was like silver bells.

"I remember now! Of course, this is the street! The place we're looking for is right past that big ice plant down the block. Come on!"

She took Ragland's arm and the two walked eastward. The street was dim and deserted. It was particularly dark in front of the icehouse. There was nothing to be seen but a loading platform and a few empty trucks, parked for the night.

Pearl veered closer to the platform. A man who was slumped drunkenly on the wooden steps, rose unsteadily and staggered toward them.

Ragland didn't notice the man at first; but Pearl did. He was the same man who had lit a match as a signal.

It was Bump Wilson.

BUMP swayed close to the beautifully gowned girl. His hand reached out. What he said and what he did was so insulting that Pearl uttered a stifled scream. She shrank back, pulling loose from Ragland.

The broker's face flushed with rage. He uttered a quick oath. His fist clenched, drove at the chin of the drunken man.

But the drunk became sober with startling speed. He ducked the broker's fist and whirled closer. A gun gleamed in his hand. He held the weapon reversed and aimed a terrific blow at Ragland's skull.

Luck was all that saved the broker. As he recoiled instinctively, he slipped on the ice-wet sidewalk and fell away from the blow.

Then he went grimly into action.

He was a muscular man, in spite of his apparent softness. The insult to Pearl had enraged him. His fists drove Bump back on his heels, blood streaming from Bump's nose. Another blow, and Bump went spinning dizzily.

Ragland's fist swung in a haymaker. But Pearl's slim hand shot out suddenly like a snake. Her fingers clamped on Ragland's wrist and diverted the blow. Her swift tug pulled Ragland off balance.

Bump struck savagely with his clubbed gun. It hit Ragland on the back of his turned skull. The broker pitched to the dark sidewalk without a groan.

DOUBLE DEATH

Instantly, Bump bent over the limp victim and threw him over his shoulders. The treacherous "finger" job had been done perfectly. Bump carried the unconscious broker into the icehouse.

Pearl followed.

It was dark inside except for a single overhead electric lamp. There was no sign of the night watchman. Neither Pearl nor Bump made any effort to walk softly or to lower their jubilant voices. The unfortunate watchman had already been taken care of!

Ragland was carried to a square opening in the floor. It was the top of a slippery chute that led to the basement of the plant. Bump dropped his limp victim with a thump. The unconscious man vanished down the chute into the darkness of the seller.

Pearl gave a brief laugh, but Bump swore viciously. He dabbed at his bloody nose with a handkerchief. He stood there, cursing fiercely under his breath, until Pearl plucked his arm with a quick, warning gesture.

"We're doing this job on a time basis," she said, harshly. "The boss will be sore if we waste a minute. Forget your bloody nose and let's go!"

They hurried onward through the gloomy interior of the icehouse, passed through cold, silent corridors, turned dark corners with quick haste.

Presently, they came to a final doorway and went through. They were on the rear loading platform of the ice plant.

There were a half a dozen ice trucks, all dark and empty. They formed a shield that hid view of the sidewalk. Behind the trucks was a closed coupe.

Pearl Crawford descended from the loading platform and raced to the waiting coupe. She slid behind the wheel and started the engine. A moment later, she drove around the barrier of parked trucks and headed for the street.

The faint hum of her car vanished.

Bump Wilson remained on the rear loading platform. One of the waiting trucks had been backed up to that platform. Bump grinned as he saw it. But he walked past the lowered tailboard of the truck, and returned to the small doorway of the icehouse through which he and Pearl had emerged.

Bump was still working on a time schedule. He still had plenty to do!

WHEN Carl Ragland's unconscious body slid down the slippery chute to the cellar of the ice plant, it landed on a concrete floor. He lay inertly. A single overhead light gleamed with ghastly distinctness on his pale, upturned face.

Barely twenty seconds passed. Then there was a faint shuffle of approaching feet. A sinister figure materialized from the gloom. He stared silently downward at the unconscious victim.

He was dressed entirely in black. A mask covered his face and muffled the outline of his head. The eyes that burned through the slits of the enveloping mask were cold, pitiless.

DOUBLE DEATH

The figure was the same criminal genius who had murdered George Clifford, and deposited his body in a furnished room hired by the red-haired Peggy Madison. His hands were gloved. One of his fingers seemed to be missing. The gloved index finger of the criminal's left hand flapped loosely

His right hand gripped the holster of a peculiar-looking gun. It had an unusually long and oversized snout. A silencer had been fastened to the barrel.

The masked man bent close over the unconscious body of Carl Ragland. His movements were those of a machine.

Placing the muzzle of the silenced gun a few inches above Ragland's chest, he pulled the trigger. The bullet ripped through the unconscious broker's heart. Ragland died instantly.

The masked murderer placed sacking carefully about to sop up the ghastly crimson fluid. Then he turned and vanished into darkness beyond the area of the ceiling light. When he came back he was carrying what looked like a deflated air mattress. Opening it flat, he spread it on the stone floor.

It was a bag with a zipper running down its entire length. The masked man pulled the zipper, opening the flat sack. Inside were smaller bags, two layers of them. The masked man withdrew the small bags. He carried them to a tub of chopped ice that stood over near the wall.

One by one, the small bags were crammed with chopped ice. The masked man carried them to the sack alongside the bleeding body of Carl Ragland.

He placed a layer on the bottom of the big sack. Then the corpse of the broker who had stubbornly refused to sell his interest in the war invention of Doctor Jasper Logan. Then another layer.

The masked man washed all trace of blood from the stone floor. Seizing one end of the heavy murder sack, which had been greased carefully on its under side, the murderer dragged it easily along the concrete floor to an elevator at the rear of the cellar.

He ascended with his victim to the street level at the rear of the plant. He whistled softly, and then raced back to the elevator.

BUMP WILSON was waiting outside the small exit door. He dragged out the heavy sack and slid it aboard the empty truck at the loading platform.

By the time Bump finished, the masked man had returned a second time from the cellar where he had killed Ragland. This time, he brought with him the body of the night watchman.

The watchman had been killed by a horrible smash on the back of the skull. This method of death was deliberate. It would help to fool the police when the watchman's body was found miles away from the icehouse.

With Bump behind the wheel, the truck drove away. The masked man rode inside with his two victims. The raised tailboard of the truck hid the crouched murderer from the chance view of any pedestrian. The truck rumbled across town toward the Hudson River. It turned into upper Riverside Drive and headed across the viaduct that spans the sunken valley of West 125th Street.

Midway across the spidery structure, the ice truck halted close to the railing of the viaduct. Bump Wilson carried the body of the dead watchman to the rail and slid him over.

DOUBLE DEATH

When police would find the body, instead of murder they would report an accident. A blood test would disclose the fact that the watchman had fallen while drunk. He had been given liquor by a man who knew his fondness for alcohol.

The liquor would also explain why the watchman was found dead so far from his duty. Drunk, he had wandered away from the ice plant in a daze. He had fallen from the viaduct in the midst of a drunken stupor.

His death would have no connection whatever with the later "death" of a broker named Carl Ragland.

The fleeing ice truck that contained a masked supercriminal and the iced body of Ragland, rolled quietly from the northern end of the viaduct. It turned east, then north. It finally halted on a quiet residential street of upper Washington Heights. Trees lined both sides of the street. The houses were privately owned, each with a large garage. All of the houses were dark. Their owners were hard-working, law-abiding folk who retired early. The truck slowed in front of one of these homes.

Julius Herzog, real-estate agent for Doctor Logan, would have recognized this particular house. But Herzog was not inside, nor was Logan. The house was empty.

THE ice truck curved into a gravel driveway. It vanished into the garage. The door slid shut behind it. A strong light glowed within. No trace of that light showed outside.

It was a large garage, with room for both the truck and the other car that was already there. The second car was a small sedan. It glistened with new paint. Its license plate was clear and legible. Both the car and the plate were stolen. The sedan belonged to a dentist in Brooklyn. The plate had come from still another automobile in Queens.

The masked man was taking no chances of being traced by police when he finished the third ghastly act of his grim drama of a perfect crime.

Act 1 was the real death of the unfortunate Carl Ragland. Act 2 was the safe disposal of the body of the icehouse watchman. Act 3 would take place in a top-floor room hired by a shapely red-haired girl named Betty Gaylord.

Bump Wilson glanced uneasily at his masked chief. The man's black-clad figure, his grim silence, made Bump uneasy. Then Bump received his orders.

"You're through for the night. You can leave now. Do exactly what I've told you. Repeat your instructions."

Bump obeyed in a voice that was tremulous in spite of himself. When he finished, came the order:

"All right – beat it!"

Bump left the garage. He waited until his employer had put out the light before he opened the door. Then he squeezed swiftly through the partly opened barrier and walked tensely along the drive to the sidewalk. He was on edge and overcareful to avoid observation.

That was Bump's big mistake. His slinking anxiety made him noticeable on the dark street. He was seen by a man with suspiciously alert eyes.

The man was a cop! He was hidden behind one of the thick trees that lined the sidewalk of this quiet residential street. He had noticed Bump's stealthy figure emerge from the garage. He watched him sneak

along the driveway to the street.

As Bump passed the tree, the cop sprang out and confronted him.

"What were you doing in that garage?"

Bump gasped with dismay. The cop got a good look at his face. He gave a yelp of excitement as he recognized the prowler. He knew instantly that he was facing Bump Wilson, one of the most dangerous thugs in New York.

The cop's hand lifted his service gun.

CHAPTER XII. MYSTERY TRAIL

THE second of hesitation which had followed the cop's recognition of the thug, gave Bump his opportunity. His fist moved with the speed of a striking snake. There was a drawn pistol in that fist. It whizzed inside the cop's lifting arm. It struck the cop a stunning blow, dropping him in a sprawled, silent heap on the dark sidewalk.

Bump could have finished his foe then and there. But he didn't. He was badly rattled. The sudden appearance of the cop at a time when Bump thought everything was moving smoothly, robbed him of the ability to think. Instead of murdering the only witness who had stumbled into the midst of a perfect crime, Bump fled!

His feet made a quick tattoo on the deserted sidewalk. He vanished around the corner.

The dazed cop groaned presently, and rolled to his knees. His head ached and there was a trickle of blood on his cheeks. But he was able to stagger to his feet and glare about him.

Bump had disappeared. The street was silent. But the door of the near-by garage was still ajar. The cop knew that Bump had sneaked furtively from that garage. His desperate attack and quick flight were proof that something was urgently wrong.

Cautiously, the policeman entered the garage, making no sound. The ceiling bulb was not lit. But a faint reddish afterglow of the filament inside the bulb indicated that someone had turned off the powerful lamp only a second before the policeman's arrival.

The cop's gun was ready for action. With the weapon braced steadily, he slid a small flashlight from his pocket. A beam of yellow brilliance explored the interior of the garage.

There was no sign of a burglar. The cop eyed the ice truck and the small sedan. No shot flamed at him from the darkness beyond the radius of his torch. The only sound was the creak of his thick-soled shoes.

He satisfied himself that there was no one hidden inside the sedan. Then he let down the high tailboard of the truck.

Instantly, he saw the peculiar sack that lay on the floor of the truck. It looked grotesquely stiff. Climbing noiselessly into the truck, the cop bent over the sack and tried to lift it.

It was very heavy, and cold to the touch. The cop, glancing at his smeared fingers, discovered that the bottom of the sack was greased.

DOUBLE DEATH

He found the zipper and pulled it open, splitting the sack apart from top to bottom. The mystery of the coldness was explained when the startled bluecoat opened one of the smaller bags that formed the top layer inside. His fingers explored a slush of melting ice.

A body was between the two layers of ice bags.

The sight of the stiffened corpse of Carl Ragland made the stomach of the veteran cop quiver. It was a bloody and gruesome discovery in a precinct where crime seldom occurred.

Turning, the policeman moved to get out the back of the truck and race to the nearest call box.

He was too slow. The man who confronted him from behind the open rear of the truck had made no noise as he slid open a well-oiled panel at the back of the garage. Masked, garbed in black, he was an awesome figure.

"Drop the gun!"

His voice was pitched so low that it was barely audible. But the cop obeyed the command. To do otherwise was to commit suicide. The masked man had the drop on him. He was holding the same silenced weapon that had sent a bullet ripping through the heart of Carl Ragland.

He laughed icily as the police gun dropped with a faint thud to the floor of the truck.

"Hands up high! Kick that gun out here!"

He made no effort to stoop for the weapon as it skidded out and fell at his feet. He was eyeing coolly the quick rise and fall of the breathless policeman's chest.

His gun barrel moved sideways a fraction of an inch. He gave no warning of death. The doomed policeman didn't even hear the faint pop of the silenced gun as flame spurted from its long barrel.

The bullet pierced the cop's heart.

INSTANTLY, the masked murderer became a silent tornado of purposeful action. The corpse of the dead policeman was dragged from the truck and placed upright on the front seat of the sedan. The killer propped him so that he seemed asleep, resting with one shoulder against the closed door.

The killer got in on the other side and slid behind the wheel. A touch of his foot started the motor. Before he backed the sedan from the garage, he leaned out and made carefully sure that he had attended properly to the disturbed corpse of Carl Ragland.

He chuckled as he saw haste had not made him inefficient. The ice bags were back in place. The zipper of the sack had been drawn tight. The tailboard of the truck was bolted in place.

The sedan backed quietly to the gravel driveway. The masked man hurried to the garage door and locked it. The car made a high, whining noise as it raced away.

Its speed increased. There were no pedestrians visible in the dark uptown streets through which he drove southward. He could easily have dumped the dead cop right here. But he preferred to get rid of his unwelcome passenger at a distance much farther from the scene of the actual killing.

DOUBLE DEATH

Finally, he slowed. He had found a locality that suited him. Reaching with one hand past the leaning figure of the dead bluecoat, he pulled open the catch of the door. The heavy body pitched out to the pavement as the door swung wide. A gloved hand slammed the door. The sedan crowded on speed.

But fate ruined the coldly conceived perfection of a master criminal!

At almost the exact instant that the dead cop tumbled sprawling into the gutter, another car rounded the corner behind the murder sedan. It was a nighthawk taxi. Its driver was returning to an uptown garage to turn in his cab and go home for the night.

He saw the body go plummeting to the pavement a half block in front of him. As he sped closer, he saw a blue uniform and the gleam of brass buttons. A cop! Killed, and tossed from a car that was now streaking away at mad, reckless speed.

That taxi driver had guts! Dropping his palm on his horn button, he crowded on every bit of power his engine could generate. He pursued the flying sedan.

The taxi driver's own brother was a cop! He had caught a quick glimpse of the dead patrolman's face as he sped past the limp blue bundle on the pavement. He knew him! It was Dan Ahern, a friend of his brother and himself. As square and decent a cop as ever pounded a beat and refused a bribe.

The taxi driver kept his palm on the horn button in a wailing shriek of alarm.

A hole spat suddenly through the glass of his windshield. Another! No sound accompanied those shots. The hackman merely ducked his head and increased his speed. He knew those bullets came from a silenced gun. But he knew also, that the chase could not proceed much farther without attracting help from other policemen.

A block ahead, a bluecoat had already heard that wild horn tooting. He saw the two cars racing toward him and sprang out into the middle of the street, waving his gun. The masked man swerved his wheel and tried to run him down.

The cop fired twice, but failed to hit one of those spinning tires. At the last second, he leaped backward to avoid death. The sedan skidded around a corner with a scream of tortured rubber.

THE pursuing taxicab halted with a harsh groan of its brakes. The cop sprang to the running board. He didn't utter a single word. He didn't have to. Grimly, he hung on with his left hand. The taxi rocked and bounced as it sped after the vanishing killer.

West and south the chase proceeded. The sedan was far ahead. Its red tail light flickered like a mad will-o'-the-wisp.

The cop on the swaying running board had caught an earlier glimpse of the fugitive. He had seen the mask, the black clothes, the gloved hands. He had seen a gloved forefinger that flapped loosely.

Ahead was the masked killer of George Clifford! The heart of the cop on the taxi's running board exulted with fierce joy. He was convinced that he was on the trail of the missing Doctor Logan at last!

He was more convinced of it when the chase approached Logan's brownstone house on the West Side!

DOUBLE DEATH

The masked fugitive had a strong advantage in time over his pursuers. He was two or three blocks ahead of the taxi when he raced down the side street around the corner from Logan's home. He halted the sedan and sprang out, raced down concrete steps to a sunken alley.

It was the same alley through which Walter Starr had been conducted blindfolded by the cunning Herzog on his secret visit to the missing inventor.

The masked man ran noiselessly down the alley toward the empty house adjoining Logan's. But he didn't go quite that far. He halted at Logan's rear door. A key whipped from a pocket. The door opened quietly and was as softly closed again. The lock clicked on the inside.

LESS than three minutes elapsed before the pursuing bluecoat came plunging down the alley. He halted outside Logan's back door and rapped with his club.

There was no answer.

The cop threw his shoulder against the barrier. He was a big, beefy man and packed plenty of muscle. The door gave way on the third attack. It wrenched loose from its hinges.

Like a blue rock, the cop's gun jutted stiffly. The cellar light was on. But there was no sign of the masked man.

Tiptoeing warily forward, the cop searched every inch of the cellar. He explored every nook and cranny where a panting man might hide. But he found no one.

He climbed the cellar steps to the ground floor. He explored the empty laboratory in the rear, the silent living room in front. Again, his search was fruitless.

Ascending a second flight of stairs, his teeth were clenched grimly. He knew the fugitive was somewhere in the silent, brownstone house. Logan could not have doubled his trail and sneaked out again to the alley. That was impossible! And it was equally impossible for him to have escaped by the front exit.

There was a plain-clothes detective from the district attorney's office on watch in a doorway across the dark avenue. There had been no alarm in front. True, the detective had probably not heard the noise from the rear. But if he had seen a masked and black-clad figure fleeing down the broad front stoop of the brownstone, his whistle would have blown shrilly. His gun would have made crashing echoes as the masked killer fled.

The puzzled policeman ascended the last flight to the top floor. He moved very slowly, taking infinite caution. But in spite of himself the stair treads crackled under the pressure of his heavy-soled shoes.

A man above heard that sinister creak-creak from the darkness of the top floor. He was sitting bolt upright in bed, pajama-clad. His hair was tousled and his eyes sleepy.

He was Walter Starr.

With a quick movement, he threw the bedclothes aside and padded on bare feet to a bureau across the room. From a drawer, he grabbed a small automatic pistol concealed there. Moving with frightened haste, he ducked behind the partly opened door of his bedroom and waited to trap the stealthy intruder.

He saw a stockily built figure tiptoe cautiously into the room. The man advanced past the bed after a single glance toward its emptiness. He threw open the door of a closet. His flashlight poked about in the interior of

DOUBLE DEATH

the closet.

Starr pointed his automatic with a tremulous gesture.

"Hands up!" he said, in a frightened squeak.

Instantly, the figure whirled with catlike speed. A gun leveled on Starr's pajama-clad figure. The light from the electric torch blinded him. But he saw enough to part his lips in a prompt yell.

"Don't shoot! It's a mistake! I thought you were a burglar!"

He came within an ace of being killed. The cop's tense finger relaxed from his trigger. He advanced toward Starr with a growl.

"You damn fool! What are you doing hiding behind a door with a gun?"

STARR'S face was pale. Gasping, he explained what had happened. He had been awakened by a crash at the rear door downstairs. Peering through his upper window, he had been unable to see anyone outside in the alley. He had gone back to bed, convinced he had dreamed about the noise. Then he had heard stealthy feet ascending the stairs.

"You sure you saw no one at all," the cop growled.

Starr shook his head. His mouth was still dazedly open.

"What time did you come home tonight?"

"I've been asleep for more than two hours," Starr said. "I can prove it, if necessary."

"By whom?"

"By the best proof in the world. That detective on duty in front of the house. He saw me come in. He grinned, and we kidded each other about the foolishness of Doctor Logan ever returning to his own home."

"Huh?" the cop grunted. "Well, that's exactly what has happened. Logan is somewhere in this house! Or else you're the guy I want. For murder!"

"Murder?"

"You heard me! The murder of a cop! He was tossed out of a speeding sedan not fifteen minutes ago. The guy that killed him sneaked into this brownstone house about three minutes ahead of me. Get your shoes on! We're going downstairs and talk to that dick out front."

Starr obeyed the gruff order. He was still dazed by the suddenness of events. His hands shook as he tied his laces. He went downstairs with the cop.

An instant later, he shrank backward. His face was ashen. He pointed silently down the front stoop.

A figure was lying sprawled at the bottom of the steps. The cop raced down and bent over him. It was the plainclothes dick from the D.A.'s office. He had been shot through the heart. And very recently, too! Blood was still gushing from his chest.

DOUBLE DEATH

No ordinary pistol could have done this without arousing the neighborhood with the echo of the shot. The cop's lips tightened. Again, a silenced pistol had been used! The masked fugitive had done the impossible. He had raced through the brownstone, gained the street, and escaped in a clean getaway!

The proof was visible on the bottom step of the stoop. It was half-covered by the body of the dead detective. A black silk head mask!

Staring at the narrow eyeslits in the discarded mask, the baffled policeman cursed. The pressure of his grip on Walter Starr's arm brought a faint gasp of pain from the young man.

"You got a phone inside?"

"Yes."

"Show it to me quick. I gotta call headquarters!"

They raced up the stoop. But inside the vestibule, the cop paused with a queer look. He saw something that he had been in too much of a hurry to notice on the way out. It was a piece of paper, stuck under the bell-button.

There were two short sentences printed in lead pencil on the paper. The cop's jaw hardened as he read it. Starr, peering over the bluecoat's shoulder, read it too:

Wise men keep their mouths shut.

Dead men tell no tales.

The policeman thought he knew what the message meant. He assumed it was a boastful reference by the masked killer to the dead cop he had tossed out of his speeding sedan. That other cop must have discovered some clue to the whereabouts of the vanished Doctor Logan. He had paid for his knowledge with his life.

Walter Starr, however, had a different opinion. The note was addressed to a living man, not a dead one – so he thought.

"Have you heard from Logan, or seen him, since he fled to avoid arrest?" the policeman asked Starr, suddenly.

Starr licked his lips and hesitated.

He recalled his blind journey with Julius Herzog to the cellar of the house next door. He thought of the passageway that joined that cellar with the brownstone where he was now standing. Logan's grim face flashed across his mind. His lips clamped shut for an instant. When he opened them, his voice sounded dead.

"I know nothing," he said.

Tremulously, he led the cop inside the house and pointed silently to the telephone.

CHAPTER XIII. THE SLY MR. MARTIN

PEARL CRAWFORD smiled demurely, as she drove her trim little coupe along the dark thoroughfare of Manhattan.

DOUBLE DEATH

The drivers of the occasional cars that passed gave Pearl a quick, appreciative stare. It was unusual to see a girl riding alone so late at night, especially one so beautiful.

Pearl was still wearing her red-haired wig. The same gorgeous evening gown which had identified her as "Rita Munson" to the dead Ragland, still clung to her shapely figure. She had cleverly used make-up on her face. There were cute freckles on Rita Munson's nose. Her eyebrows were totally different from those of Pearl Crawford. So were her artificial lashes.

Her smile deepened. But there was a strange expression in the depths of her blue eyes – a look that was half anxiety, half fear. Pearl had an unpleasant hunch of danger. She tried not to let it take complete possession of her thoughts.

Driving with competent skill, she reached the gloomy street where she had planned in advance to make a brief stop. She braked to a quick standstill. Her slim hand groped beneath the seat and jerked out a leather bag.

The bag contained a change of costume and certain cosmetics.

In another moment, Rita Munson's fragile evening gown was lifted over her head. Her gown and her slip were stowed carefully away in the leather bag. So were the matched slippers and stockings.

Crouched almost nude in the dimness of the parked coupe, the red-haired Rita Munson caused herself to disappear forever. Except for her lacy brassiere and her brief silken panties, her costume was entirely different. So was her physical appearance. In her place sat the blond Pearl Crawford.

Pearl's laughter purred as she drove onward. But her strange feeling of anxiety persisted. The closer she drove toward her apartment house, the stronger the feeling grew.

In the end, she halted her coupe outside an all-night drugstore, went inside and called her own apartment.

The bell buzzed monotonously. No one answered. That was exactly what Pearl hoped for and expected. Smiling at her presentiment of danger, she started to replace the receiver.

As she did, she received a shock that made her blood tingle with alarm.

Someone was answering from Pearl's apartment! A woman's voice! The voice was disguised, but Pearl recognized it almost at once.

It was Evelyn Temple's!

"MAY I talk to Pearl Crawford, please?" Pearl asked, through the folds of her handkerchief.

"This is she," Evelyn Temple replied, unevenly.

"Really? I didn't recognize you, dear. This is Margaret Somerville. I came unexpectedly to New York, and naturally the first thing I thought of was to telephone my dearest friend Pearl."

There was no such person as Margaret Somerville. Evelyn swallowed the bait.

"Margaret! Darling! How lovely to hear from you! Did – did you want to stay overnight at my apartment?"

DOUBLE DEATH

Pearl grinned at the quick fright in Evelyn's tone.

"Of course not! You go back to sleep. I'll see you tomorrow morning."

She hung up swiftly. A moment later, she was telephoning the secret hide-out of Bump Wilson.

Bump sounded scared. So was Pearl, when she learned what had happened after Bump had left the garage in Washington Heights. But Bump claimed he had made a perfect getaway from a dumb cop.

"Yeah?" Pearl shrilled. "What about the boss?"

"Don't worry. He's smart!"

Pearl muttered a curt, unladylike oath. She told Bump about the presence of Evelyn in her apartment, and ordered him to hurry there instantly.

"Enter the usual way. Martin is on duty. And rush it! Maybe Temple is there, too!"

A few minutes later, Pearl parked her car at the rear of her swanky apartment building and sneaked down the cellar steps. Martin was, as she had anticipated, sitting half-asleep in his service car at the bottom of the shaft. Swiftly, she explained the urgency of events.

They rode quietly aloft in the elevator. Pearl's key made no sound as she unlocked the service door of her apartment. She had removed her high-heeled shoes. Tiptoeing in stocking feet, she crept closer and closer to the girl in the living room.

Evelyn Temple was on her knees in front of a desk she had pried open. She was reading hastily every scrap of paper she could find.

She had no warning whatever. There was a brief gurgle as Pearl's fingers clamped around Evelyn's throat. The two girls fell in a writhing tangle to the rug.

The battle was brief. Pearl's grip on Evelyn's soft throat was like steel. Temple's daughter became swiftly unconscious. Martin grinned as he stared down at the disheveled victim.

"Nice legs," he said, dryly.

Pearl cursed him.

"You get busy! Dig up some rope and a gag. And make it a good job!"

Martin obeyed. He seemed afraid of Pearl. When he had finished, Evelyn Temple sagged in an armchair in the bedroom, where he had taken her to tie her.

"O.K.!" Pearl snapped. "Get downstairs and bring up Bump. He'll be along in a minute."

There was an exultant gleam in Martin's sullen eyes the moment he got out of Pearl's sight. He was not the loyal tool Pearl thought he was. He owed no allegiance to Pearl or the masked criminal for whom she worked. Martin's real boss was Hugo Slade, the bearded, shark-toothed spy who paid well the people who served him.

DOUBLE DEATH

THE cunning Martin didn't ride all the way to the bottom of the elevator shaft. He stopped at the ground floor. Turning a corridor, he approached the lobby switchboard where a sleepy hallman was resting his head on his arms.

Martin's tone was friendly. He offered to watch the board while the operator went up the street for a cup of coffee. The offer was not unusual. Martin had done the favor often.

The moment his dupe had left the building, Martin plugged in a cord and called a number. It was a number not listed in the Manhattan directory. The voice of Hugo Slade answered.

Martin reported eagerly.

When he had finished, there was a brief silence. Then Slade gave orders. Martin grabbed a pencil and a small sheet of paper. He seemed to be making a list.

The list was in his pocket when the switchboard man returned. He agreed cheerfully to cover Martin's absence. Martin hurried toward the corner.

Coffee, however, was the last thing in his mind. He hurried toward a drugstore. Two clerks were on duty, but Martin had eyes for only one. His thumb and his little finger made a circle as he scratched his chin slowly. The signal was instantly understood. One of the two clerks moved forward with alacrity.

"Something in the drug line?"

It sounded like an innocent question. But there was grim meaning in the clerk's emphasis of the word "drug".

Martin handed him his slip of paper. The clerk vanished behind a high partition in the back. Martin got friendly with the other clerk. He kept him interested with a scandalous tale about one of the tenants in his building.

When Martin left the drugstore, he was carrying a small parcel, the contents of which the other clerk hadn't seen. He shoved it in a pocket and went back to his elevator post in the basement.

He didn't have to wait long for Bump.

"Didja nab Temple's daughter?" the gunman snapped.

"Yeah."

"Swell! Let's go up!"

Bump's lips curved in an unpleasant grin. He anticipated a torture job. That pleased Bump, especially when the victim was a pretty girl. The car ascended smoothly in the shaft.

Martin's hand left the automatic control lever. He turned slightly, let Bump have the point of a hypodermic needle at the back of his neck, close to the bony ridge of his spine. The piston of the hypodermic pumped a colorless fluid into Bump's blood stream.

The gunman gave a startled yelp as he felt the prick of the needle. It was the only sound he uttered. The rest was choked off beneath the grimy palm of Martin.

DOUBLE DEATH

The drug he had shot into Bump was deadly stuff. Its effects were not permanent, but it was powerful enough to quiet a victim with the speed of lightning.

Bump's struggle ceased almost instantly. He lay like a limp dummy on the floor of the ascending car. Martin left him there when the elevator stopped.

The treacherous elevator man reentered Pearl's apartment. He hurried toward the expectant Pearl with a look of fake worry.

"Bump's drunk!" he said, anxiously "He's been hitting the bottle!"

"The fool!" Pearl gasped. "Of all times to –"

MARTIN had no trouble using his hypo as Pearl turned to race from the room. Her soft flesh took the needle like butter. For an instant, her face looked blank. Then it contorted with rage. But the battle she put up was even shorter than that of Bump. She went suddenly lax in the elevator man's arms.

He carried her to a sofa, dropped her. She landed with a thump that almost bounced her to the floor. Her head and arms trailed toward the rug.

Martin uttered the same sneering remark he had made earlier.

"Nice legs!"

This time, Pearl did not bawl him out. She lay like a dead woman. Martin raced out to the motionless elevator and carried back Bump. He left him in the living room with Pearl. Then he raced to the inner room where Evelyn Temple sat gagged and bound in a wide-armed chair.

Her eyes widened with terror as she saw Martin. Then her terror changed to amazement. Martin had a knife in his hand. But he was using it to rescue her, not to hurt her. He whispered low-toned, tense words in her ear.

"I'll have you out of this hell-hole in a minute! Be quiet, or you'll get us both killed. I'm a friend – understand?"

Martin chafed her wrists and ankles to restore circulation. Actually, he was coolly delaying the removal of the gag in order to give the frightened girl time to recover her wits. He didn't want any hysterical cry from her that might be heard outside the apartment.

His cleverness worked. When he removed the gag, Evelyn uttered no cry. Her pale lips hushed his ear with a puzzled question.

"Who are you? Why did you help that woman to attack me?"

Martin pointed meaningfully toward the lapel of his coat, where the badge of a detective might conceivably be hidden. But he didn't turn the lapel. Evelyn was too excited to notice.

"A detective?"

"Yeah. I had to help tie you up to cover myself from suspicion. I planned to release you later, and rush you to your father – before it's –"

DOUBLE DEATH

His voice broke off. For a second, his face was averted.

"Before it's – too late," he finished, slowly.

"My father? Too late?" The blood drained from Evelyn's face.

"He's shot pretty bad. The gunman got away. We're hoping your father may recover consciousness before he –" Martin gulped. "You'd better hurry!"

"Yes – yes! Oh, come on!"

She caught despairingly at his sleeve. The foxy Martin had no trouble getting her down in the elevator. He hurried her through the dimly-lit basement to the rear exit.

A car was waiting at the curb. Martin's grip tightened as he propelled his victim swiftly across the dark sidewalk.

Evelyn didn't notice how tightly he held her. But she did notice the car. Through the fog that filled her brain, a clear thought suddenly glowed. She knew a police car when she saw one. This wasn't one!

EVELYN tried to break from Martin's grasp. Her heels dug desperately against the sidewalk, her mouth opened to emit a scream.

But Martin was ready for trouble. He shut off Evelyn's scream with the brutal pressure of his palm. She was dragged forward as the rear door of the parked car swung silently open.

Martin threw the girl headlong inside. A gloved hand seized the girl. The sight of her captor froze Evelyn into terrified paralysis.

She was staring at a grinning stranger whose undershot jaw exposed a row of jutting white teeth like the mouth of a shark. An untidy brown beard covered his fat, bulbous face. He took charge of Evelyn with brutal efficiency.

The man was Hugo Slade!

Martin took the wheel of the car. He had stripped off his uniform. He was wearing dark, inconspicuous clothing underneath. No betraying sound came from the kidnapped girl in the rear of the speeding automobile.

It drove to the dance-hall buildings on the lower West Side where Hugo Slade maintained his secret headquarters. Evelyn was carried into the basement through a series of connecting alleys that led from the rear street. Martin remained to guard her.

Hugo Slade's white teeth gleamed.

"Events are moving faster than I had anticipated," he warned Martin in his hoarse, ugly voice. "I'll hold you responsible for this girl's presence when I return. Don't harm her in any way. But don't let her escape!"

Martin's throat was suddenly too dry to emit a word. He knew what would happen to him if he made a blunder.

DOUBLE DEATH

Slade was already leaving. His face turned for a swift instant. A ghastly smile parted his bearded lips.

"I'll be back soon. I'm going to attend to a gentleman in whom I'm most interested!"

Laughter seemed to bubble through his clenched jaws.

"Tonight, I shall take care of the most dangerous man in New York – The Shadow!"

Hugo Slade vanished from the room.

CHAPTER XIV. RESCUE

THE SHADOW, however, was not waiting to be "taken" by Hugo Slade, or anyone else. He knew, from his constant warfare against criminals, that the best defense was attack. Clyde Burke had already visited the furnished room rented by The Shadow as Albert Robinson.

Clyde had been given instructions designed to trap the masked supercriminal who had murdered George Clifford and Carl Ragland.

The Shadow, of course, had no actual knowledge yet of Ragland's death. But from Clyde's report, he was certain the broker had already been killed.

Clyde had found out that Ragland was missing from his hotel. He was able to pick up other facts in his role as a reporter. He learned that Ragland was entangled with a beautiful red-haired girl who called herself Rita Munson.

To The Shadow, the answer spelled murder.

He was convinced that Ragland's body was being held secretly somewhere, pending the final disposal of the corpse in the top-floor rooming-house quarters which had been hired by Betty Gaylord.

Clyde Burke's instructions concerned the room that adjoined the one next to Miss Gaylord. He grinned as he left to take his dangerous post. He was confident of success.

But Clyde was already guilty of a bad error. Like other men before him, he was underestimating the cunning of the shapely Miss Gaylord!

Meanwhile, the quiet Albert Robinson had left the rooming house. He took a taxicab to a spot a block away from the swanky apartment house where Pearl Crawford lived. He was acting on the assumption that Ragland's corpse might be hidden in Pearl's apartment.

The Shadow had little trouble entering the building without being observed. He took a route with which he was grimly familiar – the rear cellar entrance by which Lamont Cranston had been carried off to be "drowned" in the East River.

The service elevator was at the foot of the shaft. It was empty.

The Shadow closed the door softly and took the control handle. The car carried him smoothly up the shaft. Having reached the service hall outside Pearl's rear door, he began to pick the lock with noiseless efficiency.

DOUBLE DEATH

He had barely begun the task, when he stopped. Faint laughter came from his parted lips. The door was not locked! Someone had either entered or left the apartment in such a hurry that they had forgot to lock the rear door.

Lights were blazing in all the rooms. A curious silence filled the place. The Shadow was sensitive to such silence. He could almost hear an inaudible vibration in the air. It was like the pleading echo of a call for help that had long since died away.

The Shadow advanced cautiously. Parting the heavy drapes of the living room with a gentle pressure, he stood rigidly watchful.

He was staring at the unconscious figures of Bump Wilson and Pearl Crawford.

BUMP was lying full length on the sofa. Pearl had slipped partly to the floor. The Shadow, by physical inspection, discovered that both crooks had been drugged.

Only one person could be responsible for what was obviously a cunning double cross. Martin, the elevator operator! But where was Martin now?

A heavy armchair in the bedroom of the apartment drew The Shadow's keen attention. There was a curling bit of yellow fluff on the rug alongside one of the legs of the chair. It was a fluff from a hemp rope. The fragment was sharply cut, indicating a keen knife blade.

Had Martin cut the rope? In that case, a prisoner had been very recently tied up helplessly in this apartment. Was it Carl Ragland; perhaps still alive?

The Shadow didn't believe this explanation. However, he was certain that Martin had double-crossed the unconscious pair on the floor and had made off with their prisoner.

He examined the chair more closely. Swiftly, he changed his mind about the sex of the prisoner. A woman! The faint odor of perfume was unmistakable. A perfume more delicate than the stronger scent used by Pearl.

There was also a thread of pale blue silk caught in a corner of the chair. No man wore a blue silk suit! A woman was indicated. Undoubtedly a blonde, judging from the color she preferred.

Only one blonde besides Pearl was implicated in this baffling criminal case. Evelyn Temple!

The Shadow turned the chair around to examine its back. Having done so, he allowed a hiss of satisfied laughter to escape his lips. His judgment was verified by the evidence of his eyes.

A peculiar jumble of letters was scratched on the back of the chair. The Shadow realized what had caused that bizarre piling of letters. The wrists of the helpless girl had been tied behind the chair. There had been just enough play of her fingers to allow her to scratch with her diamond ring on the varnished wood behind her.

The letters spelled the name already divined by the mental process of The Shadow:

Evelyn Temple!

Musing, The Shadow's mind returned to the treacherous personality of Martin. Martin was in the employ of Hugo Slade! To The Shadow, there was only one correct conclusion. Slade and the mysterious supercriminal in the black mask were enemies! Evelyn had been snatched from one set of killers by another. Her life was in

deadly peril!

The Shadow quitted Pearl Crawford's apartment with soundless haste. He descended in the service elevator and glided from the dark basement entrance in the rear. His goal was a dangerous one. He was racing toward a certain brick dance-hall building in a West Side slum area, where Hugo Slade maintained secret headquarters.

The fast-moving car contained neither the mild Albert Robinson nor the handsome and debonair Kent Allard. Eyes like piercing flame glowed from under the slouch hat of an almost invisible black-clad figure.

The Shadow was paying this grim call in person!

THE SHADOW had barely departed when the uncomfortably poised figure of Pearl Crawford stirred. Her blue eyes opened cautiously. Her uptilted legs slid off the edge of the sofa where Bump Wilson lay.

She leaped to her feet. She had recovered consciousness a moment before The Shadow had entered the apartment, and had heard the faint vibration of his tiptoeing feet against the floor of the corridor. When he bent over her, Pearl's closed eyelids had undergone his inspection without a quiver.

Her will power was magnificent. Being drugged, she had no need to control her breathing. The drug was also an alibi for the abnormal race of her pulse when The Shadow had lifted her wrist. Pearl had been cunning enough to realize this, and to concentrate on keeping his eyelids rigid.

Now, she sprang at the inert figure of Bump, grabbed his hair and jerked his head. Her palms slapped his cheeks with stinging force. She knew that the power of the hastily administered drug was waning in Bump's brain. But he was more sluggish than she; slower to recover.

It took cold water to bring Bump out of his trance. He swayed upright with an oath, his sullen face dripping. A glance at Pearl's blazing eyes and the sound of her expert profanity completed Bump's cure in swift fashion.

"Get up, fool!" Pearl shrieked. "We're in a trap! So is the boss! The whole clever scheme is shot wide open! We've got to lam out of here in one hell of a hurry, or we'll be too late to plant Ragland's body!"

Bump gasped. He seized Pearl's eagerly extended hand to help him to his feet. The two raced from the room.

CHAPTER XV. A TRAP IS SPRUNG

THE SHADOW stood, black and silent, behind an unusual screen. He was staring through a tiny pin-point hole he had pierced in the draped folds of an American flag.

It pleased Hugo Slade to make mockery of that flag every time he entered and left the meeting room of his secret headquarters in New York.

The Shadow had gained the basement room he had discovered on his previous visit in the disguise of a drunken thug. The fake bars that covered the basement window of the brick dance-hall building had swung aside like a gate under his practiced touch. He had tiptoed to the flag-draped screen of the inner room.

Hugo Slade was not visible. But Martin was! The elevator operator was leering at the helpless figure of Evelyn Temple. The girl was gagged and bound.

DOUBLE DEATH

Martin laughed aloud at the loathing in her face. There was a pistol in his alert hand. His gaze never once left the draped flag through which Slade would presently return.

The Shadow had no chance for strategy; no time to delay. Sinister events were due to take place soon in the furnished rooming house where Clyde Burke had been left with certain grim instructions. It was necessary for The Shadow to rescue Evelyn promptly, in order to effect the capture of the cleverest criminal with whom he had ever locked wits.

He could have shot Martin through the frail barrier of the flag, but he wanted no betraying noise. So he pitted his own life against the desperate need for silence.

Ripping the flag aside, he propelled himself headlong into the room like a living projectile.

Martin tried to do three things at once. His mouth opened in a startled scream. His gun lifted level to blast death. He tried to leap sidewise to gain the protection of Evelyn's helpless body.

He failed in all three attempts.

The Shadow struck him with head and shoulder. The cry stuck in Martin's throat. He was thrown violently away from the girl. The crash of his gun remained silent.

A hand of The Shadow had clamped on the small bones on either side of Martin's gun wrist. Martin's finger uncurled spasmodically away from his trigger. His cry of pain was smothered against The Shadow's chest.

The two men fell to the floor in a huddle. Martin tried vainly to grab his fallen gun. The Shadow's toe sent it skidding away. For an instant, he was beneath the writhing crook. Then, with a powerful heave, he upset his man and rolled to his knees above him.

He struck without hesitation. Martin gave a whistling sigh and folded like a squeezed accordion. He went limp and unconscious; but The Shadow took no chances. He tied him tightly with ropes he slashed away from Evelyn Temple. Terror had been too much for her. She lay on the floor in a faint.

PICKING Evelyn up in his powerful arms, The Shadow raced with her to the barred window of Slade's outer room. He swung the hinged bars open and gained the back yard.

Through dirty and tortuous alleys he carried his blond burden, to the car he had left parked in a narrow slum street.

From around the corner he could hear the slow slap-slap of the broad-soled shoes of an unsuspecting cop. By the time the cop had turned the corner, The Shadow's car was moving away at a normal and lawful speed. The cop saw nothing queer about the moving vehicle. In another moment, The Shadow had turned east and was gone.

The fact that Evelyn Temple had fainted made things easier. His plan for disposal of her was a bold one. He knew she was innocent of wrongdoing, and in terrible peril. He decided to hand her over to the police for protection.

Halting his car briefly, he wrote a note in a disguised hand. The paper came from a cheap stationery shop. There were tons of paper exactly like it. It could not be traced. His message read:

Place this girl under protective custody. She is in danger of

DOUBLE DEATH

death from criminals anxious to avoid arrest. Guard her for twenty–
four hours – and I promise to hand over to you the masked–murderer
of George Clifford.

THE SHADOW.

Three or four blocks. from the spot where The Shadow had halted to scrawl his hasty note, he again slowed his car. This time, his goal was a neat stone building in front of whose entrance glowed two green lamps. It was the station house of a downtown police precinct.

The lateness of the hour had turned the street into a ribbon of silence. The green lamps threw sudden weird blackness on the steps of the police station. The Shadow laid Evelyn Temple propped gently against a stone balustrade, the note in her hand.

In an instant, his car was humming swiftly away. There was harshness in his whispered laughter as he raced uptown. He had paid a high price for Evelyn's safety. He had tipped his hand to the police and the public!

Tomorrow's newspaper headlines would be black and sensational. Reporters who knew nothing of the real truth would brand The Shadow with the old and often–repeated charge – that he himself was a criminal, working for selfish and unknown aims. Public opinion would force the police to spread a dragnet for The Shadow's capture.

But there was one police officer to whom the name of The Shadow would bring hope: Joe Cardona. The mysterious voice of The Shadow usually tipped Cardona to the truth, when it was time to make the arrest and take the credit.

The link between The Shadow and the police was Clyde Burke. If Clyde failed, so would Cardona – and so would The Shadow!

THE SHADOW did not enter the rooming house where he had left Clyde. He circled the block and parked his car. He had removed his black robe and hat. They were carried in a briefcase by a mild–looking man whom the landlady of the rooming house would have recognized as Albert Robinson.

The Shadow approached the alley that ran between the rear of the rooming house and the back of the restaurant building. He saw what he expected to discover. A sedan was parked at the dark curb of the side street. The car was empty.

Peering cautiously down the alley, The Shadow's body stiffened. A long plank extended from the roof of the restaurant building to the fire escape outside Betty Gaylord's room. A masked figure was crawling across that frail bridge. He was dressed from head to foot in concealing black.

Behind him he was dragging a heavy, greased sack!

The masked figure vanished into the furnished room window. The plank bridge was drawn back to the restaurant roof by Bump Wilson.

The Shadow retreated. There was method in his behavior. He had studied every inch of this neighborhood like a book. His goal was an all–night cigar store, with public phone booths.

DOUBLE DEATH

He called police headquarters and asked for Joe Cardona; met with bitter disappointment. Joe was not at his headquarter's desk. He had rushed to the precinct station where the unconscious figure of Evelyn Temple had just been found on the front steps.

The Shadow whispered an electrifying command to be forwarded at once to Cardona. He heard the gasp of the switchboard cop. He hung up instantly, hurried back to the rear of the rooming house.

The crook's empty sedan was still parked at the alley exit. Bump had already disposed of the plank over which the masked man had crawled with his ghastly burden. Bump was dimly visible in the alley, staring up at the window of Betty Gaylord's room.

An empty sack fluttered down. It was followed by smaller bags. Bump scooped them up and raced to the parked car in the side street.

He sprang behind the wheel and waited nervously. A grimly held gun indicated what would happen if The Shadow appeared.

But The Shadow had no intention of showing himself at this particular time. Utterly invisible, he was hidden not many feet from the tense figure of Bump Wilson.

He was concealed under the closed lid of the sedan's trunk.

CLYDE BURKE waited in pitch-darkness to hear what The Shadow had warned him to expect – the music of murder!

His ear was pressed to the wall of the room. He had gotten rid of the real lodger by a fake telephone call. The man had departed on a wild-goose chase. It gave Clyde the opportunity to listen rigidly for sounds from Betty Gaylord's room.

Suddenly, he heard the lilt of radio dance music. After a few moments, the music broke off abruptly. It was followed by a brief interval of silence. Then, without warning, a quarrel began in the adjoining room. The voices of two angry men were faintly audible. An oath was followed by a blow.

A muffled pistol shot cut short what was evidently a desperate fight. A body hit the floor with a thump easily audible through the thin wall.

Clyde's jaw hardened. There was a gun in his hand. He opened his door softly and tiptoed down the hall.

Radio dance music was again playing inside Betty Gaylord's room. Clyde knocked on the door. He was tense with excitement. He expected to encounter a masked murderer.

No masked man, however, emerged from the room. The door opened very hesitantly. Clyde's gun was ready for action under the flap of his coat. A girl stood revealed on the threshold staring sleepily.

Clyde gasped as he saw her.

Betty Gaylord had evidently just risen from bed in response to Clyde's knock. Her eyes were dewy with sleep. She had flung a robe loosely about her shoulders, but it afforded her little protection.

She was unclothed except for a black lace nightgown.

DOUBLE DEATH

Burke gulped at the disturbing vision. The girl's figure gleamed like pale moonlight behind the lacy shadow of that exquisite black-net gown. Clyde's face flushed. For an instant, his jaw gaped foolishly.

An instant was all Betty Gaylord needed.

A slim hand clawed at Clyde's wrist. Her satiny arm jerked. The surprised reporter was yanked headlong forward. The girl's bare foot thrust between his ankles and tripped him expertly.

As he fell on his face inside the room, the door closed softly and was locked.

The next instant, a more powerful foe hurled itself on the prostrate Clyde. He caught a dazed glimpse of cruel eyes glaring at him from behind the slitted holes of a black mask. One hand clamped on his throat, the other rose in a swift arc with a short blackjack.

Betty Gaylord had twisted Clyde's gun out of his grip. Unarmed, he tried desperately to ward off the descending blackjack. He was too late. It whizzed past his upraised arm, struck him on the skull with a sound like a bat meeting a baseball.

Clyde went out cold.

CARELESS of the presence of her masked companion, Betty Gaylord whisked the filmy nightgown from her gleaming body. She dressed swiftly, donning a complete street costume, which was available for this swift emergency.

Carrying a small leather traveling bag, the red-haired girl followed her masked leader through the fire-escape window. Both knew they were in deadly peril of capture. A swift search of Clyde's unconscious body had disclosed his press card. The killers knew a trap had been spread to catch them.

The masked killer carried Clyde Burke slung over his shoulder. Halfway down, Betty Gaylord gasped with fright.

"Wait! We've got to go back. We've forgotten the phonograph record! I left it in The machine!"

The masked man cursed with fright. But his fingers closed like steel on the redhead's shapely arm.

"Can't stop now. It's too late! Listen!"

A vague sound was dimly audible in the cool darkness. It was far away, but the grim source of that distant wail was unmistakable. It was a police siren! The police were attempting to close the last link of the trap.

The fugitives fled to the parked car outside the alley exit. Clyde was tossed in the back. Bump Wilson stepped on the gas. The car sped away. A few moments later, a police car braked to a shrieking standstill in front of the furnished rooming house.

Joe Cardona was the first man out. He went like a bullet up the rooming-house steps. One of his men followed him. Others ran to the rear to block the escape of the criminals.

A quarter mile away, silvery laughter sounded from inside a smoothly speeding car. The laughter came from Betty Gaylord. Her crimson lips narrowed with cruelty as she stared down at the slumped body of Clyde Burke. If only The Shadow, too, had been captured!

She wasn't aware that The Shadow was at that very moment within a few feet of where she sat.

The Shadow was still, bodily and mentally, at close quarters with the most dangerous pair of criminals he had ever fought in the interest of justice!

CHAPTER XVI. THE PERFUMED PIT

JOE CARDONA stood staring down at the stiffened corpse of Carl Ragland, in the room the masked man and Betty Gaylord had just quitted.

Cardona's swarthy face was a mask of disappointment and anger. The telephoned warning of The Shadow had reached him too late, because of his absence from headquarters. The killer of Ragland had slipped cleverly through the closing police net.

Ragland's death was a horrible duplication of the unsolved murder of George Clifford. He had been shot through the heart. The bullet had been fired at close quarters. Yet Ragland's placid face showed that death had reached him without warning.

But this time, Cardona was able to glimpse the truth behind a cleverly falsified murder. The police had reached the scene in time to see the cunning alibi arrangements of the vanished killer.

The testimony of the medical examiner was definite. He placed the time of Ragland's death a few hours earlier. Rigor mortis still stiffened the arms and legs of the unfortunate broker. Ragland had been killed elsewhere, Cardona realized. His body had been preserved with ice for several hours. Then the corpse had been secretly transported to the rooming house for a second "murder."

Chunks of ice were still slowly melting in the basin of the lavatory across the room. The time had been too short for them to dissolve to water and run down the drain. A plain-clothes man had found one of the rubber ice bags lying in the alley, where Bump Wilson had dropped it in his hasty flight.

The plank which the masked murderer had used to drag his sacked victim on an overhead bridge across the alley, was discovered by another of Cardona's men. The cop had climbed to the roof of the restaurant building in the rear. The plank had been shoved hastily out of sight under the curved lip of the roof coping. There were grease stains along one side of the plank.

Cardona deduced that Ragland's body had been hidden with the ice bags in a larger sack. The sack's bottom had been carefully greased to slide more easily across the plank.

The method of transporting the corpse to the rooming house was now clear.

The disk phonograph record, which the killer had forgotten in his haste to escape, still lay on the flat turntable of the music cabinet. A slashed fragment of cord was attached to a metal tumbler on the front panel. The tumbler controlled the playing of either radio or phonograph.

Cardona realized the grim function of the frayed cord when he played the phonograph record. Sober-faced and attentive detectives listened.

The same fake quarrel that had preceded the death of George Clifford was reproduced by the whirling phonograph disk. It was followed by the muffled crash of a shot. Then silence. Cardona flicked the control tumbler to the left. Dance music blared innocently from the radio station already tuned in by the departed criminal.

DOUBLE DEATH

The solution of the method of Ragland's death removed the mystery of Clifford's murder. The kidnapping of the young man in the room adjoining Clifford's had been done to delay the apparent death by twenty-four hours.

All alibis were valueless. A hum of excitement came from the elated detectives.

Cardona checked the murmurs with a curt growl. He was convinced at last that Doctor Jasper Logan and the masked killer were one and the same. Designating two men to guard Ragland's body, he ordered the rest to accompany him to Logan's laboratory.

Joe had no real hope that Logan was within miles of his brownstone home. But he preferred action to standing around helplessly. And the actual knowledge of the killer's murder methods might turn up a clue in the sly inventor's home.

Police cars whizzed swiftly toward Logan's house.

ANOTHER car raced northward along dark and deserted avenues.

No sound drew attention to it except the faint whine of its spinning tires. Bump Wilson was crouched behind the wheel. A masked supercriminal and a lovely artist's model sat in the rear of the car. They stared with grim elation at the bunched folds of a laprobe on the floor. The unconscious body of Clyde Burke was hidden under the robe.

The only witness to the Ragland murder would never talk to the police! Nor would The Shadow ever gain an inkling of the amazing truth!

Such were the thoughts of Pearl Crawford and her sinister leader. Neither of them suspected that The Shadow was riding smoothly uptown with them, hidden a few feet from where they actually sat.

The escaping car had driven across town to Park Avenue. It sped north until the broad, swanky section of the avenue ended at Ninety-sixth Street. At this point, the underground tracks of the New York Central Railroad emerged from the ground. The car continued north under the elevated structure of the railroad.

The fugitives were racing through a Park Avenue different from the luxurious thoroughfare it was in midtown. The railroad viaduct filled the avenue with gloomy blackness. Tenements lined both sides of the street. The dwellings became progressively worse as the car approached the Harlem River. A lot of them were unfit for habitation. Windows and doorways were boarded up. The seal of the Board of Health had closed these slum disease spots forever.

It was in front of one of the worst of these abandoned shells that Bump Wilson finally halted. The house was located a short block from the Harlem River. Bump got out of the car and hurried across to the boarded entrance.

He had no trouble opening the sealed door.

The Shadow realized why. His eyes were peering tensely from a tiny crack of the lifted trunk lid. The boards that were nailed tightly across the tenement doorway had been sawed through. The broken ends parted when Bump unlocked and opened the door.

He was inside only a few minutes. When he returned, his hoarse voice was jubilant.

DOUBLE DEATH

"Everything's O.K.!" he growled.

The sedan sped away. It circled aimlessly for a while, to elude possible pursuers. Then it drove directly to the dead end of Park Avenue at the edge of the Harlem River.

Again, The Shadow peered cautiously from the trunk. This time, his breath sucked with inaudible satisfaction. He recognized the dark barrier of a junkyard fence. It was the property owned by the missing Doctor Logan! It was here that the kidnapped witness to Clifford's murder had been secretly held for twenty-four hours!

THE sedan drove inside the junkyard. It was cleverly hidden from sight. Clyde Burke's limp figure was lifted from the machine. He was carried toward the black, smelly river.

A barge loaded with scrap iron was moored at the rotting timbers of the junkyard bulkhead. The barge was utterly silent. So was the black, slowly-flowing river. Clyde was carried down the deck of the barge toward its stern. He was lifted downward over the stern. The three crooks vanished with him, apparently into the river itself!

The Shadow glided after them like a moving patch of darkness. He was convinced that no attempt was to be made to drown Clyde. That was why he had not yet interfered. He wanted no premature discovery of his presence.

He discovered where the crooks had gone when he reached the high stern of the barge. A ladder led downward to a small raft made of driftwood timbers. The floating raft was anchored by ropes between the barge and the dripping bulkhead of the junkyard. It was an easy matter to descend to the raft and step across.

Further progress was blocked by the grated opening of an enormous, old-fashioned sewer pipe.

But the grated sewer entrance was exactly like the boarded door of the tenement house. It was only apparently blocked off. The sewer gate swung easily open on oiled hinges. A water rat sprang out and vanished into the river with a soft plop and a widening circle of black ripples. There was no other sign of life.

The Shadow entered the sewer.

Far ahead, he could see a yellow pin point of light. In a moment, the light vanished. The crooks had left the sewer for another hiding place! The flashlight of The Shadow blinked instantly alive. It glowed like a tiny firefly in the deep darkness. He advanced noiselessly.

The sewer was dry. It was an old trunk line, abandoned from use like the condemned tenements. A more modern sewer, a half mile to the west, served the needs of the city at this point. The tenements and the ancient sewer were destined to be removed soon, to make room for a neighborhood park and playground.

The Shadow's flash showed him the spot where the footprints of Clyde's kidnapers had stopped. His fingers explored the curved wall of the underground route. He found the exit mechanism after a careful search. His foes had made no real effort to hide it. Who would ever want to crawl through the smelly darkness of an unused sewer?

Sliding through a small aperture, The Shadow discovered irregular steps cut in the soft earth. He climbed them noiselessly. A trapdoor brushed the top of his head. He listened rigidly until he was certain that no living soul was above the trapdoor. Then he pushed it gently open.

DOUBLE DEATH

HE was in an empty earth-floored cellar. The atmosphere was stale and fetid. Fresh air had not reached this spot for a long time. The Shadow, remembering the direction he had come from the river, knew exactly where he was. He was in the cellar of the boarded-up tenement where Bump had made his brief and mysterious inspection from the street entrance.

There was only one noticeable object in the cellar. It excited the immediate attention of The Shadow. It was an ancient and incredibly rusted furnace of the old hot-air type, no longer in general apartment house use in large cities. Air was drawn in from the outside and heated. The hot air rose through a nest of pipes, to be distributed to the tenants upstairs through grated registers in the floors.

The slanting metal air duct that led to the belly of the furnace was also red with rust.

The Shadow tried to peer inside the furnace. He was unable to open either the fuel door or the ash pit. Rust had welded the metal solid and immovable. The furnace was cold to the touch. No fire had been built within that hollow shell for years.

Advancing like a gliding patch of blackness, The Shadow searched every floor of the old house. It was empty from cellar to roof. Wherever Clyde's kidnapers had gone, they had managed to find a cunningly invisible retreat. The Shadow returned softly to the ground floor.

Just inside the street entry, he found the clue he sought. There were two sets of footprints on the dust-covered boards of the hallway. Bump had left them when he had made his mysterious inspection from the street.

One set of prints led along the hall to the empty living room. A second set led outward again to the sidewalk. But there was a sinister peculiarity about that inward and outward trail in the dust.

Bump had refrained from walking down the center of the hall. He had squeezed close to the right wall coming in. He had hugged the left wall going out.

The Shadow's sibilant laughter made a faint, rustling echo.

He found what had drawn Bump to the living room. It was a small chunk of heavy rock with a length of rope attached to it. Picking it up, The Shadow used the rock as a plummet to test the center of the hallway leading from the street entrance.

A square section of the floor gave way under the weight of the dangling rock. It hinged downward with well-oiled efficiency, disclosing a greased chute that slanted into pitch-blackness below. The moment the suspended rock was lifted by The Shadow, the trapdoor returned horizontal with the floor.

The scheme of the crooks was obvious. They expected a visitor or visitors! The victims, entering the hallway, would vanish silently underground with appalling speed. And The Shadow guessed where. The only possible place victims could plunge down that concealed chute must be a subbasement dug beneath the earth floor of the cellar.

The chute connected with the air vent leading to the rusted furnace down below. That furnace was hollow! Victims would drop through the furnace – to what?

THE SHADOW was determined to solve the mystery at once. He knew that to do so might expose him to a frightful death. But he knew, also, that to delay for more than a few minutes might mean the torture and murder of Clyde Burke.

DOUBLE DEATH

Once more, he descended the rotting wooden staircase that led to the cellar. This time, he examined with extraordinary care every inch of the hard-packed earth floor. To an ordinary observer, the task would have seemed hopeless. The earth was almost as hard as brick. Feet would leave no more impression than they would on cement. But The Shadow was using his brains as well as his eyes.

He remembered that Pearl Crawford wore spiked-heel shoes on her small, shapely feet. The high wooden heels would leave tiny irregularities, not easily concealed from an eye trained to observation like The Shadow's.

He found what he sought a few feet from the masonry of the left foundation wall of the cellar. The mark on the ground was more like a film than an indentation, but it was Pearl's heel print! The rounded portion was away from the wall. The concave front of the heel print was closer to the wall. It established clearly the direction Pearl had taken. The wall itself had been her goal!

The expert fingers of The Shadow probed patiently for hidden mechanism. It was not easily found. But his brain told him it had to be there. It was.

A huge stone pivoted slowly, disclosing a small recess in which there was a metal lever. The lever moved a larger section of the wall, uncovering a square opening through which a man might easily pass.

The exit was a vertical shaft. It led straight downward within the thickness of the stone wall. The Shadow peered a long time before he made certain that the bottom of the pit was closed like the top. Then he snapped on his tiny torch.

A metal ladder was visible on the inner wall of the shaft. Grasping the top rung, The Shadow swung his agile legs inside. The pit was about fifteen feet deep. No exit below was visible, but The Shadow divined that the mechanism at the bottom would probably be a duplicate of that used at the top. He shut off his narrow beam of light and descended in darkness.

As he did so, he could smell the pervasive odor of perfume. It was not the perfume used by Pearl, nor was it the more delicate scent which Evelyn Temple used.

The Shadow thought instantly of the drug which had temporarily knocked out Pearl and the murderous Bump. But this was different.

Drugs were no mystery to The Shadow. He had a specialist's accurate knowledge of chemistry. The telltale reek of the colorless fluid used to drug Pearl and Bump into temporary helplessness could not be disguised by a counter scent. This odor was nothing but perfume; probably a cheap brand, too.

Moving with absolute silence, The Shadow continued down the steel ladder to the bottom of the pit. In the blackness he searched for a mechanism like the one above. A lever jutted in a small recess of the stone wall. The lever moved a large section of the stone aside. A doorway was disclosed.

Beyond the opening was absolute darkness. Soundless, black, impenetrable! The Shadow stood rigidly, waiting for his eyes to accustom themselves to this inky darkness.

The pupils of his eyes were beginning to expand – when, suddenly, they contracted to mere pin points.

A powerful light had been focused without warning on The Shadow's face. For an instant, he had a blurred picture of a masked face and a pointing gun. Then blindness from the dazzle of light blotted everything into crimson nothingness.

DOUBLE DEATH

THE SHADOW'S gun barked. But the masked criminal in front of him had suddenly squatted down on his heels. A muscular hand jerked The Shadow forward, pulling him off balance. He was tossed headlong forward over the crouched body of the masked man.

He struck with a jarring impact on a steel plate in the floor of the invisible chamber. The prick of a million needles stabbed The Shadow's body. The steel plate was electrified!

The pulsing current that flowed through The Shadow's body did not kill him. But it stiffened his prone body into rigid paralysis. The voltage was high, but the amperage low. It was a clever device to make simple the capture of a dangerous opponent.

Before The Shadow was aware of anything except the tingling agony in his stiffened limbs, he was bound helplessly by an unseen, rubber-gloved captor.

Then, with abrupt suddenness, the silvery laughter of a woman sounded in the darkness.

Light flooded the underground chamber. It disclosed the shapely figure of Pearl Crawford. Her laughter still bubbled with jeering pleasure. Bump Wilson stood alongside her, grinning like a hyena. Behind this pair was a silent, black-clad figure. The man in the mask!

His gloved hands shoved Pearl and Bump apart. He advanced to confront his captive. The Shadow noticed that the gloved forefinger of his left hand was empty

With suave politeness, the masked man began to talk.

CHAPTER XVII. THE GLASS TROUGH

"WELCOME to The Shadow," he sneered, smoothly. "I've long wanted to meet you. As you see, I expected your arrival."

His mocking voice hardened.

"I knew you'd be smart enough to track me here. That's why I was so careful with the top rung of my steel ladder. You shouldn't have touched that top rung, my friend. It released a rather penetrating perfume odor from a special contrivance I have invented. A pleasant sort of calling card – but very unpleasant for you, I'm afraid!"

Pearl giggled. The capture of The Shadow, the prospect of witnessing his immediate torture and death, had brought the blond art model close to the pitch of hysteria.

"One more victim," she quavered, "and we're all set for some nice, clean fun!"

Instantly, the masked killer growled. There was rage in that clipped sound. Warning, too.

"You mean two victims, my dear," he snarled.

"That's right," Pearl said, hastily. "I forgot about the second guy."

But she was lying now, warned by her masked chief. The Shadow knew only one more victim was expected. He was quite certain of the identity of that next victim – just as certain as he was of the real identity of the man in the mask.

DOUBLE DEATH

But he said nothing. He stared about him at the amazing and unusual room into which he had penetrated on the trail of a master criminal.

Taste and plenty of money had gone into the furnishing of that chamber. There were soft rugs, comfortable couches, richly paneled walls. Electric lights glowed softly under tinted shades. A liquor decanter and a box of expensive cigars stood on a small table.

The place was a luxurious suite hidden cunningly beneath the cellar of a condemned and abandoned tenement.

Oil paintings – three of them – on the wall made The Shadow's eyes narrow. All were nude figure studies of Pearl. All were signed with the splashed signature of Mortimer Temple.

"I'm easy to look at," Pearl giggled at the helplessly bound Shadow. "Your pal, Clyde Burke, found that out when he got cracked on the dome!"

The Shadow didn't reply. He saw that there was a dark, circular opening in the ceiling above the electrified plate in the floor. He knew it was the base of the rusted furnace in the tenement cellar above. Down a greased chute and through that hollow furnace, the next victim would plunge.

There was no chance for further observation on The Shadow's part. He was carried by Bump Wilson and the masked man into a rear chamber behind the gorgeously furnished living room. He was dropped on the floor alongside the figure of Clyde Burke.

Clyde was no longer unconscious, but he was completely helpless. Tight bonds made him as stiffly inert as a mummy.

The room was a laboratory. It looked exactly like the one in Doctor Logan's brownstone home. In the center was a machine that made The Shadow gasp. It rose from the floor like the spouted projection machine used in planetariums. It was Logan's war invention that projected a ray of cold, black light!

THERE was another queer object, whose purpose The Shadow couldn't figure. This was a slanting trough of grasslike material, mounted on a wheeled base. It could be rolled freely around the room like the contrivances used to carry hospital patients to the operating chamber.

The masked criminal who had killed Clifford and Ragland paid no attention to this curious, wheeled trough. He strode toward the war invention.

Jeeringly, he explained the truth to The Shadow. The war invention was a complete failure! Its invisible black ray would never melt battleship steel at six inches or any other distance.

But with certain improvements, unknown to anyone on earth but the inventor, that cold, black ray which would presently emerge from the projecting snout of the machine, would completely revolutionize the steel industry. It was the greatest peace-time invention in the history of the world!

The masked man chuckled with vanity. Deliberately, he demonstrated his invention for the benefit of the helpless prisoners. Clyde Burke, who had seen the other machine demonstrated by Walter Starr, the well-meaning young assistant of Doctor Logan, watched with bulging eyes at what now took place.

Bump Wilson, at a growled order from his masked chief, picked up a heavy slab of chrome steel. He could barely lift it. It was clamped in place opposite the snout of the machine.

DOUBLE DEATH

The invisible black ray, focused on the heavy steel plate, made the laboratory seem suddenly chilly. It was like the windless cold from an opened icebox door. It was the only evidence of the unseen ray.

But there was soon other evidence. The steel plate began to glow rosy pink at its center. The pink stain spread out and covered it. It changed to a hot, dazzling crimson. Then the bright glow faded.

The plate seemed exactly as it had been before. All this, Clyde had witnessed in the laboratory of Doctor Logan. Why do it again? – he wondered.

"Remove the plate," the masked man said softly. "Not you, Bump. Let Pearl do it."

Pearl obeyed. She unscrewed the clamps and lifted the heavy slab of chrome steel. Clyde Burke uttered a shrill cry of amazement.

The steel was no longer heavy! Pearl picked it up with thumb and forefinger as if she were lifting a feather. Like a feather, it followed her gesture. She let go of it with a shrill giggle of overwrought nerves – and, like a feather, the thick slab of chrome steel drifted slowly to the floor where it settled without a bump.

It was so light that it was almost without weight! The pull of gravity on it was close to zero!

"Exactly!" the masked criminal said, as if reading The Shadow's thought. "A metal that is now a thousand times lighter than aluminum. And yet it's still chrome steel! The chemical atoms remain the same. Only the steel molecules have been affected."

His hidden voice chuckled.

"Can you imagine what steel like this will mean for skyscraper construction? Beams so light that a workman can lift one with one hand. Streamlined trains and ships, a thousand times more featherweight than aluminum. And all with the strength of chrome steel. Every penny of profit for this magic metal will go to me! Not to the fools I've killed! And speaking of killing fools –"

He motioned to Bump.

"Wheel that glass trough over here. I want to show these gentlemen what the ray will do to human tissue. I mean, the real ray – the one I've perfected in secret!"

THE curious contraption The Shadow had already noticed was wheeled in front of the projector. The Shadow saw that the slant of the glass trough coincided with the invisible path of the black tray.

The hooded criminal took a rat from a small cage on a near-by table. The animal had been drugged. It lay inertly in the curved glass trough – a trough which, the killer explained suavely, was also large enough and long enough to hold a man.

Clyde had already guessed that. His face was sickly white.

Again the queer icy coldness emanated from the machine. Suddenly, the rat's body in the slanting trough began to glow. It became swiftly transparent. It was like a living X-ray picture. Its teeth, its tiny skull, every bone of its skeleton was visible. For an instant, it glowed like white flame. Then it crumbled apart. It dissolved into a tiny pile of ash.

The killer blew lightly at the ashes – and there was nothing.

DOUBLE DEATH

"We'll cremate Mr. Clyde Burke first," said the hateful murmur.

Clyde's trussed body was laid in the glass trough. The black-clad arm of the murderer lifted to the machine. But an unexpected interruption stopped his gesture.

Pearl had screamed shrilly. She was overcome. The thought of witnessing the living cremation of a human being snapped her tense nerves, already close to hysteria.

As she screamed, her eyes closed and she swayed. Bump Wilson sprang to her aid.

The Shadow took advantage of the interruption. He was working with imperceptible speed to free his wrists from their tight bonds. There was a razor blade concealed between his thumb and finger, but he hadn't been able to use it yet. He had spent his time slowly securing the thin blade from a tiny pocket inside the hem of his coat sleeve.

The masked man was watching him narrowly, as if suspicious of The Shadow's quiet relaxation.

Pearl's weakness was the break The Shadow had hoped for. It diverted the masked man's attention to Pearl. Bump grabbed one of her slack arms, the hooded criminal the other. They dragged her with limply trailing feet to the outer room.

They had barely left the laboratory when The Shadow's trussed body seemed to tremble like a leaf from head to foot. His bound wrists jerked apart. Blood dripped from an ugly gash in his flesh. But he ignored the wound. Bending, he leaned toward his trussed feet.

The cords snapped away from his ankles. With a noiseless bound, The Shadow reached Clyde. He freed him with a reckless speed that ripped Clyde's flesh as cruelly as The Shadow's.

But neither man minded that. Clyde leaped from the ugly oval length of the inclined glass trough. He whirled to help The Shadow.

Suddenly, both men froze motionless. From the unseen front room came the sudden crashing of a falling body.

A shrill, male yell sounded. It was followed by a shot. An oath from the masked criminal was cut short by another fierce yell.

The Shadow recognized that voice. It was the voice of Walter Starr, the assistant to Doctor Logan!

Clyde Burke recognized it, too. He guessed instantly what must have happened. Starr's body had come plummeting down the chute from the trapdoor in the tenement house entrance. He had fallen through the hollow furnace overhead.

STARR'S yell echoed shrilly over the crackle of pistol fire. Evidently, the muscular contortion of Starr's body at the moment of impact had enabled him to roll free of the charged electrical plate in the floor. The collapse of the hysterical Pearl had riveted the attention of the two killers on her. The dazed Starr had been able to stagger to his feet and grab for his gun.

He was desperately shooting it out with the snarling murderers of Clifford and Ragland!

DOUBLE DEATH

All this passed through Clyde's brain in the instant that his grim glance swung toward the motionless figure of The Shadow. He received a quick, purposeful nod. The Shadow was already in motion. Clyde darted forward on the heels of his resolute leader.

The ornate living room was a ghastly scene. Walter Starr was down on one knee, firing defensively at the masked man. He had already shot down Bump. Bump lay writhing weakly on the floor in a welter of blood. Almost at his dying elbow lay the still figure of Pearl. She had fainted.

But the masked criminal was still very much alive!

He had skipped with the agility of an ape to the protection of the sofa end. He pulled the trigger of a queer-looking gun. A cloud of vapor spat like a spreading white fan toward Starr. Starr coughed and retreated.

The next instant, The Shadow had ripped the sofa from the wall. His headlong dive brought him in crashing attack against the masked man a scant instant before the flanking leap of Clyde Burke.

Clyde twisted the vapor gun from the murderer's taut grip. The Shadow made it possible by the skillful jujitsu hold he had secured on his squirming antagonist.

There was a doglike yelp of agony as The Shadow's fingers tightened. The masked criminal collapsed. He lay moaning, with the breath driven from his lungs. His diaphragm was temporarily paralyzed. The Shadow had captured him without the necessity of even wounding him. The only visible mark on him was a small, purplish bruise on his wrist.

Walter Starr looked like a man reprieved from hell. He had been rescued from death, but his dazed expression was still dangerous. His gun lifted to cover The Shadow.

Clyde disarmed him before Logan's terrified assistant could pull his trigger.

"Snap out of it, Starr! You're safe! The gang has been caught!"

The Shadow nodded gently as Starr relaxed.

There was a slight smile on The Shadow's taut lips. He issued a low-voiced command. It was pleasantly spoken, but there was a ring of authority in it that was impossible to disobey.

The Shadow asked Walter Starr to explain how he had been lured to the tenement-house trap.

A man's name was pronounced hesitantly by Starr. It was a name that Clyde Burke had expected to hear: Doctor Jasper Logan!

STARR had received a written message from Logan. The note contained the address of a slum tenement on upper Park Avenue, and a piteous plea for help from the fugitive inventor.

Logan claimed he had discovered the headquarters of the masked murderer of Clifford and Ragland. He asked Starr's help. It was Logan's only chance to establish his own innocence and escape the chair for murders he had never committed. He begged Starr to come secretly to the tenement to meet him.

"And like a sap, you came!" Clyde finished, harshly.

DOUBLE DEATH

Starr's frightened gaze turned toward the hooded captive on the floor.

"I still don't believe it's Doctor Logan," Starr muttered. His face was pale, but there was loyalty to his employer shining in his dark eyes. "Logan is a scientist, not a killer. It's someone else, masquerading in an effort to deceive the police."

Clyde reached down to unmask the murderer. But a deft hand restrained him. The hand was The Shadow's. He was smiling as he made a strange statement.

He declared that the masked man on the floor was not Doctor Logan! He proved it by removing the glove from the left hand of the criminal. Instantly, Starr gave a cry. Clyde, too, gasped. He had seen Logan's left hand before he had fled from the police. Logan's maimed forefinger was a spongy pink stump.

This man's finger was whole. It had been cleverly fixed to simulate an injury. The finger had been bent forward and taped close to its base with strong adhesive.

"Who is he?" Clyde cried. The Shadow pronounced a name.

"Impossible!" Clyde cried. "Why should he kill Clifford and Ragland?"

The Shadow didn't reply. Clyde had never seen him in such a queerly thoughtful mood. The Shadow stood motionless for a moment, as if turning various puzzling facts over in his keen mind. Then, with a sudden gesture, he bent and ripped away the concealing mask from his captive.

It was a man whose name The Shadow had already pronounced:

Hugo Slade!

SLADE'S eyes were wide with terror. His bearded lips twitched. His bulbous cheeks were distended as he gasped for air. Clyde recoiled instinctively as he saw the sharklike teeth jutting like fangs from the undershot jaw.

Hugo Slade had found his voice at last.

"I didn't kill Clifford or Ragland!" he shrieked. "It's a frame-up – a lie! I tried to steal Doctor Logan's invention. But theft is all I've ever been guilty of. Not murder!"

His hunted eyes sought the enigmatic gaze of The Shadow.

"I'm innocent – and you know it!"

"Explain!" The Shadow commanded harshly.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE AMAZING TRUTH

THE SHADOW'S command produced exactly the effect he desired.

Hugo Slade stopped his shrill yelling as though he had been doused with cold water. His body had recovered from the paralyzing effects of The Shadow's jujitsu. Now his wits, too, were recovering. A crafty gleam came into Slade's eyes.

DOUBLE DEATH

In a smooth and plausible voice, he began to explain his apparently guilty predicament.

He told substantially the same story Walter Starr had told to explain his presence in the tenement subcellar. Hugo Slade, however, added an important variation. Doctor Logan had not sent any luring message to the international spy.

Slade admitted coolly that he had trailed the fugitive inventor to the shabby Harlem River tenement. He had sneaked through the street entry – and had plunged suddenly through an unsuspected trapdoor in the floor. A greased chute slid him headlong into the luxuriously furnished apartment beneath the tenement cellar.

He paused, watching alertly the stern countenance of The Shadow.

"Continue!" The Shadow commanded.

He had been promptly captured, Slade asserted. He was unable to identify his foe. The foe was a tall, muscular man dressed entirely in black. He was wearing a hooded mask that shrouded his head and face. The criminal had been assisted by Bump and Pearl. The trio had dragged the dazed and helpless Slade to an inner room. They forced a complete change of costume on him.

To Slade's horror, he found himself dressed in an exact duplicate of the disguise worn by the clever supercriminal who had caught him. A mask was drawn over his face and head. His left forefinger was bent in two and glued flat with adhesive tape. Gloves were placed on his hands to hide the fact that his maimed finger was a fake. Then he was manacled.

How long he remained in his dark prison, Slade did not know. But he was suddenly confronted by Bump Wilson. The manacles were swiftly unlocked from Slade's aching wrists.

A gun was shoved in his hand – the same sinister vapor gun with which he had tried later to disable The Shadow, he admitted. Slade was forced noiselessly through a dark, narrow passage and shoved suddenly into the brilliance of the living room.

The first face he saw was that of Walter Starr.

The young man had been lying half dazed on the floor beneath the chute opening in the ceiling. Starr rolled swiftly to his knees and drew a gun. Yelling with terror, he had opened fire at the masked Slade. Not knowing what it was all about, Slade had attempted to defend himself from Starr's mad onslaught. Then The Shadow had intervened. And –

"I swear that's the truth," Slade concluded, suavely. "The real killer escaped by forcing me to wear his costume. He used me for a fall-guy. And that's all I know."

"WHO killed Bump?" Clyde Burke asked, quickly.

"I – I don't know. I didn't notice."

"When did Pearl faint? Was she lying unconscious on the floor when you entered? What became of the masked man? And why didn't you yell or try to flee when your handcuffs were first removed?"

The curt questions were shot at Slade like bullets by the Classic reporter. Slade had no chance to think up quick explanations.

DOUBLE DEATH

"I don't know," he said, uneasily. "I can't explain. I – I guess maybe I was dazed."

His whole story was the fishiest alibi Clyde had ever listened to. He didn't believe Slade for a moment. Nor did Walter Starr. The young man was no longer trembling with exhaustion and fright. A look of grim suspicion tightened his handsome mouth.

"Where's Doctor Logan? You've killed him! Where have you hidden his body?"

From the very beginning, Starr had believed in Logan's innocence. Even the queer journey he had taken with Julius Herzog, to the inventor's temporary hiding place in the house adjoining Logan's brownstone home, did not shatter Starr's belief in Logan's innocence.

The unmasking of Hugo Slade seemed to exonerate the missing inventor. Starr's belief was that Logan, dead or alive, was concealed somewhere in this underground labyrinth by the cunning Slade.

But where?

The Shadow had not uttered a word from the moment Slade had concluded his feeble alibi. He was using his eyes to confirm the unspoken thoughts behind his expressionless face.

He watched the white-faced Pearl Crawford gasp feebly and recover from her faint. She rose silently to her feet in rigid terror, under the menace of The Shadow's drawn gun. Clyde, too, aimed his weapon steadily. Pearl and the snarling Hugo Slade were herded back into the laboratory in the rear.

No one paid any attention to the body of Bump. The Shadow's quick examination had already disclosed that the sullen gunman would need no more watching. He was stone dead.

Pearl tried to vamp Clyde Burke with a demure, pleading smile. He was conscious of her perfumed loveliness. She leaned closer to him with a sway of her lovely hips, as she walked at his side, a prisoner.

But Clyde had learned his lesson in the dark room of Betty Gaylord. A pretty woman could no longer make a fool of him. His gun muzzle shoved coldly at her, forcing her to recoil. She cursed him viciously.

The Shadow strode with quick steps across the laboratory. His goal was the door of a cupboard in a far corner of the room. He had noticed that door earlier. He gave Slade a strange, fleeting smile as he sprang forward.

Slade cried out instantly with a tone of loud certainty: "That's the closet where I was kept prisoner!"

But his face paled when The Shadow flung open the cupboard door. A figure toppled into view and fell to the floor of the laboratory. The prisoner was bound hand and foot, and there was a gag between his swollen jaws.

The man was Doctor Jasper Logan!

SWIFTLY, The Shadow cut his bonds and ripped the tight gag loose from the inventor's distended mouth. Doctor Logan, however, was unable to talk. His body lay where it had fallen. He was only semiconscious. The Shadow's face darkened as he saw the ugly red burns on Logan's hands and feet. The missing inventor had been systematically and horribly tortured.

Hugo Slade cringed away from the angry growl of Walter Starr. Logan's assistant sprang forward, his hands twitching to take Slade by the throat. Clyde Burke stopped that with a curt word of warning. But secretly, he felt like Starr did. Every move The Shadow made was piling up fresh evidence against the bearded Slade.

DOUBLE DEATH

Starr confronted the master spy with grim rage in his voice. He accused Slade of plotting to kill both Logan and himself. He branded him with the death of Clifford and Ragland. Of the three innocent investors, only Mortimer Temple had escaped the spy's cunning death net. Everyone else connected with the black-ray invention was either dead or had narrowly escaped murder.

Suddenly, Starr's voice rose in a shriller cry. There was amazement in that yell. Face to face with Slade, he had been staring at the man's bearded features. Awe and a grimly incredulous horror made his words impossible to understand.

His hand shot suddenly outward.

His fingers caught the untidy brown beard of the spy and yanked. There was a cry of pain from Hugo Slade – then the beard ripped away. A face was disclosed that was a queer lumpy counterpart of another face which Clyde Burke dazedly remembered.

He sprang to Starr's aid, helped to finish the unmasking which Starr had begun. Hugo Slade's white, sharklike teeth came out from his jutting underjaw. They were on a removable, artificial bridge. Blobs of surgical cotton were removed from inside the distended cheeks of the struggling Slade. The scar that ran like a thin purple crescent from his temple past the tip of one ear, washed harmlessly away under the pressure of a damp sponge.

A younger, more handsome man glared with guilty dismay at the stern faces that surrounded him. He was a man well known in the best social circles of New York. A gentleman of charm, wealth and talent.

It was Mortimer Temple, the famous artist!

THE SHADOW had taken no personal part in the wild commotion that accompanied the unmasking of the painter. He had known that Mortimer Temple and Hugo Slade were the same Jekyll and Hyde personality. He had known it ever since he had found a damp blob of surgical cotton in the incinerator chute of Temple's apartment, following the "burglary" by The Shadow himself.

Slade had tossed his ugly disguise down the incinerator when he had fled from The Shadow. He had dealt himself a quick blow on the head, and had received aid and comfort in his role of the innocent Mortimer Temple. The presence of Kent Allard in his apartment had forced Temple's hand, but he had been clever enough to fool his own daughter and the police.

There were other startling facts which The Shadow knew. Facts which prompted him to remain silent now, in order to obtain final proof of the real identity of a cunning supercriminal.

He kept his glance rigidly on the lovely face of Pearl Crawford. He watched every fleeting change of expression. He was unable to detect fear yet. Fear would come later – when The Shadow spoke.

Pearl knew the vicious truth, and so did The Shadow!

Clyde Burke had again changed his puzzled mind. Doctor Jasper Logan was a victim, not a killer. Entirely innocent, Logan's eccentric personality had been used as a cloak by a cunning murderer.

Mortimer Temple, the supposed sucker, was the real criminal! His was a triple role – artist, spy, murderer. As one of the three threatened investors in Logan's invention, he was above suspicion. Pearl was not only his model; she was his willing confederate in crime.

DOUBLE DEATH

All this and more, poured from the excited lips of Clyde Burke.

The Shadow, however, shook his head. Part of what Clyde had said was true. Part of it was false. The Shadow separated truth from falsehood.

Temple and Slade were the same man, he agreed. The respectable artist was the most dangerous international spy in America. For that, Temple would pay the price. He would be sent to a Federal penitentiary for life. But

—

The Shadow's voice deepened.

"Mortimer Temple is not the masked murderer of Clifford and Ragland!"

They stared at him in wonder.

"The name of the real killer is —"

A SCREAM from Pearl interrupted The Shadow's disclosure. She had leaped swiftly backward toward the doorway of the laboratory. There was horror and fear on her lovely face. Her hand moved with the swiftness of a cat.

The laboratory lights went out!

In the blackness there was the roar of a pistol shot. It was followed by a groan, and the rush of fleeing feet. The sound came from near the corner where Doctor Logan had been lying. The feet fled toward the front room on the heels of Pearl.

Who the man was, Clyde Burke had no means of knowing. But he raced swiftly in pursuit.

The Shadow had not seemed to make a single movement. But when Clyde Burke plunged into the dark front room, he found himself behind the steady figure of The Shadow. A flashlight glowed in The Shadow's left hand. It sent a beam of brilliance that outlined with stark accuracy the bodies of a man and a woman who stood at bay.

The woman was Pearl. The man — masked.

His gun spat a streak of scarlet like the darting tongue of a snake. The explosion rocked the room with echoes. But the bullet missed the flying body of The Shadow. He was like a black will-o'-the-wisp, darting with amazing rapidity to the strategic cover the scattered furniture afforded. His answering shots drove the masked man backward to a corner of the room. Pearl retreated at his side, firing viciously.

They were hemmed in a blind alley. There was no way out.

Pearl's revolver hammer clicked on an empty shell. Clyde was crawling closer, wriggling behind the overturned sofa on his belly.

With a scream, Pearl sprang. But her leap was sideways. Her lovely body covered for an instant the crouched form of her masked leader.

The Shadow had no choice to stop the pressure of his finger on his trigger. To be merciful would be to doom Clyde to death from the shot the masked man was aiming at the onrushing reporter.

DOUBLE DEATH

The criminal's slug whined a quarter inch above Clyde's scalp. But the bullet from The Shadow's gun ripped through Pearl's desperately outflung body.

As she collapsed, the man whom she had tried to protect leaped callously over her fallen figure. He made a mad rush for freedom.

His gun butt dropped Clyde in a bleeding huddle on the floor. But he was unable to escape The Shadow. There was a titanic struggle of guns, fists, feet. It ended abruptly with the headlong crash of the masked man.

He had been knocked unconscious, but he was like a coldly wriggling snake which cannot die before sundown. His fingers clenched and unclenched in blind hate long after The Shadow had blown the thin spiral of smoke from his gun muzzle.

Pearl Crawford was dead. Death had drained her beauty. The criminal ugliness that she had concealed in life behind the flawless beauty of face and body shone pitilessly from her hard blue eyes. It was like the lifting away of a mask.

The Shadow was staring at another mask. Leaning over the hooded killer, The Shadow spoke grimly.

"Pearl was the sweetheart of this criminal genius. That is why she helped him plan and commit his perfect crime. The name of her lover is – Walter Starr!"

His fingers proved his statement. Walter Starr was still a handsome young man. There was a faint smile on his pale lips, a childlike twist of his clenched fingers. But the fingers were strong and merciless. His glazed eyes, like Pearl's, revealed clearly the crookedness he had bottled up behind an innocent exterior to fool the police – but not The Shadow!

THE SHADOW explained.

He had suspected Starr almost from the first. Doctor Logan's suspicious actions, his prompt flight from the police, were not the attributes of a man who had murdered George Clifford in a perfect crime.

The hiding of the kidnapped witness in Logan's junkyard was another false move by an overconfident murderer. Logan, if guilty, would never have done so foolish a thing. Who, then, was most familiar with Logan's habits and business?

Julius Herzog and Walter Starr!

The motive of the crimes pointed to Starr. He was familiar with Logan's invention. It had failed. But suppose Starr had built a duplicate of the machine and had made additional experiments in another laboratory? The Shadow acted on this theory.

He was not deceived by the fake "demonstration" that Starr had so glibly performed for Clyde Burke. Nor was he deceived by the bomb which Clyde thought had been planted by Logan.

The whole bomb episode was a cunning device to make Starr seem doubly innocent. Starr had sawed through the laboratory bars. The bullet hole which Clyde found in the wall had come from Starr's own gun. He had hidden the bomb under the floor in Logan's suitcase – another mistake on the part of an overconfident crook.

For instantly, The Shadow had seen the resemblance to the use of Logan's junkyard for the hiding of the kidnapped witness to Clifford's death.

DOUBLE DEATH

Hugo Slade's fishy story of his capture was true. He had actually been hidden in the closet from which Logan's body had tumbled out when The Shadow opened the door. The closet had an inner panel which connected with a passage inside the wall.

Starr had intended to kill Slade at first, but the swift turn of events gave him what he thought was an opportunity to fasten the murder guilt on the spy.

Starr coolly pretended he had fallen through the chute from the tenement hallway. He killed Bump to silence him forever. He fooled Clyde Burke. But The Shadow saw the imperceptible signal that passed between Starr and the blond artist's model. He saw her sly retreat toward the light switch.

The Shadow permitted the maneuver because he wanted actual proof that Starr and the criminal in the black mask were the same. He risked death to prove it. It gave Starr time to mask himself and attempt to blast his way to freedom.

On the laboratory floor, Hugo Slade lay dead. His strange double career as a respected artist and a dangerous international spy was ended. He had been killed by the shots fired in the darkened laboratory. But Slade's death would not be recorded in any newspaper.

Mortimer Temple's reputation would never be smirched.

THE SHADOW'S voice softened as he gave merciful commands to Clyde Burke. Clyde was a reporter for the Classic. He would write what The Shadow wished.

Readers would be told that Temple, an honest man, had lost his life in a brave effort to capture the killer of Clifford and Ragland. Evelyn Temple would be spared the heartbreak of the ugly truth.

The profits from an amazing new invention would go where justice indicated they should – to Doctor Jasper Logan himself! Logan readily promised to carry out the whispered suggestion of The Shadow. The United States would have complete priority for any war use of the new feather–light steel which the security of the nation demanded.

Clyde Burke sent excited words whizzing over a telephone wire to police headquarters. It brought Commissioner Weston himself racing uptown.

But neither Weston, nor Cardona, nor any of their men, would lay eyes on the indomitable figure of The Shadow. He was already invisible when Clyde hung up the phone with a tremulous hand and turned for further orders.

There were none. The Shadow was gone. Unseen, unheard, he had glided from the underground apartment.

The cool darkness of the night swallowed him. The echo of his sibilant laugh melted into silence under the twinkling stars of sleeping Manhattan.

THE END