

The Fifth Napoleon

Maxwell Grant

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The Fifth Napoleon

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. THE CROOKED SHADOW.

Two men were walking with disciplined steps along a broad, stone-floored corridor of the State prison of Sing Sing. Their goal was the office of the warden. The faces of the two men were etched in harsh relief. Their steps made clicking echoes.

One of these men was a convict about to be released. His name was "Lifer" Stone. There was a sneering smile on his face. His eyes kept watching his shadow as it slid swiftly ahead of him along the smooth corridor floor. His shadow was like himself—crooked.

One of Lifer's shoulders was hunched considerably lower than the other, as the result of a police bullet that had ripped into him at the time of his arrest. His shadow intensified this deformity.

Lifer's companion was the head prison keeper. He flushed as he heard the convict chuckle. He knew what Lifer was thinking. A confirmed criminal with a vicious record, he was about to be released in spite of anything the warden could do. Perhaps underworld wealth had accomplished this miracle; perhaps crooked outside influences.

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Lifer opened the warden's door himself. He strode swiftly toward the desk where a tired-looking gray-haired man sat in the slanting sunshine that came through a broad window behind him.

"Hiyuh, Toots!"

The trusties, working quietly at typewriters and filing cabinets, gasped at the effrontery of the grinning ex-convict. The warden's fist clenched and then relaxed. There was nothing he could do now, and Lifer knew it.

"You got a lousy hotel here, pal! I can't recommend the dump; an' I ain't comin' back here no more. I just thought you'd like to know."

"I'm afraid you are coming back again, Lifer," the warden said, slowly. "You're a confirmed and vicious criminal. You're being released to-day in spite of my recommendation to the contrary. If you'll listen to a few plain words of advice—"

"Tell this chief screw of yours to unlock the can and lemme out. That's all I'm interested in!"

The warden shrugged. Advice was futile. His pen scratched briefly, then Lifer signed his name with a scraggly flourish. The warden handed him a crisp five-dollar bill.

"Thanks for the cigarette dough," Lifer sneered. "Look me up, if you need a loan some time. A month from now, I'll have more jack than you make in a year!"

His voice hardened. "And get this, pal! You can tell it to Police Commissioner Weston, to inspector Joe Cardona or to any other damn copper whose health you'd like to protect! It ain't gonna be safe to pester me, see? I got friends on the outside! Figure that out any way you like!"

He turned arrogantly on his heel and followed the head keeper from the room.

When he was released into the outside, he hurried swiftly away through the sunshine, a sinister figure in a cheap suit of clothes and prison-made shoes. His crooked shadow glided ahead of him.

He reached the outskirts of the town of Ossining and moved leisurely along toward the distant railroad station. To his left was a brick garage building with a dingy "TO LET" sign swinging over its decayed front. He reached the corner and was turning toward the long hill ahead when suddenly he halted. A shiver of superstitious awe ran coldly along his spine.

"Lifer Stone! Come here!"

The command was pitched very low, almost a whisper, but it was a whisper that carried dearly to the ears of the released convict.

It wasn't the words that frightened Stone. It was the voice itself. Lifer Stone's own husky voice was calling to him!

LIFER whirled with a frightened oath. The summons came from the head of a narrow alley that ran between the garage and the building next door. There was a man lurking there. Only his shadow was visible, stretching flat and black on the sunlit sidewalk.

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Something about that shadow made the hair crawl on Lifer's scalp. The head was tilted, the left shoulder hunched oddly. Lifer had heard his own voice; now he was seeing his own shadow!

"Lifer Stone—come here!"

Lifer's hand dropped to his hip before he realized he had no weapon. Terror stiffened him. Inch by inch, Lifer forced himself to walk toward that projecting shadow of himself. He peered around the edge of the brick wall—and his mouth flew open to emit a scream of terror.

He was staring at the crouched and motionless figure of—himself!

Before Lifer could utter a sound, the figure in the alley sprang at him. Hands closed on the convict's windpipe, strangling him into silence. He was dragged down the alley with a powerful jerk. A door in the side of the garage wall opened and both men vanished. The door closed.

Outside in the narrow, dusty alley the sunlight blazed as before. There was no indication that anything unusual had happened in this unfrequented part of Ossining.

But inside the garage, Lifer Stone was already unconscious. Strong fingers had probed for nerves in the back of his neck, had applied pressure to them. Lifer was out cold.

His miraculous double sprang away from him and glided swiftly toward a telephone on a wall bracket. Except for the telephone and the grim figure in prison-release clothes, the garage was empty. Lifer No. 2 jerked a watch out from the pocket of his ill-made suit and glanced at the dial. Then he laughed.

He had timed and executed his attack with remarkable precision. It still lacked sixty seconds till the moment when he intended to make a very important phone call.

His laughter made eerie echoes in the empty garage. Joe Cardona would have recognized that sound. So would a score of the toughest criminals of the underworld. Hearing it, they would have cringed. For the mirth that bubbled from those grim lips was the ominous laughter of The Shadow!

As the second hand on his watch moved to sixty, The Shadow unhooked the telephone receiver and whispered a number. There was a brief pause, then over the wire came:

"Burbank speaking."

"Plan complete. Shipment ready. Stand by to transmit order in thirty seconds!"

The Shadow hung up the receiver. The voice with whom he had just talked was that of Burbank, his trusted contact man. Personally unknown to any of The Shadow's many agents in the ceaseless war on crime, Burbank was available at any hour of the day or night for the receipt and transmission of orders. At present, the rest was up to two clever agents who were waiting with a swift sedan not five miles from this garage.

The Shadow glided toward the rear wall. His arm and hand seemed scarcely to move, yet in an instant he was gone. A door painted to resemble stone had slid open for an instant, revealing a small recess within the wall. Then it closed without a click.

The eyes of The Shadow, watching at a tiny peephole, were able to observe the motionless body of Lifer Stone, and beyond him the locked street entrance of the garage.

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FOR not many over five minutes, The Shadow's watch ticked faintly in his open palm. Then he nodded slightly and placed it in his pocket. He had hardly done so when there was a sound outside the garage.

A car was drawing to a stop. A man outside unlocked the street door and slid it open. A taxi drove in.

The man at the door closed it and hurried to the unconscious ex-convict on the floor. He lifted Lifer in a strong grip and placed him in the rear of the taxi. He was helped at his task by the cab driver, a thin, nondescript man with steady eyes.

"O. K. Clyde?"

"All set, Moe."

There was no further talk. Moe slid behind the wheel of the taxi. A lap robe in the back covered the unconscious captive. The garage door was opened once more by the man called Clyde. Moe drove the car out with deft speed and the door slid shut and was locked on the outside. The whine of the taxi diminished down the street.

The sibilant laughter of The Shadow echoed as he stepped from his hiding place in the paneled wall. He knew he could depend implicitly on the loyalty and obedience of those two resolute kidnapers. The thin man at the wheel of the cab was Moe Shrevnitz, the smartest taxicab driver in New York. The other man was Clyde Burke, of the Classic, best known of New York's newspaper reporters.

Both were agents of The Shadow. They would keep Lifer Stone out of circulation, until they heard from The Shadow.

The Shadow did not leave the garage immediately. There was still ample time before the train would arrive at the Ossining station to take him to New York in the guise of Lifer Stone. To travel there in the body and the clothing of Lifer Stone was The Shadow's grim purpose.

His plan was a far-reaching one. It had to do with the criminal activities of a group of millionaire racketeers who called themselves "The Four Napoleons." The Shadow was not deceived by the title. He knew that five, not four, was the correct number of these wealthy lawbreakers. Behind them, directing them, was a Fifth Napoleon!

To find and destroy this Fifth Napoleon was the reason for The Shadow's strange disguise. He was planning to fight crime with crime, to penetrate into the lairs of the underworld from the inside.

There was already another menace to the Napoleons. "Tiger" Marsh! Like the Fifth Napoleon, Tiger Marsh was a criminal enigma to the police. All that was known about him was that he had emerged suddenly as a power in Manhattan; he had given defiance to the Four Napoleons and was prepared to wrest from them the rich spoils of thievery. A vast undercover war impended.

The release of Lifer Stone from Sing Sing was undoubtedly part of the war.

Somebody wanted to use his evil wits and his murderous gun.

But Lifer Stone was no longer headed for New York. The Shadow was taking his place. He was deliberately courting death, and he knew it.

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THE SHADOW slipped out the side door into the alley and began to walk toward the railroad station. It was almost time for the train to arrive when he reached the depot. People took one swift look at his clothing and his pallid face and edged away.

The conductor on the train gave The Shadow a sharp look when he took his ticket. As he moved along the aisle, The Shadow could see him whispering furtively to some of the passengers. He knew what the conductor was saying:

"See that fellow back there in the corner seat by himself? He's a convict! Must have been just released from Sing Sing! You can always tell by their faces. Dead white—like a fish's belly."

The Shadow had used a special bleaching liquid on his skin, to convince people like that conductor. But it would not be so simple when he arrived in Grand Central Station in New York. Unless he was mistaken, Inspector Joe Cardona would be there. Crooks, too; perhaps the very ones who had arranged the real Lifer's release.

With his pallid face turned toward the windowpane, The Shadow watched the landscape fly past. He knew he had deliberately entered upon one of the most dangerous exploits of his whole career.

He was pitting himself against the power of the Fifth Napoleon!

CHAPTER II. DOUBLE DANGER.

RALPH WESTON, police commissioner of New York City, stared grimly at the three men assembled in his office at police headquarters. His mouth was tight, his jaw line rigid.

"Cardona?"

"Sorry, commissioner. Not a single lead, so far. Not even the shred of a clue! Nothing!"

"Judge?"

"No success. I have, as you know, a dozen of the brightest young legal investigators in the city on my staff. They've failed to uncover a single penny of the millions in racket money that we know The Four Napoleons have extorted from frightened business men. No income tax has been paid on that vast sum. The trouble is to locate it—and to prove ownership. Unfortunately, we have been able to do neither."

"Mr. Daniel?"

"I guess I'll have to say ditto. I've got every reporter I can spare assigned to investigate the racket situation. Nothing but rumors, and all phony when we succeed in running them down."

Joe Cardona scratched a match with a vicious spurt and lit a cigar. His swarthy face showed anger. Cardona regarded every criminal outside of jail as a personal insult to himself. He was the city's ace detective, acting inspector in the department, and the strong right arm of Commissioner Weston.

The man called "judge" was older than Cardona. He looked more the student type, as if he had spent many years poring over legal opinions and court documents. But his eyes were like cold crystal. His name was Paul Sherman. He had been appointed by the governor as a special district attorney to prosecute and convict racketeers.

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The third man at the commissioner's conference was Fred Daniel. He was there as managing editor of the New York Classic, the newspaper on which Clyde Burke was a star reporter.

Daniel was a dynamic newspaper man, whose rise had been swift and dramatic. Under his able direction, the paper was waging an aggressive crusading policy against crime and criminals. Daniel was the youngest man in the room; handsome, and alert to his finger tips. He was engaged to marry Judge Sherman's daughter.

The purpose that had drawn these men together for a conference of war was a brief news item from Sing Sing prison. A convict named Lifer Stone had been suddenly released and was on his way to New York. To Weston and Cardona, this fact seemed enormously significant. But Fred Daniel was inclined to pay small attention to it.

"A killer—yes," he said curtly. "But hardly a big-shot. Gentlemen; we're after bigger game than a punk like Lifer!"

"You mean The Four Napoleons, of course," Weston said.

Joe Cardona nodded in agreement.

He was thinking of four ugly names: Charlie Boston; Mike Hammer; Andy Martin; Con Platt. These were the successful racketeers who enjoyed the underworld nickname of The Four Napoleons.

The nickname came from their physical appearance. Pudgy, well-fed, sleek, they preyed on the entire city with four well-regulated rackets. High-priced lawyers protected their gunmen and collectors. Their take ran into millions. Yet none of the four paid a cent of income tax.

When arrested and examined, they showed incomes of less than five thousand apiece, and expenses that left the government owing them money. They had no occupation except to hang around night clubs. Their incomes came from lucky bets at the race track, or so they said. It was impossible to prove otherwise.

None of them had the brains or ability to have organized the vast net of city-wide rackets they headed. They smirked when they were called The Four Napoleons. But they laughed loudest when underworld whispers suggested the possibility of a Fifth Napoleon—a sinister genius of crime who directed their activities.

A Fifth Napoleon?

"Don't be silly!" Charlie Boston sneered at the police, when he was questioned.

CHARLIE was the slickest and most talkative of the four. He was also the fondest of women and liquor. Con Platt was the greedy one. Mike Hammer was the toughest. Andy Martin the meanest.

Their characters and physical appearance were an open book to Judge Sherman. But to find the definite evidence that would smash their rackets and send them to jail—that was something not so easy. In fact, so far, it had been impossible.

It was further complicated by the sinister figure of a rival mobleader named Tiger Marsh. Tiger Marsh was like the Fifth Napoleon, a figure almost legendary. Bit by bit, his name had loomed across the underworld, until now he controlled a mob almost as powerful as the entrenched racketeers.

War had broken out between Tiger and the Fifth Napoleon, for supremacy. Seven men had already been murdered—two of them innocent citizens who had been shot down before they could escape from the

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fusillade of mobster bullets.

Rumor was all that Commissioner Weston and Joe Cardona had to go by. Reports agreed that Tiger Marsh was a tall, powerfully built man, with a shock of red hair, and eyes like blue ice. His place of headquarters, the source of his wealth, were unknown. But his grim declaration of war against the Fifth Napoleon was no secret. Four of the mobsters killed in the last week were members of Tiger's mob."

Joe Cardona had been chewing grimly on his cigar while the buzz of talk went on.

"There's only one way to get a toehold on this case, and that's to find the man that both gangs are eager to hire. I mean to find him—and make the rat talk!"

"Who's that?" Fred Daniel asked in his quiet voice.

"Lifer Stone. He was released from Sing Sing to-day by some crooked hocus-pocus. He's due at Grand Central in a half hour. When he gets off the train, I'm going to be there. I'll have this Lifer Stone in custody so quick that—"

"You can't arrest a man merely because he's an ex-convict," Fred Daniel pointed out with a faint smile.

"That's true. But there are some new laws on the books that will give me a nice handle to work with. Don't forget it's against the law for a man to consort with known criminals."

The newspaper editor gave a brief nod of comprehension.

"I've got a hunch," Joe continued, "that Lifer Stone will be met at the station by a henchman of the gang that sprung him from jail. If the two try a quick sneak together, I'm going to trail them and find out where they go. If they get wise to me, I'll arrest them both, toss 'em in the can and see what a little sweating will do!"

Cardona clapped his derby on his head, nodded a brisk farewell to the others, and left the room with a quick step.

"I'd prefer not to have any one arrested until I have the evidence for a clear-cut case against these killers," Judge Sherman murmured.

"Leave that to Joe Cardona," Weston replied, dryly. "Sometimes it takes an arrest to get evidence. I'm hoping Joe will attend to both details."

THE SHADOW moved slowly with the crowd that drifted up the ramp from the train platform to the vast open concourse of Grand Central Station. He entered the waiting room and began to walk aimlessly about, as though killing time.

Almost immediately, he became aware that a man on one of the benches was interested in him. The fellow laid down the newspaper he had been reading and began to drift unobtrusively across the room.

The Shadow recognized him with a thrill of satisfaction. He was a smooth crook named "Tick" Murphy. The Shadow knew him for what he was—a "fixer," a smart underworld go-between.

As Tick Murphy stepped closer, he gave The Shadow a swift scrutiny. His voice was barely audible:

"Hello, Lifer! Welcome to the big town!"

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"Who says I'm Lifer?" The Shadow spoke briefly from the corner of his mouth. His words were sullen.

"Don't be that way, pal," Tick said quickly. "I've got a proposition for you. Big dough from a big-shot! Let's get out of here and grab a cab."

"Never mind the cab. Spill your stuff!"

Tick's eyes veered nervously. There was no sign of any plain-clothes men around, but he was afraid to linger in a public spot with a convict just released from Sing Sing.

"O. K. We'll talk outside. Tail me."

He handed Lifer a cigarette, for the benefit of any casual observers, and left him abruptly. The Shadow followed. His purpose was twofold. His disguise had fooled Tick, but he was not sure yet whether it was good enough to fool the police.

The absence of detectives in the station puzzled him. He had expected Cardona to be there. He wanted to test his appearance on the sharp eyes of Joe. That was why he insisted on trailing Tick Murphy on foot, rather than taking a cab. He had a shrewd hunch that Cardona was somewhere in the neighborhood.

A couple of blocks to the east, Tick Murphy halted, glanced back, and vanished into a dark doorway. The Shadow did not follow him. He waited outside until Tick emerged, looking angry and suspicious.

"What's the idea? We can't talk out here!"

"Here or no place, pal. There's plenty of guys hate my guts. Maybe your boss is one of 'em. I ain't takin' no chances."

"O. K." Tick shrugged. "Ever hear of The Four Napoleons?"

"Maybe."

"Maybe, hell! It's the biggest mob in town and you know it!"

"How much dough for me if I tie in?"

"Write your own ticket. They need your trigger finger and they'll pay big prices. They have already, dope! Who do you think sprung you out of the big house?"

"I wouldn't know."

"Well. I'm here to tell you—" His voice broke off suddenly. He swore. "Here comes trouble! Watch yourself!"

THE SHADOW knew what the trouble was when he saw a familiar figure walking briskly toward them. It was Joe Cardona.

"Hello, Tick! Hello, Lifer!" was Joe's greeting. "I thought I'd give you boys a chance to talk things over before I laid the finger on you."

There was fury in Tick Murphy's hard smile. But his voice remained calm.

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"Go roll your hoop, dick! You got nothing on either of us."

"No?" Cardona ignored him. He kept his grim eyes on The Shadow. There was hostility and contempt in his gaze. The Shadow knew he had passed the second identification test successfully, even before Joe spoke.

Then Cardona chuckled. He said, "You should have studied law while you were in the can, Lifer. They've passed some neat ones while you were up the river. For instance"—his voice hardened—"it's against the law nowadays for a crook to be found consorting with a known criminal. I'm taking you two punks down to headquarters for a little chat."

"Try and make me talk," Tick growled.

"Maybe you won't," Cardona admitted, with that same grin of triumph on his dark features. "But I'll bet apples that Lifer will! He'll tell us what you were propositioning him about—or he'll go right back up the river! And this time he'll stick!"

Joe crowded close to Lifer and began to frisk him expertly. Tick swayed backward as if he were cowed. Suddenly, his hand darted from his pocket. There was a metallic glitter as his clenched fist struck Cardona a terrific blow in back of the ear.

Cardona went down like a felled ox. Tick slipped brass knuckles from his unclenched hand. They were streaked with blood.

"Quick!" he snarled. "Let's go!"

Both men whirled. Cardona lay unconscious on the sidewalk. Tick was jerking anxiously at the supposed convict's arm. The Shadow had to go through with his grim bluff, or ruin his whole plan of campaign. It had cost him a grim effort not to interfere with the attack on Joe. But to have interfered would have been to tip his fake identity to both Joe and Tick.

He made up his mind instantly, and started to flee with his crooked companion.

It was too late. People had witnessed the savage attack. Women were screaming. Men were racing from the corner toward the pair.

In the quick confusion, The Shadow cleverly contrived to separate himself from Tick. He saw the murderous go-between leap, gun in hand, toward the startled driver of a parked taxicab. The gun went into the driver's back. The car rocketed around the corner, driving people out of its path like flushed quail.

A pedestrian who tried to memorize the cab's number went down in the gutter with a bullet through his body.

FOR a precious second or two, The Shadow was unobserved.

He darted into the dark doorway behind him and raced at top speed to the rear entrance of the house. He sprinted across the back yard and swung over a fence. Down an alley he sped, and through a dim whitewashed cellar. He emerged on a quiet street and glanced swiftly up and down. Then he walked quietly to a light delivery truck that was parked at the curb, got in and drove away.

The Shadow stayed with the truck for ten minutes. He figured it would take that long before the real driver became aware of the theft and warned the police. Ten minutes' leeway was plenty for The Shadow.

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He left the truck in front of a corner coffee pot and went in through the avenue entrance. But he didn't stay inside. He left by a side door and ducked down a near-by subway entrance. Another ten minutes and he was entering a cheap hotel, nodding meaningfully to the clerk behind the shabby desk.

The clerk's nod was as grim as The Shadow's. Everything had been arranged beforehand. The clerk expected Lifer Stone. He handed him a room key, and his voice drifted warningly into the guest's ear as The Shadow bent close over the desk for an instant.

"I've given you a room in the rear. Second floor back, on an alley. Fire escape handy for a quick scam!"

"Swell! What about a rod?"

"Gun and ammunition on a shelf in the clothes closet."

The swift interchange of whispers had taken only an instant. There were a few ugly looking loungers hanging around the dusty lobby of this thieves' flophouse, but none of them showed any interest in the new arrival. The Shadow was protected by the power of Lifer Stone's reputation as a killer with a nasty temper. None of these crooks would butt in on him unless he deliberately gave them the high sign.

The Shadow muttered thanks. With a scowl and a hunch of his left shoulder, he shambled past the elevator and climbed a flight of narrow stairs to the second floor. He inserted his key into the lock and entered a bare room that contained only a bed and a cheap bureau.

The window was open and he glanced out and made sure that the fire escape led to the rear alley, as the clerk had promised.

The Shadow smiled grimly, as he strode to the closet to get the gun and ammunition waiting for him.

But as he jerked the door open he became suddenly still. A man was crouched inside. An automatic pistol pointed steadily at The Shadow's heart.

"Get 'em up, Lifer!"

The face of the man with the weapon was like cold ice. The Shadow recognized a criminal antagonist.

"Back up and turn around!"

A quick palm-thrust along The Shadow's body convinced the gunman that Lifer was unarmed.

"Sit down on that bed. I want to talk to you!"

"Don't get excited, pal," came The Shadow's words in Lifer's tones. "I'm open for a proposition from The Four Napoleons, but not if they're going to get tough about it! Besides, I've already talked with Tick Murphy. You're late, pal."

"Yeah?"

The intruder's gun remained ominously steady. His chuckle was like a croon of death.

"You're takin' a little walk down that fire escape with me. The guy I work for ain't so sure about you. He thinks maybe you might be a stooge for the cops."

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"He must be a sap! Who is he?"

"Tiger Marsh! How do you like that?"

The Shadow didn't answer. He sat perfectly quietly on the edge of the bed, watching the ominous muzzle of the mobster's gun. He had no intention of being kidnapped, and led like a lamb to slaughter.

But he was entirely unarmed.

CHAPTER III. THE FIFTH NAPOLEON.

Four men sat lolling in deep leather chairs in the electric-lit silence of a strange blank-walled room.

The room in which these men sat had neither doors nor windows. They had arrived, one by one, from a secret elevator whose vertical shaft was concealed in one of the somber walls. A certain earthy smell in the air suggested that the chamber might be many feet underground.

Plenty of money had been spent on the arrangements for this snug retreat for crooks. It was, in fact, the focal point of the organized criminal rackets of New York. Police would have had no trouble identifying the four well-dressed scoundrels who sat in their chairs waiting with an air of grim expectancy.

The Four Napoleons!

The man with the expensive cigar in his fat fingers was Charlie Boston, head of the arson racket. Next to him was Con Platt. Con controlled, through his killers and collectors, the rich pickings that came from millions of tons of foodstuff that rolled daily through the freight yards to feed the hungry maw of a vast metropolis.

Mike Hammer took toll from builders and labor unions. Andy Martin was the czar who bled merchants and storekeepers and restaurant owners—and killed them with hired triggermen when they tried to resist his demands.

The secret of their criminal power lay not in themselves, but in the organizing genius of another man. Their glances kept moving toward the blank wall behind an empty desk that stood alone.

They were waiting for the arrival of the Fifth Napoleon.

Suddenly, there was a faint humming sound. The wall behind the desk slid open. It moved slowly because it was made of solid-steel. The hum came from a concealed motor.

A figure appeared. He moved into view like a pillar of crimson flame. He was robed from head to foot in scarlet, the deep color of blood. His face was hidden behind a silken red mask. He wore scarlet slippers and gloves.

For a second, the slitted eyeholes in the mask surveyed the four men in the leather chairs. There was utter silence in the room. Then the Fifth Napoleon glided to the chair behind the desk.

Suddenly, he spoke. His voice was the tremulous, high-pitched quaver of a very old man.

"Napoleon No. 1—report!"

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Charlie Boston cleared his throat nervously. He gave a full account of his activities for the past twenty-four hours and the amount of loot his racket had collected. The robed leader nodded, and made a notation in a small leather-covered book.

"Napoleon No. 2!"

Mike Hammer answered promptly. Con Platt followed. Then Andy Martin. The staggering sums they reported were entered in the book by their unknown leader. He chuckled, and slid the book into a pocket inside the lining of his robe.

"Everything is going very nicely, gentlemen—including the problem of Mr. Lifer Stone!"

AN electric tension seemed to flow into the quaver of the Fifth Napoleon's voice. Whether his extreme age was a disguise or not, he radiated power and triumph. The four rogues who had become millionaires by following his orders and doing his bidding, sat stiffly alert

"As I anticipated," the Fifth Napoleon whispered in his squeaking voice, "Lifer Stone arrived to-day at Grand Central, having been released from Sing Sing by a power he doesn't yet understand. He was met by an agent, who tried to conduct him to us for a conference. That agent failed!"

There was an audible murmur from the tense listeners. To have a henchman fail on a job might be to incur the displeasure of their grim crimson-robed leader. Yet none of the four dared to ask the Fifth Napoleon for the name of the culprit.

"The penalty for failure is death!" the ugly whisper continued. "Let it be a warning for the future. The agent who failed us has been traced and is dead! Forget him and listen carefully to what I have to say."

For the next few minutes, the four pudgy racket leaders listened to an amazingly accurate account of what had happened to Lifer Stone, from the moment he had arrived at Grand Central up to the instant he had fled from the unconscious body of Joe Cardona.

"I'm not at all sure about this man Lifer," the Fifth Napoleon continued, harshly. "His actions since his release from jail have been peculiar. I suspect the influence of a powerful opponent, who has sworn he intends to destroy us and take over the profitable rule of the underworld in this city."

"Tiger Marsh!" Charlie Boston snarled.

"Exactly! Have any of you found out anything definite about Tiger's physical appearance or where his headquarters may be?"

There was silence, until Mike Hammer spoke.

"Nothing," he growled, "except the rumors I've already reported to you. Tiger is supposed to have made millions racketeering in Detroit. He's tied up every crook in the city who isn't already a member of our organization. We've tried to bribe some of them to get a line on his headquarters. No luck on that. Either they don't know, or they're afraid to tell.

"As for the appearance of Tiger—the rumors say that he's a tall man, with flaming-red hair and deep-blue eyes."

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The robed leader took a sheet of paper from his desk and tore it slowly into four equal pieces. He scrawled a mark on one of them, folded the four scraps of paper and shuffled them. Then he handed a paper to each of his four lieutenants.

They examined them carefully, each shielding his own in the hollow of his palm. It was impossible to tell from their expressions who had received the marked paper.

"The man who has received the black cross," the Fifth Napoleon said, "will find and bring here, to this headquarters the convict known as Lifer Stone. I want to see him face to face. If he really intends to work for us, as he promised, I want to know that. If he's a treacherous liar and is already hooked up with Tiger Marsh, I have the instruments of torture to find out."

"Do you think it's safe to bring him here, even blindfolded?" Con Platt asked.

The Fifth Napoleon's laughter was shrill.

"Lifer will be subjected to scientific deception every moment of the time he is here. The earthy odor from those concealed air vents will tell him instantly that he is in a cavern deep under the earth. The elevator in which he will be brought here is a modern one, completely enclosed. It will be impossible for him—even if he were not blindfolded—to know whether he is going up or down! We've made tests ourselves and we know!

"Then there's the little matter of the subway train overhead."

His crimson hand moved out of sight under the edge of his desk. He pressed a concealed button. It was an exact duplication of the thunderous roar of a subway train. The Fifth Napoleon waited an instant, then he pressed a second button. The roar of the train was repeated—only, this time, it was a train passing overhead from the opposite direction.

Con Platt chuckled; he was satisfied. So were the others.

THE Fifth Napoleon rose from his desk. He glided toward the wall opposite the spot where the elevator shaft was concealed. There was a small knob projecting from the surface and the crimson-robed leader moved it with a deft twist of his gloved hand.

Instantly, a panel slid aside, and brilliant sunlight flooded the dimly lit chamber. A window was revealed. Beyond the window was the open sweep of blue sky and the distant pinnacles of tall skyscrapers.

"Thirty-five stories in the air," the Fifth Napoleon muttered. "I defy Lifer Stone or any one else to discover the truth!"

The deceptive panel over the window closed without sound. The Fifth Napoleon went back to his desk. Under his blood-red robe and mask he walked with the solid tread of a young, heavily built man. But his bent shoulders and the thin squeak of his voice told a different story.

The true secret to his hidden identity was unknown to the four well-fed lieutenants who served him.

They waited to be dismissed from the conference. One of them was charged with the task of bringing Lifer Stone back to this sinister room.

"Napoleon No. 1!" the thin voice said.

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Charlie Boston rose without a word and left the room by the secret elevator. Five minutes passed.

"Napoleon No: 2!"

Mike Hammer departed with the same absolute silence. Then Con Platt left; and after him, Andy Martin.

The Fifth Napoleon rose slowly to his feet. He glided toward the wall at the rear of his desk. He lifted no hand, made no motion whatever, yet there was a faint whirring sound and the steel barrier slid aside. His scarlet robe vanished and the wall again became blank and solid.

He left behind only the echo of a laugh. There was no squeak in it, no thin quaver of an aged man. It was deep, full-toned, filled with the strength of youthful lungs.

The Fifth Napoleon was far from decrepit, either physically or mentally. Had The Shadow heard that challenging laugh he would have known instantly he was facing the hardest battle of his career—against a genius of crime in the prime of life!

CHAPTER IV. FLAME AND WATER.

THE SHADOW, at this precise instant, was facing death from an automatic.

Opposite him in a cheap hotel room stood a tensed killer. The gunman was a henchman of Tiger Marsh. He stared along the barrel of his weapon at the fake Lifer Stone.

"Get up off that bed! Walk over to the window!"

The Shadow got up slowly. He was trying to bluff for time. He kept his gaze away from the closet door, where he knew a loaded gun was lying waiting for him on the top shelf.

The mobster's gun jerked sideways.

"Take it nice and slow over to that window. Down the fire escape to the alley. There's a guy waitin' below—so no monkey business, if you wanta meet Tiger Marsh in one piece!"

There was no chance whatever for The Shadow to make a dive for the closet door and his waiting gun. He stepped over the window sill to the fire-escape platform. The back alley was deep in shadow. Across a rear yard was the blank brick surface of a warehouse wall. Down below, a man waited in the shadow of the wall. His gun made a lump under the loose flap of his unbuttoned coat.

The Shadow reached the bottom fire-escape platform. He dropped ten feet to the pavement of the alley. The man below sprang close. A gun stuck grimly into The Shadow's ribs.

"O. K. Digger?" the second thug whispered.

"Yeah. Let's go!"

They squeezed past a pile of empty ash cans and out into the sunlight of a side street. Cars were parked along the curb, and there were a few pedestrians moving in both directions. But no one noticed anything peculiar about the three men who walked so closely together toward a sedan that was waiting at the curb.

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"In!" "Digger" said. "Eddie, you take the wheel. I'll shove this mug in the back."

Suddenly, The Shadow seemed to collapse. His body dropped to the pavement. He had heard the ominous roar of an approaching automobile. Out of the corner of his eye, he had seen the jutting muzzle of a Tommy gun.

Digger saw it an instant after The Shadow. He screamed a shrill warning to Eddie. Their guns swung upward.

But the split-second of delay was all the hijacking car needed. The scarlet flare from the pistols of Tiger Marsh's henchmen was drowned in the stuttering pap-pap-pap of the Tommy gun. Digger's bullet shattered a second-story window in the building opposite. Eddie had no chance to fire at all.

He pitched headlong to the sidewalk, his face streaming blood. Digger whirled, took three drunken steps toward the alley and went down like a bundle of rags.

The orders of the Fifth Napoleon were being grimly carried out by sharp-shooting hijackers. They had no intention of losing Lifer Stone to Tiger Marsh.

THE thug with the Tommy gun sprang to the pavement and began to rush toward The Shadow.

It was a bad mistake. While Eddie was gasping his last breath, The Shadow was rolling behind his prone body, snatching the pistol from his limp hand.

He used Eddie's dead body as a horizontal shield. Slugs ripped over The Shadow's head and spattered against the brick wall behind him. But The Shadow's gun was blazing now. It roared twice—so fast that the two shots sounded like the long-drawn echo of one.

A blue hole flicked into the forehead of the advancing killer. Another bullet ripped away two front teeth and crashed through the back of his skull.

The Tommy gun fell from his hands. He stood swaying on his toes for a, ghastly instant. Then he was down and The Shadow was racing toward the hijacker's car. The Tommy gun was cradled at his chest for fast shooting.

A bullet whistled past The Shadow's ear. Another singed the flesh of his bent forearm. But the chauffeur of the mobster sedan was firing wildly. Before he could steady his aim, he crumpled under the wheel of the car.

The Shadow tossed the smoking Tommy gun inside the back of the sedan. He grasped the wheel. A kick of his foot and the idling motor roared. He pushed out the body of the chauffeur.

He was still in a desperate predicament. Down the street a policeman was racing swiftly forward. The Shadow sent two bullets from Eddie's pistol at the panting bluecoat. He fired high. His purpose was merely to slow up the cop and force him to take cover.

He succeeded in this strategy. The cop pivoted and threw himself behind the protection of an ash can.

Straight eastward The Shadow drove, roaring recklessly through avenue traffic. Behind him, he heard the explosion of pistol fire. A taxicab had taken up the dangerous chase. The cop whom The Shadow had momentarily outwitted was hanging precariously to the running board of the taxi, pumping bullets toward the vanishing sedan.

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From the avenue The Shadow had just crossed came the sound of a screaming siren. A police car, attracted by the shooting, was racing to the aid of the lone bluecoat on the taxi's running board.

The Shadow knew he was pocketed. Four blocks ahead of him were the piers and wharves of the East River. A turn north or south into the heavy traffic of trucks and drays would mean almost instantly a crashing collision and the end of The Shadow's life in a hail of police gunfire.

The cops had recognized the chemical "prison pallor" of the fugitive's face. They had noted the crooked left shoulder. They had recognized Lifer Stone, a convict for whom a general police alarm was out for the assault on Inspector Cardona.

The Shadow gave them no chance to close up the gap of a block or so that separated pursuers and pursued. As he whizzed toward the East River, he increased his reckless speed. He drove onto a wharf at sixty miles an hour.

Longshoremen and stevedores sprang aside with oaths of terror as the roaring sedan raced straight for the stringpiece at frightful speed.

The Shadow's face peered sideways for the space of a split-second. He saw a gravel barge moored in the slip alongside the shore end of the pier. In another instant, the sedan struck the stringpiece at the end of the pier with a crash that blew out both front tires.

The car bounced upward. It flew far out over the surface of the river, turning completely over in mid-air. It struck upside down with a tremendous splash.

THE SHADOW braced himself for that splash. He had wriggled upright as the car turned over. He was clutching the sill of the opened window as it struck the water. He could feel the tremendous impact and the swift roaring of bubbles past his submerged ears.

One leg was already outside the window frame, but The Shadow still hung grimly to his grip. He wanted to sink deep with the car before he let go. To rise too swiftly to the surface would ruin his intent.

He felt a heavy jounce as the roof of the overturned car struck the bottom. Black mud swirled past his wide-open eyes. He dived free, avoiding the miry bottom below him.

He swam toward the overhang of the pier; using a powerful breast stroke to pull him along under the surface of the water. His legs thrashed without a stop until his lungs were almost bursting. He expelled the air slowly until a sudden upward tilt brought his head above water.

He was in profound darkness under the flooring of the pier. Beside him was the black hull of the gravel barge. He could hear faint yells and the thump of racing feet on the planks above his head. Cops and longshoremen were racing toward the stringpiece where the sedan had made its fatal plunge.

The Shadow took a deep breath. Again he dived. He swam around the stern of the barge, keeping well below the surface. Between the barge's stern and the piling that protected the end of the slip was a scummy space of water about two feet wide. The head of The Shadow emerged in this tiny area. He glanced upward.

No faces were visible from either the stern of the barge or the street. Every one within earshot had rushed out to the end of the pier, drawn by the tremendous splash of the wrecked sedan.

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A rope dangled from the barge. It didn't quite reach the level of the water, but The Shadow, by a quick thrash of his powerful legs, managed to catch the dangling end and hold tight. He went hand over hand up the rope.

The squat structure of the barge's cabin shielded his dripping figure from the pier. He rolled out of sight behind the coaming. But only for an instant.

Crawling swiftly on hands and knees, he reached the open hold, where tons of gravel lay. He squirmed over a timber and let himself drop. The loose gravel slid away under his feet like polished rice. Lying flat, he burrowed deeper.

The gravel slid over him, hiding him completely. He kept his palms over his mouth and nose so that he might have a tiny pocket in which to breathe.

He could hear shouts and orders from the distant pier head. Out there, police were diving into the river in a grim search for the drowned body of Lifer Stone. Cramped, bruised and aching, The Shadow smiled. He closed his eyes and relaxed his muscles in order to conserve his tired strength.

CHAPTER V. SPIDER AND FLY.

"I THINK you're being utterly ridiculous! What's wrong with Charlie Boston?"

Ethel Sherman stared angrily at her father as she asked the question. Judge Sherman was angry, too, but he repressed it with a grim effort.

"I don't like to have friends tell me that they've seen you dancing at a night club with a man who's a notorious criminal."

"Charlie Boston a criminal?" Ethel echoed, indignantly. Then she laughed. "Really, father, just because you've been appointed a special district attorney is no reason to lose your sense of proportion. Charlie wouldn't hurt a fly! He's a perfect gentleman and an excellent dancer! Everybody calls him Napoleon because he's such a fat, pompous little fellow. I think he's cute. I like to dance with him—and I'm not going to be bundled off to Washington like a silly schoolgirl."

Judge Sherman shrugged helplessly.

"Ask Fred, if you don't believe me," he said. "Fred is an experienced newspaperman and he knows exactly what Boston is. That's why I asked him to come here to reason with you."

Fred Daniel's dark eyes looked unhappy as the girl swung scornfully toward him.

"It's true," he said in a low voice. "This fellow Boston is a well-known crook. For you to be seen dancing in public with him is—like playing with fire!"

"So I'm playing with fire, eh?" Ethel's voice rose. "Whose fault is that, Fred? Have you taken me out lately? We're supposed to be engaged, but from the look of things—"

"Ethel!" Fred Daniel cried. "You don't mean that!"

"I do! I never see you! Busy, busy, busy! You think more of your job as managing editor of that silly old Classic than you do of me! You won't take me dancing, and you won't let any one else. Well, I'm not going to

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Washington, even if you are jealous of Charlie Boston!"

Fred Daniel's good-looking face flushed. He started to make a quick rejoinder, when a look from Judge Sherman stopped him.

"You'll really have a good time," Sherman told his daughter, with gentle persuasion. "Milly is your best girl friend. You've told me yourself what a good sport she is. Why not do this just to please me? It will only be for a couple weeks."

Ethel hesitated. Then, suddenly, to the amazement of both men, she smiled. She leaned forward and kissed her father.

"You're right! I'm sorry I've made such a fuss. I haven't seen Milly in ages. It will be fun to visit her!"

She turned and went up the stairs. They could hear her calling gayly to her maid to pack her traveling bag. Fred Daniel was still puzzled by the swift change in his fiancée's demeanor. But Ethel's father chuckled.

"I know her better than you, Fred. She's as changeable as a weathervane. All she needed was a little persuasion. I do wish, however, that you'd show her little more attention when she returns from her trip. You really have been devoting too much attention to your job on the newspaper."

Fred Daniel nodded.

"This racket prosecution has had me up to my ears in work. If we could only get a lead! We've doubled our newspaper reward for information concerning The Four Napoleons and this blasted Tiger Marsh, and nothing happens. There isn't a crook in the underworld who dares open his mouth. And I'm worried about Ethel. If she were kidnaped—"

"Why should any one kidnap her?"

"You never can tell, when two powerful gangs are battling for supremacy. They might use her—either the Napoleon outfit or Tiger Marsh's gang—as a hostage to hold off prosecution by the police."

"Forget it! That's nonsense!" Sherman murmured.

"You're probably right, sir. I guess I'm getting a swell case of jitters from overwork."

BOTH men smiled. However, they would not have felt so easy about the problem of the girl upstairs, had they known the real reason why she had changed her mind so suddenly. She was still angry at her fiancé and her father, and still grimly determined not to go to Washington for an enforced vacation.

Her father's reference to the fact that her friend Milly was a good sport, was what had changed Ethel's mind. A plan had shaped itself instantly in the mind of the headstrong girl. She'd let Milly help her out. A long-distance telephone call from Newark would do the trick nicely.

Ethel Sherman had admitted readily to her father that she had gone dancing many times with the smooth Charlie Boston. But she had held back one important piece of information. She had a date with Charlie in New York this very night. She intended to keep that date. It would serve her father right, she thought, for trying to bully her.

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Such were the thoughts of the silly girl as she came gayly down the broad staircase with her traveling bag. She felt like the heroine of a movie. She'd have a wonderful time, dining and dancing in New York for a week or so with pleasant companions. She'd live in a quiet hotel under an assumed name—and good-natured Charlie Boston would take her to some of the exciting places she'd always wanted to see. Prize fights, burlesque shows—things like those.

A taxicab took the smiling trio to Pennsylvania Station. Judge Sherman saw that his daughter was comfortably settled in her Pullman. Fred Daniel bought her magazines and candy. They stood on the lower platform waving a pleasant farewell as the train pulled out.

The instant the train was in motion, Ethel Sherman had rung for the porter. She gave him a five-dollar bill and showed him her luggage.

"I'm leaving the train at Newark," Ethel said. "I want you to take charge of my bags. When the train gets to Washington, a girl friend of mine will meet you at the station and take the baggage. I'll telephone your number ahead so that she can't miss you. Just wait on the platform until she comes."

"Yas'm."

In a few more minutes, the train halted alongside the narrow overhead platform at Newark. Ethel Sherman rose quietly and got off. She found an isolated telephone booth in a far corner of the station. She put through a long-distance call to Washington. When she finished talking, her eyes were shining. Millie was a good sport. She giggled excitedly and promised to do what Ethel asked.

Then Judge Sherman's headstrong daughter put through another call. This time, she telephoned to near-by Manhattan. The curt voice of Charlie Boston answered. His voice changed miraculously when he understood who was on the wire. He became affable, jovial.

"Where are you, babe? I thought we had a date for to-night?"

"We have, silly! That's why I'm calling you. I'm over in Newark."

"What the dickens are you doing over there?"

"It's a long and amusing story," Ethel giggled. "I'll tell you all about it when I see you. How about meeting me at the Hudson Terminal in twenty minutes? I'm taking the Tube back."

"O. K. babe. I'll be there. You can depend on old Uncle Charlie Boston—Good-time Charlie, that's me!"

His throaty laughter sounded pleasant and reassuring to the excited girl. She hung up and left the booth. She felt more and more like a movie heroine about to start on a highly romantic adventure. Charlie Boston wasn't exactly a handsome hero, but he was better than nothing.

ETHEL took the Hudson Tube back to New York. Charlie Boston was waiting for her at the exit gate.

They found a secluded bench in a dark corner of the station, and Charlie listened attentively to the girl's explanation of her fake trip to Washington and her swift return from Newark. A sultry gleam came into his creased eyes. He masked it instantly by dropping heavy eyelids.

"Can you trust this girlfriend of yours to drop a telegram to your man and cover your alibi?"

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"Of course!"

"That's swell!" He began to laugh softly, patting her arm with a gesture of amusement and admiration.

"Will you take me to all those interesting places you promised?"

"I sure will!" His eyes flicked toward her innocent profile. "Say—where are you going to stay?"

"I've got my plans all figured out." Ethel mentioned a sedate woman's hotel on the West Side. "I've always wanted to live in a hotel. I've got plenty money to carry me for a week or two. I'll buy a suitcase and some more clothes—and then—night clubs, and lots of excitement, eh, Charlie?"

"Right!" he said. "Let's go."

An hour or so later, Charlie left Ethel at the entrance of the highly respectable woman's hotel she had selected as her residence while she was on her reckless vacation in New York. She carried a brand-new bag, with a complete new outfit of clothing. On a slip of paper in Charlie Boston's pocket was the fake name Ethel Sherman was going to use.

"To-morrow night at eight?" she whispered.

"Right!"

They pressed hands briefly, and Charlie did a discreet sneak before the doorman got too close to him. He walked rapidly for a block or two, his eyes hard, his mouth strained. He could feel perspiration on the palms of the hands clenched in his pockets. But there a triumphant twist to Charlie Boston's tight mouth.

He took a cab to a midtown bar and grill and walked through to a rear room. The door in the back was locked, but Charlie had a key that took care of that. No one in the grill paid any attention to him, though every one of the tough-looking loungers recognized him.

There was nothing in the back room but a couple of chairs, a table and a telephone. Charlie Boston sunk his fat lips into the transmitter and called a number in a low voice.

He was answered almost immediately by the quavering, high-pitched tones of the Fifth Napoleon.

Grimly, Charlie told his criminal master what had happened. He gave the name of the hotel, the assumed name that Ethel Sherman had taken. He told of Milly and the airtight alibi in Washington.

"You've done excellently!" the quavering voice on the wire replied. "In the meantime, act discreetly so as not to alarm the girl and put her on her guard."

"Don't worry," Charlie Boston grinned. "Dames are my specialty—I know how to handle them!"

He hung up with a shaky hand. Women were Charlie's one weakness. The memory of Ethel's pretty face conjured up a pleasant picture in Charlie's mind.

He locked the door of the little room behind him, and had several drinks at the bar. It was after midnight before he climbed unsteadily into a taxicab and drove to his expensive private home on the West Side.

CHAPTER VI. TIGER'S PREY.

THE neighborhood where Charlie Boston lived was a quiet one. His house was a plain three-story brownstone dwelling, like the other respectable dwellings that lined both sides of the block. The only difference between them was that Charlie's house was detached from the rest of the row. An alley—barred with a gate—on either side led to the rear.

The key to those alley gates was in Charlie's pocket. He made sure they were locked before he went up the front stoop.

There were a few envelopes lying on the table in the front hall. One of them had no address on it and bore no stamp. He ignored the others and ripped this one open; It contained a five-hundred-dollar bill. He grinned, and slipped the bank note into his pocket.

Moving down the dimly lighted hall, he made for the closed door of the living room. His bodyguard, "Butch," would be waiting there, playing a sleepy game of solitaire. The pudgy racketeer wanted to ask Butch who had brought the envelope with the five hundred dollars. There were so many suckers who paid weekly tribute for protection that it was hard to keep track of them all.

But Charlie's grin faded from his lips as he opened the heavy door that closed off the living room from the hall. The room was pitch-dark. Anger made Charlie's voice curt.

"Hey, Butch! You asleep, you lazy bum?"

There was no answer. Charlie's hand felt for the wall switch, then suddenly halted. There was something ominous about that silence. It was not like Butch to doze over a deck of cards. And why should he turn the light out?

Charlie stood perfectly still, both hands sliding toward his pockets. A gun tightened grimly in his right hand. His left clutched a tiny electric torch. He took a noiseless step forward into the darkened room.

The bright beam of his torch threw a revealing pencil of light. The light quivered, Charlie Boston uttered a shrill oath of fright. Butch was lying flat on his back on the floor, with his dead eyes wide open toward the ceiling. There was crimson ooze on his forehead, where a heavy-caliber bullet had drilled through the bone.

Boston had barely uttered his gasp of fright when from a dark corner of the room came a scarlet spurt of flame from a silenced gun. The bullet that whizzed toward the startled racketeer knocked the flashlight from his numb grasp. The light went out, plunging the room into utter blackness.

The blackness was only momentary. The bright dazzle of a second electric torch cut a tunnel of sharp, revealing light. It focused on the eyes of Boston, blinding him utterly. Even had he been able to see, he would not have recognized his foe. The killer's face was a white blur behind a handkerchief mask.

"Take it, you punk!" a deep voice snarled.

The silenced gun made a faint plopp! in the room. Boston reeled back against the wall and dropped his weapon. He tried to clutch weakly at the wall as he fell. Death overtook him before he could complete the gesture. He struck the floor in a sodden heap.

THE killer wasted no time examining the body of the victim. With a hissing breath of triumph, he hurdled the

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limp form of Boston and approached a card table. He scattered some of the cards on the floor. He overturned chairs and smashed a couple of whisky glasses.

Then he darted back to Charlie Boston and banged the racketeer's dead hand against the wall until he skinned the knuckles.

He wanted the scene in the room to resemble the grim end of a quarrel over a card game. When he had satisfied himself that the picture was good enough to fool the police, he fired a shot from Butch's pistol into a sofa pillow. He did the same with Boston's weapon.

Powder marks dappled the pillow, but the killer intended to take that revealing piece of evidence with him. What he was leaving for the police to find was a bullet hole without powder marks in the back of the sofa. He left another one in the wall just above the spot where Charlie Boston lay.

In the darkness, The murderer's feet made no sound. The only evidence of movement in the room was the tiny beam from his powerful torch. It skipped along the wall and hesitated on the surface of a silken tapestry. A gloved hand drew the tapestry aside. Behind it was a small steel safe door sunk flush with the surface of the wall.

The gloved hand of the killer began to spin the dials of the safe. In a moment or two there was a slight click, and the door swung open. The light from the torch probed into the hollow of the open safe, and again the killer chuckled.

From the safe he took a queer haul. It seemed an insignificant reward for so daring and brutal a double murder. But the thief was satisfied. He made a hasty bundle of two or three leather-covered account books. On top of them he laid a bunch of stuffed envelopes and a pile canceled checks.

He found paper and cord in a rear room and made a neat package of his loot. Then he closed the safe and locked it, replaced the tapestry.

He tiptoed into the rear room, where a window was lifted halfway up from the sill.

Suddenly, he stopped short with a gasping gurgle. A pair of invisible hands had clamped on the flesh of his throat from behind, shutting off his windpipe. The electric torch fell to the floor. With a tremendous effort, the killer threw himself forward, toppling off balance and pulling his invisible attacker with him.

They rolled in desperate combat on the floor, etched in the narrow beam of light that streamed from the fallen torch.

The man who had attacked the murderer of Charlie Boston was now dimly visible. He was robed in black from head to foot. His hands on the killer's throat were like patches of darkness. He tried to rip the mask from his opponent's face, but his effort missed.

It was a false move. It enabled the killer to jerk himself free. He rolled backward and caught at the bundle he had stolen from Charlie Boston's safe. He threw the loot flying toward the opened window behind him.

But his black-robed foe struck the wrist a quick blow and deflected the missile, so that it struck the sill and rebounded back into the room. Again the writhing killer took catlike advantage of a split second's opportunity. He was on his knees like a flash and springing to his feet.

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He lashed out with his toe at the body of his enemy. The blow caught his black-robed foe in the stomach, toppling him headlong. The man in the handkerchief mask reached the open sill of the window with sobbing haste.

He dived out head-first.

There was a thud in the paved rear courtyard. Then the patter of flying feet died away in silence.

The man in the rear room of the brownstone house made no effort to pursue the killer. He had failed in his effort to uncover the murderer's identity, but he had succeeded in something equally as important. He had within his grasp the thing he had visited this quiet home to obtain.

With a bend of his supple body, he reached down and picked up the paper-wrapped parcel that had been abandoned by the escaping murderer.

The black-robed figure laughed. The sound was like a sibilant whisper of doom. It was the laughter of The Shadow. His figure and face were more distinct now, as he picked up the torch that lay on the floor.

The brim of a black slouch hat covered the whole upper part of his face, except for the piercing gleam of his eyes and the strong beaklike nose. His cloak hung partly open where the struggle with his foe had ripped the fabric. The scarlet lining of the garment was like a smear of blood.

The Shadow's movements became swift. He was turning to leave the room, when he heard from the front door of the silent house a sudden ominous sound. The rattle of a skeleton key!

The Shadow clutched his precious loot closer to his body. He melted swiftly toward the rear of the house. Before the opening door out front was squeaking faintly on its hinges, The Shadow had dropped quietly to the courtyard in the back. He became instantly invisible.

His black cloak merged with the surrounding darkness. It was impossible to tell whether he was still standing there in rigid silence or whether already he had moved toward the alley that led to the street.

Meanwhile, other cautious feet were making stealthy progress across the front hall. Two men were edging toward the doorway of the darkened front parlor where Charlie Boston and his dead bodyguard lay bathed in blood.

The darkness reassured them. A hand slid cautiously along the inner wall of the room and the light switch clicked.

The sight of the two dead men on the floor brought a quick gasp from the burglars. One of them backed instantly to the doorway and watched the hall and the staircase, his eyes and his weapon stiffly alert.

The second thug made a hasty examination of the bodies of Charlie Boston and his slain bodyguard.

He grinned sneeringly as he saw the overturned table, the scattered cards, the smashed whisky glasses.

He was too smart to be fooled by the faked evidence of a drunken quarrel. He tiptoed to the rear window and observed that the sash was raised. Then his faint whisper called his companion.

"Somebody beat us to the job! I'll bet a grand he cleaned out Charlie's safe before he scrambled!"

The Fifth Napoleon

"Tiger's gonna be damned sore!"

"You're tellin' me!" There was uneasiness in the clipped snarl. "Tiger ought to be outside by this time. Get out to the front door and give him the signal."

Footsteps faded. From the front of the house came the brief sound of a whistle. The thug returned presently with a tall, muscular man who thrust him contemptuously aside. The tall man viewed the two bodies on the floor with a snarl of baffled fury.

"Who do you think gunned them, chief?"

"Lifer Stone! It couldn't have been any one else. I've been leery of that guy ever since he got out of stir. Did you find the safe?"

"No."

THE tall man's eyes studied the room. They were deep-blue and utterly ruthless. His hair was a carrot red. It was easy to see why Tiger Marsh's bid for underworld power had frightened Charlie Boston and the other Napoleons.

The man's whole bearing radiated strength and an evil assurance. His two henchmen quailed as his blue eyes bored into them.

Suddenly, Tiger's glance fixed itself on the wall of the room. He chuckled loudly. Then he strode toward the silken tapestry. He had noted a slight variance in the flat surface of the fabric. It was apparent to him that the tapestry had been recently rearranged. A clutch of his muscular hand ripped the hanging from the wall.

The hidden safe was disclosed. He motioned to one of his henchmen.

"All right, Fingers! Get that tin can open!"

"Fingers" crept closer to the safe. The reason for his nickname became apparent when he reached for the dials of the safe. He used no tools except his sense of touch and an ear for listening. For nearly ten minutes he manipulated the dials with grim concentration. Sweat ran down his tense face and dripped from his chin.

Suddenly, there was a double click. The steel door swung open.

Tiger thrust the cracksman aside with a fierce sweep of his arm. He plunged his hand into the safe and explored its deep interior.

The profanity that instantly filled the room was the more terrible because it was uttered in so low and quiet a tone. Tiger's hand came empty from the safe.

The two henchmen avoided his wrathful blue eyes. They were afraid to make any comment, for fear of drawing Tiger's ire to themselves.

They knew what his plan had been. He had intended to hijack Charlie Boston's records and documents. With the records of payments, the names of the victims and the roster of professional "firebugs" in his possession, he could take over the whole arson racket and profit from its rich pickings in tribute. Now the whole daring plan had gone haywire.

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"Lifer Stone pulled this wise job," Tiger snarled. "He must be a stooge for the D. A. There's no other answer. That's why he got out of jail so neatly. O. K.—we'll take care of Mr. Lifer Stone!"

The blue eyes were as cold as ice under moonlight.

"You guys scram! Lifer might have been smart enough to phone the cops, after he made his get-away. Don't go near my headquarters till you phone in first. There might be a tail on you. Did you wipe that safe clean?"

"Yeah," Fingers said.

THE two thugs crept down the stairs to the basement. Tiger Marsh watched from behind the shaded window until he saw them enter a parked car near the corner and drive quietly away. Then he grunted, and left the house himself.

A policeman saw Tiger emerge from the quiet basement of the brownstone. The cop had already noted the stealthy departure of Fingers and his pal. He had begun to race noiselessly forward to investigate. Tiger Marsh stepped almost into the cop's arms.

Instantly, the red-headed criminal leader swung his fist. It caught the cop a powerful blow on the point of the jaw, tumbling him before he could duck away.

Tiger fled to the corner and out of sight as bullets began to pump after him. His car was parked around the corner. In an instant, he was behind the wheel, jamming his foot hard on the accelerator.

The car was in wild flight before the pursuing cop rounded the dark corner. The cop steadied himself and fired at the vanishing automobile, but the distance was becoming too great for certain aim.

The cop raced for a call box. He unhooked the telephone and sent an excited call into his precinct house. Instantly, the police system began to act with hair-trigger precision. In less than two minutes, every patrolman in Manhattan knew that a man answering the description of Tiger Marsh was roaring through the streets of the West Side on a desperate get-away.

Ten minutes later, Tiger's car was found. But Tiger himself had vanished. The car offered no clue. It had been stolen from a dentist in the Bronx the morning before.

Inspector Cardona was at the scene. So was Police Commissioner Weston, hurriedly roused from his bed. They raced back to Charlie Boston's house in Weston's car and made the gruesome discovery of the double murder.

Weston stared at the bodies, and his eyes were perplexed. But Joe Cardona kept his eyes on the rifled safe in the wall. He guessed instantly what had happened. But his conclusion was a wrong one.

He placed the blame for the murder and the theft on Tiger Marsh. He would have been less cocksure had he seen the pale face of Lifer Stone. The convict drove quietly through darkness a mile or two away. There was a paper-wrapped parcel lying on the seat of Lifer Stone's car. On it was printed in hastily scrawled letters the name and address of special district attorney Sherman.

A faintly sibilant laugh of triumph came from the tense lips of the pseudo-convict. The Shadow's plans were beginning to take shape.

CHAPTER VII. TWO-ELEVEN-NINE.

IT was well past midnight when The Shadow arrived in the neighborhood of Judge Sherman's home.

A policeman, walking his lonely beat, gave The Shadow's car a quick scrutiny as he drove past. He made no effort halt the automobile. He was on watch for some one quite different in appearance from The Shadow. He was watching for a man with flaming-red hair and deep-blue eyes.

The police were on the lookout for Tiger Marsh. His unlucky mishap as he fled from the slain bodies of Charlie Boston and his bodyguard, had drawn the entire attention of the police to Tiger himself.

The Shadow took no chances. He drove eastward and doubled back again. When the car again appeared, the cop was well toward the other end of his beat.

The Shadow's goal was the quiet home of Judge Sherman. His eyes gleamed as he braked the car. He picked up the paper-wrapped parcel he had hidden under the seat. The Shadow had already examined the books and papers that made up that parcel.

He knew that it formed a complete expose of the arson racket that had been so long dominated by Charlie Boston under the leadership of the Fifth Napoleon. There were records of payments, lists of victims and—more important—the address and telephone number of every important firebug in the city.

The death of Charlie Boston was not in itself sufficient to break up the organized arson racket. But these damning documents in the hands of Judge Sherman would provide the evidence for a wholesale round-up and conviction of Boston's gang. It would wipe out at one blow an important source of the rich criminal revenues of the Fifth Napoleon.

The Shadow left the engine of his car running softly. He ran up the front steps of Judge Sherman's darkened home and laid the parcel carefully on the door-sill. He pressed the doorbell with a long push. Then he turned and raced back to his waiting car.

His speed was justified. In barely a few seconds, he was behind the wheel and the car was racing away. But fast as he was, he was almost recognized.

THE front door of the Sherman home opened swiftly. A fully-dressed man sprang into view and peered after the vanishing car. It was Kendall, the special district attorney's trusted butler.

He uttered an oath as the car containing The Shadow whirled around the corner. He had been unable to recognize the mysterious visitor who had left the bundle that lay in the doorway at his feet.

He picked up the package and examined it. He noted that it was addressed to his employer. Something about the appearance of that hastily wrapped parcel made the face of the butler growl. He tore a tiny corner of the wrapping apart and tried to examine the contents. He saw the leather back of an account book and a sheaf of papers.

One swift glance was enough for Kendall. It was exactly what he had feared. Like the police earlier that evening, he made an instant deduction and a wrong one. His frightened guess was the man who had delivered the parcel was Tiger Marsh.

Quietly, he shut the front door. He began to tiptoe along the hall to his own living quarters in the rear

The Fifth Napoleon

basement

He had almost made it safely when a voice called sharply from the staircase above: "Kendall! Are you up? Who was that at the door?"

The butler's face twisted murderously. He looked swiftly right and left for a place to hide the parcel in his trembling hand. But he had no time to get rid of it.

Judge Sherman had already descended the stairs from his bedroom. He wearing a loose bathrobe thrown hastily over his pajamas.

"What have you got there, Kendall? Did some one bring a package for me?"

"Er--yes, sir. That is, not exactly sir."

Haltingly, the butler told his story. Judge Sherman took the parcel. Curiosity gave way to eager interest, as he examined the contents.

"Good heavens!" he breathed.

A swift glance at the books and documents told him that fate had delivered into his hands complete evidence against Charlie Boston and his arson mob. Kendall, the butler, knew it, too.

He said, haltingly: "Is--is it important, sir?"

"Damned important! Who brought it? Are you sure you didn't see his face?"

Kendall shook his head. He had no intention of bringing Tiger Marsh's name into the picture. The Fifth Napoleon would take care of Tiger! In the meantime, the all-important task was to get hold of those damning records that spelled ruin to one whole segment of the Fifth Napoleon's underworld empire.

Kendall's wooden face deceived Sherman completely. He had good references, and performed his duties with deft ability.

"I'll take care of these documents, Kendall," Sherman said. "Suppose you go to bed."

"Very good, sir."

THE butler walked slowly down the hall and descended the stairs to the basement. But the moment he reached the bottom, he slipped off his shoes and hurried noiselessly back to the main hallway. He listened at the foot of the stairs for the closing of Judge Sherman's bedroom door.

If Sherman didn't lock the door, the butler planned to enter that room and steal the parcel. Standing crouched in the semidarkness of the lower hall, he licked dry lips and listened for the bang of the door.

He heard it. It was followed by the curt click of the lock.

Kendall's last chance was gone. There was no way of entering the bedroom from the outside of the house. The butler was well able to pick the lock, but he was afraid to make the try; Sherman was a light sleeper.

The Fifth Napoleon

Kendall abandoned the notion of robbery as too dangerous. Perhaps it would be better to retain his identity as a trusted servant and remain in the house—as was his duty to the Fifth Napoleon.

The butler shivered suddenly. He remembered the shrill, quavering voice of the Fifth Napoleon. He tiptoed cautiously down the hall to the telephone stand.

Shielding the instrument against his body, he dialed a secret number. It was the first time he had ever called that number. He was under strict orders to do so only under the direst necessity. The voice of the Fifth Napoleon answered almost immediately.

The butler identified himself by number. With his lips cushioned against the transmitter, he whispered a quick report of what had happened.

Silence followed. The butler's tense anxiety could not bear the strain after a second or two.

"You'd better get in touch with Charlie Boston, at once!" he blurted. "He'd never allow anything as important as that to be stolen. He must have been killed by Tiger Marsh!"

He knew he had made a mistake as soon as the words left his lips. He began to stutter an incoherent apology. The shrill, snarling voice of the Fifth Napoleon cut through his panicky whisper:

"You fool! What do you mean by mentioning names on a telephone wire? Report to—morrow morning at headquarters for discipline!"

Icy fear dropped like a cold sponge along Kendall's spine. He knew the intonation of death when he heard it. Yet such was the discipline of the Fifth Napoleon that the butler dared not plead for his life.

He said in a dead gasp: "Orders received and acknowledged by Agent 2-11-9."

"Dismissed!" the voice on the wire snarled.

Kendall cradled the phone with a shaking hand and crept silently downstairs to his room. His face was beaded with cold sweat. Unless the Fifth Napoleon decided that Agent 2-11-9's usefulness as a spy in the household of the special district attorney merited a reprieve for his blunder, Kendall would get the same grim treatment that had been dealt out to Tick Murphy: Death!

The terrified butler shuddered.

CHAPTER VIII. FIND THE WOMAN.

ETHEL SHERMAN sat quietly in a tastefully furnished bedroom of a respectable hotel. Her face was as white as chalk. Her eyes were staring helplessly at the black headlines of a newspaper:

CHARLIE BOSTON SLAIN!

Noted Racketeer and His Bodyguard

Shot to Death in Gangster War.

The Fifth Napoleon

Police Search Centers on Tiger Marsh.

A sob choked Ethel Sherman's throat. She turned to the second page of the tabloid with a cringing gesture. Headlines running across the entire top of the second page read:

MYSTERIOUS VEILED WOMAN

SOUGHT AS "MURDER FINGER"

Ethel Sherman knew with a feeling of utter despair that the veiled woman was herself.

Charlie Boston had been recognized when he had met Ethel at the Hudson Terminal on her swift return from Newark. Police and reporters were proceeding on the natural assumption that Charlie's well-known weakness for women had been used by his underworld enemies to lure him to his death. District Attorney Sherman had issued a statement declaring that the veiled woman was the key to the crime.

Ethel shuddered. Hunted! By her own father, who thought she was safely in Washington at the home of a girl friend!

She sprang from her chair. Her only thought was to telephone her father, tell him where she was, beg him to come and get her. The newspaper story of the murder had opened Ethel's eyes to the desperate war for criminal supremacy that was being waged by New York's rival underworld kings.

But when the voice of the judge came on the wire, Ethel changed her mind. She called her fiance, Fred Daniel, at the managing editor's desk of the Classic.

A scheme to save herself from the consequences of her own folly leapt into her mind. She'd confess to him; get him to drive her to Newark and take the first plane out for Washington. She could count on Milly to protect her secret. Her father would never know that she had sneaked back to Newark to keep a reckless date with Charlie Boston.

Fred Daniel's voice was surprised but delighted when he heard her.

"Hello, darling! It was sweet of you to call me from Washington."

"I'm—I'm not in Washington, Fred. I'm here—in New York!"

"What? Are you joking?"

"Please listen! I've got to see you at once!" She gave him the name of the hotel, and added breathlessly: You can't come up to my room because it's against the rules in a woman's hotel. I'll meet you in the small sitting room downstairs. Please, Fred—hurry! I'm in dreadful trouble!"

"Trouble?" There was worry in his low voice. "What sort of trouble?"

"Murder!" she gasped, and hung up.

ETHEL went to a secluded sitting room in the rear to wait for Fred Daniel. It was still early enough in the morning for the room to be empty.

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Fred's face was white as he entered a few minutes later. They sat together on a sofa in a dim corner, and Daniel's face got paler as he listened to her frightened story.

She told him what she wanted him to do. He shook his head.

"Fly to Washington? You can't!"

"Why not? It's the only safe thing to do."

"It's the most dangerous," he whispered, his eyes watching the doorway for chance intruders. "It isn't your father you have to fear—or the police. It's the mobsters who'll be combing the city looking for you. Tiger Marsh will move heaven and earth to shut your mouth with a bullet! The Fifth Napoleon will think you aided Tiger to kill Charlie Boston. You're caught between two fires. Darling, you've got to stay hidden here!"

She nodded tremulously. She knew that Fred Daniel was talking common sense. She agreed to follow his advice. But she made him promise not to breathe a word of where she actually was to her father. She realized at last that if a hint of his daughter's friendship with Charlie Boston should leak into the newspapers, it would ruin Judge Sherman's value as a public prosecutor and blacken his career forever.

Reluctantly, Fred Daniel agreed to deceive Ethel's father for a few days longer. His jaw tightened, as he warned:

"Don't leave your room for an instant! Have your meals sent up. And don't go out on the street for any purpose whatsoever! I'll keep in touch with you by phone."

Ethel's eyes filled with tears. She walked back to the elevator, and Fred Daniel left the hotel by a side exit.

With his mouth drawn into a hard line, he drove straight to the house of Judge Sherman. By the time he entered the living room of the special district attorney's home, he had managed to twist his lips into his usual carefree smile.

But one look at Sherman made the newspaper editor's heart sink. The Judge's eyes were like polished ice. He said in a crisp, curt voice: "Sit down. I want to talk with you."

Sherman left the room for a moment. When he returned, the special district attorney was carrying a package that he handled as though it might contain dynamite. He closed and locked the door. Then he untied the strings of the parcel and showed the managing editor of the Classic what the package contained.

FRED DANIEL'S mind was trained to react swiftly. His eyes raced across the pages of leather-covered account books. He gave a quick cry of excitement. He realized he was looking at something which the police had been vainly trying to discover for months: The complete evidence of Charlie Boston's arson racket. Names, payments— everything!

"Good heavens, man! Where did you get this?"

Sherman lowered his voice. He explained about the mysterious ring at his doorbell the night before. He told how the evidence had been left by a man who had vanished before the butler could catch a glimpse of him.

"Every firebug on that list that you've just examined was arrested before daylight in a series of quick police raids," Sherman whispered. "We have them all under lock and key. They won't talk, but it doesn't matter now. We have evidence, thank God, that will send every one of those rats to prison for long terms!"

The Fifth Napoleon

"What about—the Fifth Napoleon?"

"Nothing. Unfortunately, there's not a shred of a clue in these records to disclose his identity or his headquarters. Charlie Boston's racket seems to have been a watertight affair. The evidence points only to himself and his own hirelings."

Fred Daniel's finger pointed to another of the documents.

"A list of safe-deposit boxes," he gasped, eagerly. "No wonder Charlie paid no income taxes! He must have hidden every cent of his profits in cash. Did you open the boxes?"

"We opened them. But every one was empty."

"I don't understand."

"Crooks have the advantage over honest men," Sherman murmured. "To open those boxes legally requires a court order. By the time the order was legally executed this morning, it was too late. Some one already had visited every one of those safe-deposit boxes and removed every penny of accumulated loot!"

"I still don't understand," Daniel said. "To do that would require identification, a key and a signature."

"The man who beat us to the loot had all three," Sherman said. "He used Boston's keys, wrote Boston's signature—and looked like him."

"The Fifth Napoleon!" Daniel cried.

"I don't think so. I'm convinced that the man who left the evidence at my door hated the Fifth Napoleon, and wanted to cripple one whole segment of his gang by turning over the evidence of Boston's racket to me. He had time to do that and to steal the money, too. And I think we can guess who he is."

"Tiger Marsh?"

"Exactly! It was Tiger who murdered Boston and his bodyguard. It was Tiger who took the money. He doesn't give a rap for justice. He's merely using the police as a weapon in his private warfare on a rival gang."

"Do yaw think Lifer Stone is mixed up in this?" Fred Daniel asked, slowly.

"I don't know. Lifer seems to have disappeared completely. Joe Cardona called me a few minutes ago, with no success in the search for him."

Sherman rose and gripped the managing editor's hand with a weary sigh. "It's a criminal labyrinth—the worst we ever tried to untangle. I'm just glad my daughter is safely out of it, in Washington."

"That's a blessing," Daniel said unsteadily.

The two walked slowly to the door. Their heavy footfalls warned a man who was crouched outside in the hallway with his ear pressed to the panel. It was Kendall, the butler. He vanished quickly along the hall.

He didn't reappear until Sherman summoned him to dismiss his guest. Kendall handed Fred Daniel his coat. He stood for a second, staring after him with a look of crafty triumph in his narrow eyes.

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When he turned to go back to his quarters, the crafty look was gone. He bowed to Judge Sherman with a slight bend of his well-trained back. He was feeling much better than he had been the preceding night.

Kendall had answered the dread summons of the Fifth Napoleon. The threat of death for his blunder last night on the telephone was no longer hanging over his head.

The Fifth Napoleon had decided that Kendall's value as a spy in the home of the special district attorney was too great to be destroyed by killing him in the interests of discipline.

Fred Daniel had given Ethel Sherman bad advice. The Fifth Napoleon knew exactly where she was, and was grimly biding his time before he struck.

CHAPTER IX. MURDER BAIT.

A MASKED figure, dressed in a concealing scarlet robe, whose hue was color of blood, sat silently watching the other men in a blank-walled, windowless room high above the dim clamor of Manhattan's busy traffic.

His gaze moved from Con Platt to Mike Hammer and onward to Andy Martin. The leather chair next to the one in which Martin sat was empty. Ordinarily, Charlie Boston sat in that chair. He would do so no longer. Murder had removed him from the inner council of the Fifth Napoleon.

It was to avenge that murder that this grim conference had been called. In the brain of the Fifth Napoleon a cunning scheme had been hatched. It awaited only the cooperation of his three remaining lieutenants.

His laughter was like the rasp of a file on a steel pipe.

"Charlie Boston has been murdered! Only one criminal in New York is strong and bold enough to strike at my organization. That man is Tiger Marsh. From now on, I order you to drop everything else and to concentrate on the capture and death of Tiger Marsh!"

A savage growl of agreement burst from the lips of the three henchmen. But before any of them could speak, the icy whisper of their leader silenced them.

"I have brought you here not to talk, but to listen. I have a plan that cannot fail, if each of you obeys implicitly the instructions you receive. The plan is as follows."

His words came slowly and distinctly. The henchmen's faces lit up with a cruel understanding.

The plan was based on the greed of Tiger March. It was a scheme to lure him into the open so that he could be destroyed. The bait was the hidden wealth of the Napoleon gang.

Con Platt and his two companions were ordered to appear openly on the street and to go at once to three separate rooming houses in Brooklyn. Each was given the address of his destination on a separate slip of paper.

"You will find waiting for you there," the Fifth Napoleon rasped, "a locked and sealed trunk, similar to those in which money and valuables are customarily shipped. To-morrow morning an express truck will stop in front of each of these three rooming houses. You will carry out the trunk and place it in the truck. The truck will drive away, followed by a sedan in which four of our gunmen will be riding.

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He chuckled. "Unless I'm mistaken, Tiger Marsh's spies will discover what is happening and telephone the news to their chief. An attempt will be made to hijack the express truck—which I intend to succeed! For the moment those trunks are smashed open on a lonely road up-State, there will be a tremendous explosion that will blow Tiger Marsh and his men to tatters of bloody flesh!"

There was a quick gasp from Andy Martin.

"How will we—"

"Quiet!"

The shrill voice of the Fifth Napoleon continued.

"If you mean what protection will there be for the driver of the express wagon and the gunmen in the trailing sedan, the answer is none. Gunmen are cheap! To deceive Tiger's men it will be necessary to deceive our own. They will think the trunks they are guarding actually contain money. They will die in that belief. Is that clear?"

It was. There was no mercy in the eyes of the three men who listened. Only a grim admiration for the cold-gutted efficiency of their scarlet-robed leader.

"As for the money itself," the husky whisper continued, "I have arranged for every penny of our hoarded profits to be transported here, to headquarters, for safe-keeping. There will be two money trunks in each of these rooming houses. The real trunk will be marked by a yellow cross—and you are to guard it with your life!

"As soon as the express wagon drives off with the fake consignment, a Blue Star taxicab will pick each one of you up and drive you to the terminal garage in the basement of this building. The loot will be brought up to this very room in the secret elevator—a million dollars in cold cash!"

His eyes flashed behind the holes slit in his scarlet mask.

"Let the district attorney try to find it then! Let him search all the safe-deposit boxes in the city. He'll find nothing! The theft of Charlie Boston's money will not be repeated!"

The mention of the name of the dead racketeer brought a momentary silence into the blank-walled room. They were thinking not of Charlie's killer, but of the man who had delivered the parcel of evidence to the special district attorney.

Kendall, the cunning spy planted in the home of Judge Sherman, had mistakenly identified the furtive visitor as Tiger Marsh. He was now convinced he had made an error. Careful investigation and clever eavesdropping had replaced the name of Tiger Marsh with that of Lifer Stone. He had reported this fact at once to the Fifth Napoleon.

"Unfortunately, we have not succeeded in finding a trace of Lifer Stone, as yet," the hooded leader snarled. "Lifer is undoubtedly hiding somewhere with the connivance and help of the district attorney.

"Our first thought, that he was working in Tiger Marsh's gang, must now be dismissed. Had such been the case, Tiger would have had the records stolen from Charlie Boston's safe. But we know that Judge Sherman got those account books and documents. And we know that prompt police raids rounded up every man in Charlie's gang. For that disaster, we have Lifer Stone to thank. He's a white-livered stool pigeon in the

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employ of the police, and he, too, must die!"

THE Fifth Napoleon's scarlet hand pressed a button on the surface of his desk. He leaned over a box-like device and waited. From the interior the black metal box a voice sounded suddenly.

"Agent 9-17-4 standing by."

The Fifth Napoleon replied:

"New orders concerning the use Blue Star taxicabs for the next twenty-four hours: All taxis not actively employed in the transfer of trunks from Brooklyn will go on cruise duty at once. Accept no passengers unless necessary to avoid complaints to the police. Each driver will be given the same general order: Find Lifer Stone!

"Assign cabs to every section of the city. If Lifer is seen on the street, pick him up and bring him in to headquarters. If he resists, kill him! If he is spotted going into a house, notify headquarters instantly the location of hangout. That is all."

The Fifth Napoleon's hand moved briefly. The transmitter went dead. The scarlet-robed leader stared at Boston's empty chair with expressionless eyes.

"Napoleon No. 2," he said in his harsh quaver.

Mike Hammer rose without a word and walked to the concealed panel of the elevator shaft. He vanished without sound. Platt and Martin followed at five-minute intervals.

Then the Fifth Napoleon backed toward the wall behind his desk and vanished like a swirl of blood behind the closing shutter in the steel wall.

AN express truck had halted at the curb outside a dingy rooming house in Brooklyn. The driver stared up and down the street before he descended from his seat. There was a slight lump under his left armpit. But his jacket was loosely buttoned; so that the butt of the hidden gun was not too apparent. The eyes of the chauffeur were watchful. He was a trained gunman, one of Mike Hammer's mob.

He rang the bell of the rooming house and disappeared inside.

His movements were accurately observed by a man lounging at the corner. The observer stood in front of a drug store window, apparently studying the articles displayed in the show case. This second man's name was "Chick" Morgan. He was a "finger man" for Tiger Marsh.

Five minutes after the driver of the truck had entered the house, he reappeared again. He was accompanied by Mike Hammer himself. The two men were staggering under the weight of a heavy trunk which they carried between them.

The eyes of Chick Morgan glittered with satisfaction as he noted the seals and the double lock that protected the lid of the trunk.

Hammer and the driver placed the trunk carefully into the express wagon. There was a brief, whispered conference between the two men, then the pudgy racket leader turned and went back into the house.

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The driver climbed to his seat, but he didn't start his engine immediately. His glance veered swiftly toward the corner. But Chick Morgan was no longer visible. He had moved into the store entrance.

The express driver dropped his palm on the horn button and gave two quick blasts. Then his gears rattled noisily and the truck drove away.

Before it reached the next corner, it was being quietly followed by a sleek sedan that had appeared seemingly from nowhere. The sedan throttled its speed, so that it kept about half a block behind the truck it was guarding.

That it was there to follow and guard Mike Hammer's locked money trunk, Chick Morgan had no doubt whatever. He had caught a glimpse of the five killers who rode inside.

CHICK MORGAN waited to see no more. He entered a phone booth in the drug store, and called Tiger Marsh's headquarters; reported the situation. Evidently the reply pleased his vanity, for Chick grinned broadly as he hung up.

He was still grinning as he walked to the curb and signaled a taxicab. As he got in, the cab started with a jerk. It raced to the corner and slithered out of sight with a whine of skidding rubber.

There was one observer of the speeding taxi. The only evidence of his presence was a slightly lifted window sash in a building opposite the rooming house. The shade was drawn low on the window behind which the man was crouched. A pair of tiny but extremely powerful field glasses was glued to his calmly observant eyes.

The man laughed in a low, sibilant whisper. The sound was the laughter of The Shadow. But the pallid face was the face of Lifer Stone. He had spotted the presence of Tiger Marsh's henchman. He had witnessed the swift departure of the taxicab. But he had seen something else. As Chick Morgan had entered the cab, a crouched figure had risen from beneath a lap robe. The Shadow knew that Chick had been neatly trapped and hijacked by a man with a glittering knife.

The Shadow remained behind the partly opened window, watching the front of the rooming house opposite. Unlike Chick Morgan, The Shadow had not been deceived by the fake money transfer. He divined that the trunk in the express wagon was a phony. His field glass had enabled him to study at close range the expressions of both Mike Hammer and the driver.

He had seen their crooked grins, and had read their lips as they whispered together. They were both sneeringly aware of the presence of Tiger Marsh's spy in the drugstore entrance. The whole thing was being carefully staged for the spy's benefit in order to trap him and the others. The Shadow kept his field glasses trained on the doorway of the dingy rooming house opposite. He was waiting for the sly Mike Hammer to reappear.

CHAPTER X. THE DUPLICATE TRUNK.

THE SHADOW'S thoughts were correct. Chick Morgan had been neatly trapped in that Blue Star cab.

He had barely set foot inside the cab when the backward-flung hand of the chauffeur slammed the door and the taxi sped away. From under a lap robe on the floor, a man swayed upward on his knees. A vicious jerk sent Chick Morgan toppling. He tried to grab for his gun, but a sharp prick at the flesh of his throat stopped the gesture before it had barely started.

The Fifth Napoleon

"Take it easy, mug," a hoarse voice warned, "or I'll slash your neck open!"

Blood from the sharp point of the knife trickled down Chick's neck. He lay very quietly on the floor of the cab.

"O. K. Tony?" the knife expert cried to the taxi driver.

"O. K. Slasher! Got him set?"

"Slasher" chuckled. He didn't bother replying. With a knife in his hand, Slasher was like a streak of lightning. His nickname came from his wizardry with cold steel. He could kill swiftly and surely, in half the time it took a man with a gun to squeeze a trigger.

There was no further talk between the kidnapers. The cab drove swiftly through the streets of this outlying section of Brooklyn, cutting corners accurately as if the man at the wheel knew exactly where he was going.

He did. His goal was an unpaved road below the dirt embankment of a spur of the Long Island railroad. It was a dead-end thoroughfare.

"Sit up, mug!" Slasher told his victim. "Put both hands flat on the top of your dome!"

Chick Morgan knew he had reached the end of a one-way ride. But there remained a ray of hope in his cunning brain. His gun was still hidden in his shoulder holster.

Chick started to place his hands on top of his head. Suddenly one hand darted downward in a lightning gesture. His gun leaped from its concealed shoulder holster. The muzzle twisted murderously toward Slasher's belly.

But before Chick's finger could tighten on the trigger, he gave a horrible, gurgling scream. Slasher's knife buried itself in Chick's throat. The keen blade ripped the flesh into a gaping wound. Blood jetted in a ghastly torrent. It soaked into Chick's clothing and into lap robe that Slasher instantly had under the toppling gunman.

The knife had severed Chick's windpipe. In a moment his feeble twitching ceased. He was dead.

"That's what comes from workin' for Tiger Marsh!" Slasher snarled.

There was no one in sight along the rutted road. It ran beside a vacant lot, littered with tin cans, rusted bedsprings and piles of discarded rubbish. The fence that surrounded it was unpainted and sagging with age.

Slasher and Tony carried Chick's body swiftly through a gap in the boards and dropped it in a weed-filled gully. The bloodstained robe was left with the corpse. Tony tossed tin cans and chunks of refuse, until the mound in the gully resembled the rest of the near-by junk piles.

The vacant lot was in a remote section of Brooklyn. By the time any one stumbled upon the tin-can grave, rain and weather would have finished its grim work. A skull and a cage-like heap of ribs would be all that remained of the unfortunate Chick Morgan.

The taxicab drove quietly away. Slasher laughed deep in his corded throat.

"Step on it, Tony! Mike Hammer is waiting for us—and he's a guy that don't like to be delayed!"

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THE SHADOW was still waiting patiently at his window when the Blue-Star cab drove up once more in front of the rooming house opposite.

Slasher got out. He rang the bell, and was instantly admitted by Mike Hammer himself.

In less than a minute, Hammer and Slasher reappeared. They were carrying a trunk between them. It didn't seem to be quite as heavy as the trunk had been loaded into the express truck a half hour earlier. It was shoved into the rear of the taxicab, and Mike Hammer and his henchman got in.

The taxicab drove swiftly away. By lifting his window slightly, The Shadow was able to watch its course. It was heading straight for one of the bridges that spanned the East River into Manhattan.

The Shadow expected just such a maneuver. He had recognized the cab as one of the Blue Star fleet. Mike Hammer was riding with two gunmen who had obviously just finished kidnapping a member of a rival gang.

The two trunks The Shadow had seen indicated a clever substitution scheme. The first trunk was merely a hoax to fool the mobsmen of Tiger Marsh. The second was the valuable one. It was undoubtedly crammed with loot, and on its way to be safeguarded in the secret headquarters of the Fifth Napoleon.

The Shadow divined that other trunks were on their way to the same destination in other taxicabs. Con Platt would be in charge of a second. Andy Martin would be in charge of a third. The deluded mobsters of Tiger Marsh would be chasing the fake express truck and its guarding sedan.

The Shadow appeared presently on the sidewalk, carrying a small briefcase. The black slouch hat and the cloak of The Shadow were contained in that bag. But the man who carried it was the living embodiment of Lifer Stone. He was taking a grim chance in thus appearing in public. It was a chance he believed justified.

He entered the same drug store where Chick Morgan had made his call to Tiger Marsh. The Shadow picked up a Manhattan telephone directory and turned swiftly to the "B's." He discovered that the Blue Star taxicab company was a small outfit with only one telephone number. And only one garage!

The latter discovery simplified The Shadow's problem. His grim destination was now clear to him. And his suspicion about the real ownership of the Blue Star fleet crystallized into certainty.

The taxicabs and their drivers were part of a gigantic criminal organization. The Shadow marveled at the daring of the Fifth Napoleon. He had selected as his headquarters a modern skyscraper in the very heart of busy Manhattan. The Crown Building! It was in the basement of the Crown Building that the Blue Star fleet was garaged.

Unless The Shadow was reasoning without logic for the first time in his life, the headquarters of the gang were hidden somewhere in the same skyscraper.

The false Lifer Stone descended quietly into the subway and took an express train toward Manhattan.

Twenty minutes later, he was approaching a ramped vehicle entrance that led to the cavernous basement of the Crown Building.

CHAPTER XI. HELL'S LID.

THE road in New York City's suburban Westchester County was a bad one. It was narrow and unpaved. Rain

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was falling steadily. It didn't make the going any easier for the strange motor procession that was proceeding along this deserted country road.

A heavy express truck led the way. It was followed at a short distance by a sleek black sedan. There were five ugly-faced gunmen in the sedan. They were in a vicious temper. They growled oaths as the car churned up mud and sent water splashing from deep puddles.

They were all seasoned henchmen of the Fifth Napoleon. They could smell trouble a mile away; but the trouble that worried them was closer than that.

One of the men, called "Clip," twisted suddenly and peered back through the rear window of the sedan. A half mile behind, in the black pour of rain, he saw a mud-splashed automobile top a rise in the road and coast downward out of sight.

Clip swore viciously.

"It's still there!" he growled. "Hasn't gained an inch on us in the last ten minutes! Looks like they don't want to gain. They've been a half mile behind us ever since we hit this lousy road!"

He reached suddenly to the floor of the sedan and picked up a submachine gun.

"It's a hijack! You guys better get your smoke-wagons ready. Those heels trailing us are from Tiger Marsh's mob! I'll bet a grand on that!"

Clip's pals thought the same way he did. Weapons slid into hands that were used to dishing out sudden death. The driver eased a palm from his wheel and unbuttoned the top button of his coat. He honked his horn three times, and got a similar reply from the driver of the express truck up ahead. It was a trouble signal.

But the truck did not increase its speed. The orders of the Fifth Napoleon had been explicit: to drive not above thirty miles an hour.

The mysterious car a half mile in the rear of the black sedan continued to hang on like a leech. Clip's grim surmise about that car was correct. There were five men hunched on the padded seats, and every one of them owed allegiance to Tiger Marsh.

They were following for a grim purpose. They were under orders to steal the three locked trunks aboard the express truck.

The man sitting beside the chauffeur seemed to be the leader. He had a pair of powerful binoculars in his hand. He was watching the road ahead of the swaying express truck.

What he was looking for so keenly was a narrow bottleneck in the road ahead, or a narrow bridge, or perhaps a sharp turn above a steep precipice. Any of the three would suit his purpose.

Suddenly, he gave a clipped cry. He had seen a long, straight hill, and at its foot a narrow wooden bridge that spanned a deep ravine.

"O. K.! Let's go!"

THE chauffeur's foot jammed hard on the gas. The car shot ahead. The man with the binoculars dropped them. He seized a stubby, wide-barreled gun and crouched lower.

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The killers in the back grabbed weapons. Their job was to spill lead and protect the two men in front.

Down the long hill the car sped recklessly, gaining rapidly on the two vehicles ahead. They were instantly detected. The sound of the sedan's horn was a screeching warning. The truck ahead speeded up. The sedan slowed slightly.

This was exactly what Tiger's hijackers wanted. Their plan was to force a way past the sedan and get in between it and the fleeing truck.

Bullets flamed as the distance lessened between the two cars. The Napoleon mobsmen were using a Tommy gun, but so were Tiger's killers. The pursuing car raced alongside the sedan and began to forge ahead. Lead crashed through the windows, and ripped into the flying blur of mud-stained wheels. But not one of the slugs burst a tire.

Tiger's car was almost at the very edge of the road. The chance these determined mobsmen were taking was almost suicidal. They knew that if the speeding cars collided, both would go over the cliff edge together in crashing ruin.

The Napoleon gunmen knew that, too. Their white-faced driver spat an oath and swerved back to safety.

An instant later, the roaring hijack car was ahead of the sedan. It raced at terrific speed toward the fleeing express truck at the foot of the hill.

The narrow wooden bridge loomed like a frail spidery gap over deep nothingness. The truck took the bridge at high speed. But the pursuing car slowed as it crossed the boards.

The thug beside the chauffeur rose suddenly from his cramped position on the floor. He leaned recklessly out of the window, oblivious to the hail of bullets that spat at him from the rear. The fat-barreled pistol in his hand spat flame.

Three times he fired, but he didn't point the muzzle at the black sedan. Instead, he aimed at the planks of the narrow wooden bridge.

There were three prompt explosions. White smoke spurted upward like tendrils of fog. The smoke from the three tiny bombs merged in an impenetrable curtain. Tear gas! That was the grim method used by desperate killers to rid themselves of the sedan and its occupants.

The sedan was going so fast it was unable to stop. It dove at high speed, straight into that deadly fog that shrouded the narrow bridge.

Pain dug at the driver's eyes. Tears blinded him. With lids tightly shut in helpless agony, he tensed his grip on the wheel.

He thought he was holding the wheel rigid, but he wasn't. His right hand unconsciously applied more pressure than the left. The wheel swerved. It was enough to twist the speeding car out of its course. It raced at a blind tangent toward the frail railing of the narrow bridge.

The thugs had no warning of disaster until they felt the crash of splintered wood and the sickening lurch into empty space beneath them. Their shrieks of terror were drowned in the hiss of rain and the rush of wind as the sedan plunged into the chasm.

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It turned over, its wheels spinning uselessly in empty air. A hundred and fifty feet below, it landed with a crash. The roof of the sedan burst apart like crumpled paper. There was a terrific echo of concussion between the sheer rocky walls of the chasm, then flames spurted like blue lightning over the twisted wreckage.

In a moment, the smashed sedan and the dead men inside were in the red heart of licking flames.

TIGER'S men didn't wait to observe all this. Their own car shot ahead. The express truck driver bent every effort of his frightened will to getting more and more speed out of his lumbering vehicle. It was a useless hope.

The grim car in his rear crept closer. As it passed the tailboard of the truck, a man leaped from the running board and swung across. He squirmed inward like an eel. His gun muzzle pointed ominously toward the back of the express driver's head.

The driver glanced back and saw doom pointing at him. He cut his motor and jammed on his brakes. The truck skidded to a halt under the wet branches of overhanging trees.

"Don't shoot!" the driver gasped.

"Yeah?" the gunman behind him grinned.

He thrust his muzzle into the driver's back and fired. The slug crashed through the spine of the unfortunate captive. He was dead before his body slumped from the seat.

The car of Tiger's men had pulled to a stop directly ahead of the halted truck. Now it began to roll slowly ahead. The thug who had murdered the express driver took his place. The truck followed the car.

A quarter mile from the smashed bridge, the guiding car halted. Truck and sedan were backed into a concealing overhang of wet bushes.

A man hurried to a telephone pole and began to climb swiftly. He wore a linesman's climbing spikes, and carried a portable telephone service set slung around his shoulder.

He made a quick connection with the overhead wire, his rubber-gloved fingers working with sure efficiency. In a moment, he was talking with an operator.

"Road repair." He rasped a phone number to the bored operator. "Gimme a connection, sister! I want to talk to my foreman up the line."

His "foreman" was Tiger Marsh. The number was a booth in a small store at a village crossroad five miles ahead. When the storekeeper answered, the man clinging to the telephone pole grinned.

"Lineman reporting. My foreman will be in your place in a minute. Tell him I've fixed the trouble."

He climbed down the pole and discarded his linesman's equipment. The jubilant mobsmen of Tiger Marsh eyed hungrily the locked trunks they had hijacked. They knew the trunks contained dough—big dough! Their greed increased as the minutes passed with no sign of Tiger Marsh.

"Pretty soft," a voice mumbled. "We do the work—Tiger gets the gravy! How much dough do you suppose is in those damned boxes?"

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"A million, or I'm nuts!"

"A million! I'll bet Tiger would never miss a grand outa that pile of jack!"

There was sudden silence among the hijackers. Greedy eyes stared at one another. Tiger was a hell of a long while coming! Maybe he wasn't coming at all. Maybe he'd gotten himself bumped on the way to the rendezvous.

"You guys can do what you like," the first thug whispered. His finger twitched. "I'm gonna sneak me a grand!"

There was uncertain laughter for a moment. Then all five thugs moved by a common impulse toward the locked treasure chests.

They began to attack eagerly the fastenings of the middle trunk. The seals were easy. The locks weren't much harder. But the lid seemed to stick.

"Gimme a hand, somebody. It's stuck tight."

Two men strained at the balky lid. By grimly applied pressure, they got it to lift slowly. As it raised there was a queer grinding noise inside—as though cogs were engaging in a toothed wheel.

"What the hell kind of—"

THE remainder of that sentence was never uttered. Flame gushed upward in a blinding white dazzle that scorched the tops of the trees. The roar of a gigantic explosion awoke clapping echoes in the hills for miles around.

The explosives contained in the two unopened trunks detonated from the concussion of the first blast.

The trunks, the truck, the sedan, the five men—all vanished in that blinding spout of flame. Not a trace was left—not even a tattered remnant of bleeding flesh.

Where the truck and the sedan had stood was a gaping pit in the earth. The nearest trees were stripped of foliage and split asunder. Blackened trunks hung at crazy angles over the pit in the ground. Fire sputtered aimlessly among wet branches.

High up in the gray sky a hawk flew in long circles. The hawk was the only living thing in a vast wilderness of silence.

It continued to circle in the sky. Like a vulture.

CHAPTER XII. THE CROWN BUILDING.

A MAN with the strangely pallid face of Lifer Stone moved quietly along the sidewalk in the rear of the towering Crown Building. He carried a briefcase. His face and his shambling walk marked him as Lifer Stone. But the steady eyes were the eyes of The Shadow.

His eyes took note of his surroundings as he passed. He saw the cavernous traffic entrance where a dimly lighted stone ramp led downward to the Blue Star garage in the basement of the skyscraper. Outside the

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entrance, in a sentry-like box shack, The Shadow could see a man in the uniform of a taxi starter.

The Shadow eased toward the doorway of the sentry shack. When the uniformed starter turned his back, The Shadow dodged inside, grasped the man by the nape of the neck. Pressure he applied to hidden nerve centers paralyzed the man instantly; put him out cold for some time to come.

The Shadow lowered his victim to the floor of the shack. In another instant, the fake Lifer Stone had opened his briefcase. An amazing transformation took place. He was dressed in a long black cloak. Black gloves covered his fingers. A slouch hat shaded the whole upper part of his face, except for the strong beak-like jut of his nose.

From the hunched figure of Lifer Stone, The Shadow had emerged.

He slid quietly out of the door of the shack and glided down the gloomy ramp that led to the Blue Star garage. His blackness seemed part of the wall. Only his eyes reflected light, and they were shielded by the brim of his hat. At the lower end of the ramp he turned a corner, keeping close to the dark wall.

Empty taxicabs were visible, parked in rows. In a clearing under one of the dim overhead lights, a group of taxi drivers were in a circle on hands and knees shooting dice. The Shadow recognized every one of them as a criminal.

He took grim care not to attract their attention. His goal was a sheltered spot where he could observe the loading platform on the opposite side of the garage. Behind the platform was an office.

The door was open and the office seemed empty. But The Shadow suspected that Mike Hammer had vanished inside with a heavy trunk not many minutes earlier.

He waited. He knew that either Con Platt or Andy Martin would be the next to arrive. Their actions would be The Shadow's guide.

It proved to be Andy Martin. The arrival of his cab was the signal for the dice players to abandon their game and scatter to posts overlooking the street exit. Martin got out of the cab, and his driver sprang to assist him. They carried a heavy trunk between them. The two vanished into the little office behind the loading platform, and Martin shut the door.

Five minutes later, the taxi driver came out alone. He got in his cab and drove away. The Shadow began to belly quietly under the bodies of other parked cabs, making his way grimly toward the closed door of the office.

He met disaster almost immediately. As he wriggled between two cabs, an evil face glared at him. A gun butt swung murderously at The Shadow's skull.

THE SHADOW caught the plunging wrist and locked it into rigid helplessness. His other hand closed like a black-gloved vise on the throat of the mobster. The yell of rage and warning was never uttered. A faint gurgle was all that was heard.

Both hands of The Shadow completed their grim work. When he let go his grip, the mobster lay unconscious.

The Shadow shoved the limp body into concealment and continued his advance across the dark floor of the garage.

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The office door opened slightly, stayed that way for an instant, and then closed again.

The Shadow had gained his first objective.

The room was empty; no sign of Andy Martin or the heavy trunk which he had carried inside. Nor could The Shadow discover any trace of an exit. He turned the knob of the only other door visible—a clothes closet.

The Shadow tested the walls and floor and decided there was nothing unusual about this closet. He waited patiently inside, his keen eye at the keyhole.

In ten minutes, his patience was rewarded. Shuffling steps sounded outside. Two men came into the office, stumbling under the weight of a heavy trunk. One of them was a thug wearing the peaked cap of a taxi driver. The other man was Con Platt.

The trunk was a duplicate of the one which Andy Martin had carried into complete invisibility.

The Shadow, watching through the closet keyhole, soon discovered the nature of that cunningly concealed road to invisibility. It was in the wall of the office, directly opposite the spot in which he was crouched.

As he watched, he saw a whole section of the wall slide away, disclosing a small elevator illuminated by a rose-tinted lamp in its ceiling.

A private elevator shaft! Leading either aloft to the pinnacle of the skyscraper, or down into the bowels of the earth—which, The Shadow had no way yet of determining.

Con Platt entered the elevator, the trunk with him. The wall slid back into place. There was no hum from the concealed lift. Nothing but complete silence. The taxi driver turned and left the office.

The Shadow set grimly to work to discover the hidden mechanism of panel that concealed the elevator shaft. Con Platt's pudgy body had shielded whatever his hands had done to spring that panel open. The wall itself was no help. It was blank from ceiling to floor. No decorations or carvings of any kind. Pressure undoubtedly did the trick.

The Shadow began to test every inch of that bare wall.

He was still at work, his eyes blazing with concentration, when he suddenly stiffened. From the garage outside came the reverberating echoes of a yell of surprise and rage.

"Help! Over here! Quick!"

The Shadow divined instantly what had happened. Some one had stumbled across the body of the man he had throttled and shoved out of sight. He could hear excited yells and the rush of feet.

THE SHADOW thought fast. He knew he had no chance whatever to escape from the office in which he was trapped. His only hope lay in bluff. Not as The Shadow but as Lifer Stone!

The man he had throttled had been attacked too quickly to catch a revealing glimpse of his assailant. The darkness in the garage would make any one's clothing seem as black as the disguise The Shadow had used.

Swiftly, The Shadow darted to the clothes closet. He whipped off his black robe and hung it under one of the coats already hanging there. His slouch hat was crumpled in a twinkling, and he shoved it into an overcoat

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pocket.

He had barely closed the closet door when the rush of feet halted ominously outside the office.

The Shadow's hands lifted above his head. He held the palms outward to show they were open and empty. A ripple seemed to pass over his face and extend down his left shoulder into his body. The left shoulder sagged. His body became hulkingly different. His mouth writhed into an ugly leer.

He was grinning as mobsmen of the Fifth Napoleon flung the office door wide on its hinges. He stared at the peering faces and the steady muzzles of guns. Tough words spat cornerwise out of his sullen mouth:

"O. K. pals! You got me! Don't shoot!"

"Lifer Stone! It's Lifer!"

The mobsters yelled it with savage triumph. From the rear, hands went expertly over him and made sure he had no weapon. A thug sprang to the office desk and pressed a button. He spoke into a small object that looked like a black lid from a tin can:

"Agent 2-18-1 reporting!"

He made a quick, staccato report of the discovery and capture of Lifer Stone. Then he was respectfully quiet, evidently listening to inaudible instructions. When he finished, there was a murderous grin on his face. He growled:

"Turn around, Lifer! Face the closet!"

The Shadow obeyed. To have objected would have been to commit suicide. He knew the purpose of this maneuver. He was no longer able to see the section of the wall where the secret panel guarded the hidden elevator shaft.

A minute or two went by. His straining ears could detect no sound. No hum of machinery was audible.

"All right, Lifer!"

The Shadow knew that snarling voice. It was Con Platt's. With empty hands high above his head, The Shadow turned. The elevator panel was open. Con Platt was grinning evilly. Andy Martin was beside him. So was Mike Hammer.

"In!" Con Platt rasped.

Guns emphasized the brief command. The Shadow walked into the elevator. He knew that the panel in the wall was now closed, that the elevator was in motion. But it was intuition that told him, rather than any evidence of his senses. The elevator was a modern one, as completely enclosed as a coffin. The Shadow had no idea whether he was going up or down.

"Just a little trip down into the bowels of the earth," Con Platt murmured, smoothly. "We hope you don't mind, Lifer. You'll be easier to handle, away down where we're going!"

To The Shadow, Platt's remark offered the first definite clue. They were going not down, but up! Con Platt had been a shade too eager with his remark.

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There was no indication that the elevator had stopped; however, another wall panel was now open.

"Out!" Con Platt growled, nudging The Shadow. "Take three steps forward, then halt."

THE SHADOW obeyed. He stepped into a windowless chamber, vividly white under the glow of powerful electric lights. He stared at a tall figure that stood across the room glaring at him through slitted eyeholes.

The figure was like a sheeted pillar of flame. It was covered from head to foot in a robe the color of freshly spilled blood. A scarlet mask hooded the head. Scarlet gloves concealed the hands and wrists. Pointed red slippers peeped from beneath the hem of the robe.

"We welcome you to our little headquarters, Mr. Lifer Stone," the masked figure purred. "We've been waiting to meet you for a long time!"

His voice was like the quavering whisper of a very old man. But again The Shadow's brain discounted the evidence of his senses. He was aware of power, strength, and vitality. He knew he was facing a criminal genius of the underworld.

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CHAPTER XIII. THE HUMAN FLY.

THE SHADOW'S bluff as Lifer Stone had saved him from the smashing impact of mobster bullets. Now he faced death in a slower and more horrible form. His wrists were bound tightly to the arm of a chair.

Behind him stood Mike Hammer with the muzzle of a pistol jammed against the back of The Shadow's skull. Andy Martin and Con Platt were armed and watchful.

On the desk of the Fifth Napoleon was a queer blue-glazed bottle. It looked as if it were made of stone. The Shadow divined that it contained corrosive acid.

The laughter of the Fifth Napoleon was pitiless as he glared at the supposed convict. His blood-red hand picked up a long metal rod. The acid-dipped rod would burn out Lifer Stone's eyes. The red torturer lifted the stopple carefully from the bottle. A haze of spuming vapor eddied upward like steam.

"One by one, our enemies vanish!" the quavering voice boasted. "Tiger Marsh is no longer alive to challenge us. Your death, unless you talk, will be a lot more painful. It will do you no good to scream, because we're deep enough in the earth to be safe from interference."

As the Fifth Napoleon spoke, the earthy smell seemed to become more pronounced. Over the Shadow's head sounded the rumbling roar of a subway train. A moment of silence, then a train roared past in the opposite direction. But The Shadow was not deceived. He knew the moment he heard that subway roar that he was not underground, but high in the air, in the tower of the Crown Building. The noise of the trains was perceptible only in his ears! Had they been real trains, the vibration of their passing would have made a jarring tingling through the soles of his feet.

But there was no vibration whatever, The sound was therefore a purely mechanical one, reproduced on a phonograph record to deceive Lifer Stone and frighten him into talking.

A second bit of observation confirmed The Shadow's certainty. Opposite the wall where the elevator was

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concealed was a tiny white knob on an otherwise smooth wall. The Shadow had noticed it out of the corner of his narrowed eyes. He suspected that behind it was a window overlooking the sunlit rooftops of Manhattan.

"Talk—or die, Lifer!" the hooded leader whispered.

"I dunno nuttin' about the D. A." The Shadow muttered out of the corner of his mouth. "I never had nuttin' to do wit' Tiger Marsh's mob. I'm just a guy outa the Big house, tryin' to git along on me own, see?"

"Then how did you manage to find out the secret of my garage?"

The Shadow was silent. The Fifth Napoleon dipped his metal rod into the blue bottle. Drops of a thick, milky liquid clung hissing to the end of the rod. The Fifth Napoleon leaned forward.

Suddenly, he halted. A bell was buzzing warningly under his desk. He turned toward his black annunciator box.

The message was inaudible to The Shadow. The reply of the Fifth Napoleon betrayed astonishment. Then a grim joy. He turned quickly around, gave swift commands that startled his mob of henchmen.

"Martin, unbind the prisoner's hands! Platt, bring the fingerprint apparatus and the records of Lifer Stone from the files! Hammer, keep your gun steady on the back of the prisoner's skull! If he moves, blow his brains out!"

THE SHADOW'S bonds were cut. Hammer's gun muzzle dug into the captive's skull, forcing him to remain motionless in the chair. Platt returned with an ink pad, sensitized paper, and a sheaf of records.

The Shadow's fingers were smeared over the ink pad and pressed against the paper. The Fifth Napoleon snatched up the prints and compared them with the photographed record in his own hand. He laughed with shrill delight.

"Proof positive! Gentlemen, we've got a more important guest than I dreamed of! This man is not Lifer Stone!

Gasps came from Martin and Platt. "Who is he?"

"The Shadow!"

The Fifth Napoleon's whisper was like a breath of doom.

"The phone call I just listened to was a message from the garage office. The cloak and hat of The Shadow were found hidden in the clothes closet, where he thrust them just before he was captured."

"Dat's a lie!" The Shadow snarled, gruffly. "I dunno whatcha gabbin' about! Youse guys are nuts!"

But he knew he had reached the end of his desperate convict bluff. His feet pressed tautly against the floor.

"Tie up his hands!" the Fifth Napoleon cried.

Platt and Martin leaned to obey. But the thrust of The Shadow's forward springing body sent them flying apart. Mike Hammer's gun roared harmlessly over his hunched shoulder. His hand closed tightly about the bluish acid container.

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He swung the bottle with a quick, spilling motion. The stuff sprayed like fuming, smoky rain. Drops spattered on the mask and robe of the Fifth Napoleon, sending him backward with a yell of agony. Platt threw an arm over his face and reeled dizzily. Andy Martin hurled himself to the floor, his burned hands writhing.

The Shadow didn't wait to observe all this. His crouched body returned to his chair. Mike Hammer's finger was pressing his trigger when the chair went over backward under the thrust of The Shadow's feet. It struck Hammer off balance, upsetting him. He fell sprawling, and the gun bounced from his hand.

Before he could slide forward and grab it, The Shadow had snatched up the gun.

Flame from its jerking muzzle sent the dazed racketeers retreating through the gray haze of the spilled acid. The Shadow sprinted for the white knob in the bare wall opposite.

A quick jerk and it turned. A panel slid back. Blinding sunlight spilled into the room. A window was disclosed, and beyond it the blue sky and the skyscrapers of Manhattan.

The Shadow whirled and emptied his pistol at his foes. Slugs ripped back toward him. But The Shadow had dropped low as he fired. Except for a stinging pain along the flesh of his thigh, he was unhit.

He smashed the window with a blow of his fist. Before the blood could gush from gashed knuckles, he was over the sill. He vanished out into dizzy space hundreds of feet above the ground!

THE dazed Napoleons thought The Shadow had leaped in panic to his death. But The Shadow had not leaped, nor was he in panic. He had seen below the sill of the window a narrow stone ledge that ran horizontally along the face of the building. It was an architectural adornment.

He was moving swiftly along the ledge like a fly on the surface of a vertical sheet of paper. His heels projected into space. His toes shuffled rapidly along. His palms gripped the face of the building, cupped slightly to give him a tiny bit of suction to aid the balance of his body.

As he moved, his eyes veered over his shoulder. His goal was a spot below and opposite him—across a dizzy void of empty air. He had noted that goal in the blinding instant it had taken him to smash the window of the racketeer headquarters and squirm out to the ledge.

Directly behind the Crown Building was the rear of a tall apartment sky scraper. The flat roof contained a penthouse. Between the penthouse and the fenced edge of the roof was a stone race. A blonde in a bathing suit was sunning herself in a deck chair. Close to her chair was a huge lily pond bordered with an ornamental rock garden. The woman had been fast asleep, but the sound of breaking glass had awakened her.

She looked up and saw above her the desperately clinging figure of The Shadow on the wall of the Crown Building. Faces were peering from smashed window through which The Shadow had emerged. Guns pointed at that swiftly moving human fly.

The blonde in the bathing suit screamed.

The Shadow's toes whirled on the narrow ledge. He dove headlong downward through empty space.

He plunged straight for the lily pond on the terrace. His body slanted like an arrow across the ghastly void that separated the two buildings. His aim was true. He missed the rocks that bordered the circular edge of the ornamental pool and struck the water with a tremendous splash.

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The Shadow emerged from the water like a dripping seal. His body ached from the impact in that shallow tank. But there was enough depth of water to save him from a broken neck or sprained limbs.

He clutched at the crumpled figure of the blonde in the wispy bathing suit. She had fainted. The Shadow dragged her under the overhang of the rock garden to protect her from the spray of bullets.

But no more shots roared. The window in the Crown Building had vanished into the blankness of stone. There was no longer any trace of the shattered glass pane through which The Shadow had burst.

A double panel disguised that window opening—one inside and one outside the glass. Both moved together under the impulse of mechanism connected with the white knob inside the room. The face of the building was apparently stone.

The fainting woman would never remember from which level of the Crown Building the shots had come. The ledges on each floor were identical.

THE SHADOW darted into the penthouse. As he made his escape from the apartment building, a burning glint of victory swept the eyes of The Shadow. The Fifth Napoleon knew now that the whereabouts of his million-dollar trunks was known. An attempt would undoubtedly be made to move them to some more secret spot.

When that move took place, The Shadow's veiled eyes would be watching!

CHAPTER XIV. DOUBLE TREACHERY.

A BLUE STAR cab drew to the curb in front of the entrance of a respectable hotel on the West Side. It was the same hotel where Ethel Sherman was hiding under an assumed name.

A man and a woman inside the cab exchanged quick whispers. The man on the rear seat was Con Platt. The woman beside him was a good-looking brunette of the flashy chorus type.

"You sure you got the message straight, Mazie?"

Mazie smiled and showed even, white teeth.

"Don't worry. She'll come out like a baby following a stick of candy! The moment I mention Fred Daniel's name she'll think it's O.K. I'll tell her I'm a reporter from the Classic. As soon as she steps in the cab—"

"All right, babe. Get going!"

The brunette vanished into the hotel with a confident smile. But she was gone barely two minutes. Then she reappeared with a haste that resembled panic. She was still alone. With a frightened oath, she flung herself into the cab alongside the startled Platt.

"Get this cab outa here—quick!"

The cab shot away.

"She's gone!" Mazie gasped, fiercely, "Ethel Sherman's been snatched! We got here too late!"

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Platt listened with a startled frown to the swift story of the brunette.

Ethel Sherman had checked out of the hotel twenty minutes earlier. A man had called for her, and after listening to his story, the district attorney's gullible daughter had left hurriedly with him.

"He had the nerve," Mazie cried, harshly, "to say he was a reporter from the Classic, and a friend of Fred Daniel, the managing editor! I pumped the dame at the desk and then beat it."

"What did the guy look like?"

There was fear in Mazie's voice: "The guy that snatched Ethel Sherman was a tall bozo with flaming-red hair and deep-blue eyes. The woman at the desk remembered the blue eyes distinctly. She said they were hard to forget."

"Tiger Marsh!"

"Right!"

"But that mug's dead! He was blown to hell in an explosion!"

Platt leaned forward. He shoved the glass panel aside with a force that cracked the pane.

"Back to the garage, Pete!" he yelled to the driver. "Make it fast!"

The cab's speed increased. It threaded through traffic like a busy needle sewing through cloth. Con Platt's face was a pasty-white. Tiger Marsh had not only escaped death; he had beaten the Napoleons to their trump card. He had snatched the D. A.'s daughter for a hostage.

A queer sense of impending doom made the hair crawl on Con Platt's scalp.

TIGER MARSH was smiling crookedly. In a shabby room, lighted by the glare of a lamp on the table, he was snarling a curt order to a terrified girl. The girl was Ethel Sherman.

"Get on that phone and tell your father it's really you! Tell him it's no use trying to trace the call. This phone is on a tap from a feed cable. It'd take a company trouble-shooter a week to locate it. Go ahead, talk!"

The frightened girl stared at Tiger's bristling red hair, at the relentless blue eyes under his shaggy brows. Trembling, she picked up the phone. She spoke to Judge Sherman, who was waiting in puzzlement at the other end of the wire.

She begged her father to follow Tiger's directions. Then a ruthless hand dragged her away from the phone. A henchman of Tiger's tied and gagged her. Tiger himself took the phone.

"You heard your daughter's voice, judge. Are you satisfied now?"

"Yes! For God's sake, don't harm her! I'll do anything you say."

"What phone are you talking on? The one in your front parlor?"

"Yes."

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"Then you're sitting right near the window. Make a double cross mark on the windowpane with your finger and tell me what you see."

There was a pause. Then:

"A man's coming across the street," Sherman whispered. "He's walking up the front stoop. He's ringing the bell."

"O. K." Tiger said. "Go to the front door and take what he gives you. Then come back to the phone."

Again there was a pause. A longer one. Then:

"He gave me a cigar," Sherman whispered.

"Correct! Now I know you're telling the truth. You'll have to, if you expect to save your daughter's life. Listen carefully."

He told the terrified judge that the cigar was drugged. He ordered him to call up Joe Cardona and get him to come at once to the house.

The moment Joe arrived, he was to be informed that Sherman's daughter had been snatched. The source of the information was to be credited to Fred Daniel, managing editor of the Classic. Fred had supposedly traced the kidnapers to their hiding place and was watching the outside of the hangout.

"Tell Cardona you got a car waiting outside." Tiger snarled. "He'll go with you when you mention Fred Daniel's name. Explain to Cardona it's gotta be a personal rescue job, with just him and you and Fred Daniel. A police raid would tip off the crooks and get the girl killed. Got all that?"

"Yes--yes!"

There'll be a limousine waiting at the curb for you and Cardona. As soon as the car starts, light up a cigar and give the drugged one to Joe. He's a fiend for cigars; he'll smoke up and pass out. Leave the rest to the driver. He'll give you directions on where to find your daughter. It's an even exchange, see? You get your daughter unharmed--and we get Joe Cardona!"

"I'll--I'll do as you say," the judge breathed. "Please don't hurt my daughter! Who--who are you?"

It was the question that Tiger Marsh had been waiting for, with cunning patience. To answer it falsely was part of his crooked scheme. His chuckle was like the clink of an ice cube.

"Maybe my name will be a guarantee that I mean business. You're doing business with--the Fifth Napoleon!"

There was a gasp from the other end of the wire. In a quiet room miles away from the mobsmen of Tiger Marsh, the district attorney hung up a dead instrument with a shaking hand.

TEN minutes later, Joe Cardona walked into the judge's living room. The moment he saw Sherman's pale face, he knew something was badly wrong. He rapped out an anxious question. Sherman gulped. Smoothly, he told the lying story that would doom Joe to death.

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Cardona swallowed the bait without suspicion. He picked up the phone. Before the special district attorney could halt him, he had asked for police headquarters.

"Joe--don't!" Sherman cried. "They will kill Ethel!"

Cardona grinned. "Take it easy! I'm not gumming things, judge. This is something else. If what you say is true, the Napoleons are all away from their personal hangouts. I'm going to order simultaneous raids on the homes of Con Platt, Andy Martin and Mike Hammer. I've had search warrants ready for weeks for just such an opportunity."

In spite of Sherman's shrill objections, Joe put through the order for the triple raid. Then he turned grimly on his heel, asked:

"You got a gun with you?... Good! Let's go!"

They stepped into the parked limousine that was waiting outside. Cardona frowned as he stared at the tough visage of the chauffeur.

"Who is that guy?"

"He's all right," Sherman lied. "He's a chauffeur for the news photographers on the Classic when they have to get places in a hurry. The sedan belongs to the newspaper. Fred Daniel sent it here to pick us up"

He lighted a cigar with nervously eager fingers. Then he offered Joe the drugged cigar, and the inspector took it casually and fished for a match.

The limousine was rolling along at an easy pace. The driver was watching his rear-vision mirror. He saw something that neither of his two passengers observed. Another sedan was following the first.

A crafty gleam came into the chauffeur's eyes. He had a second mirror fixed so that he could also watch the two men in the rear. He saw Cardona strike a match and hold its glowing flame to the tip of the drugged cigar. As Joe sucked the flame close to the tip of the cigar, the district attorney's hand shot out. He clutched the cigar from the astonished mouth of the detective and threw it on the floor. Sherman's hand bit like steel into the arm of Cardona. His lips brushed Joe's ear.

"It's drugged!" he whispered. "Quick! Light one of your own. Don't let the driver suspect anything." The driver was still facing straight ahead. Apparently, he had not noticed the action behind him. While Cardona quickly fished in his pocket and lit a fresh cigar of his own, Sherman's whisper at his ear acquainted him with part of the truth.

"I couldn't go through with it, Joe," the district attorney gasped. "Not even to save the life of my own daughter. It's a trap! But I don't think it's the Fifth Napoleon! I think we're up against Tiger Marsh!"

"What makes you think that?"

"It's—it's just a hunch."

"O. K." Joe replied, softly. "We'll make things look good."

He inhaled deeply on his own cigar and pretended to sway. He leaned up against the side of the car and closed his eyes. One of his hands dropped sleepily. It dropped near the spot where Joe had a police gun

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concealed. Slowly, his fingers felt for the butt of the hidden weapon.

Joe shouldn't have closed his eyes. He didn't see the signal that passed between the chauffeur and the driver of trailing sedan.

The latter car swerved quickly into the curb and halted. Instantly, Cardona's driver did the same. He jammed on his brakes and leaped out to the sidewalk. He began to run swiftly away.

CARDONA wrenched open the door and Sherman sprang after him. A bullet from Joe's gun whizzed over the head of the fleeing chauffeur. But it didn't stop him. He ran straight past the second limousine parked at the curb.

This time, Joe aimed to bring down his man. But before his finger could tighten on the trigger, he realized that he had rushed headlong into a cunningly baited trap. A spurt of flame roared from the driver's seat of the second limousine. A bullet struck Joe's gun and sent it whirling from his paralyzed hand. His arm dropped limply to his side.

In that instant, things happened with the speed of lightning. From the stalled limousine, four men sprang to the sidewalk. Two of them leaped at Cardona. Two more closed off the retreat of Sherman.

Joe had no time to bend and clutch for his fallen weapon. He whirled, and struck out awkwardly with his fist. He staggered his nearest foe, but the second thug closed in grimly. The butt of a pistol made a loud crack against Cardona's skull. The detective went down like a toppling tree.

No attempt was made to slug Sherman. A gun muzzle dug into his ribs and a hoarse voice snarled:

"Quick! Into that car!"

Sherman obeyed instantly.. Cardona was lugged after him like a sack of meal. The door slammed. The limousine sped away from the curb.

Joe Cardona lay unconscious on the floor. Sherman crouched beside him. The D. A. was fully conscious, but he made no effort to grapple with the hijackers. There was a queer spot of color in either cheek.

One of his captors said jovially:

"Well, judge, whaddya got to say?"

Sherman didn't utter a sound.

The car's speed was no longer so fast. Its goal was evidently far uptown. It crossed the Harlem River and entered the Bronx. Soon, it slowed in a desolate region of factories, warehouses and tumbledown frame dwellings.

The car halted outside the fence of an abandoned lumber yard. An alley alongside led to a frame cottage in the rear. To the left of the alley an empty sedan was parked at the curb. To the right, at the end of the long, unkempt street, was a station of the East Side subway.

Sherman made no effort to chide his captors. He stepped from the car and moved quietly along with his armed guard. Two other thugs took care of the slugged Cardona. They walked him between them as if he were a drunk.

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The two victims were hurried swiftly through the back door of the house behind the lumber yard. They were bound hand and foot. Cardona was tossed on the floor. Sherman was forced into a heavy chair and both his wrists were bound. No attention was paid to the unconscious Cardona.

Shuffling feet sounded from the hall. Two men appeared, carrying a chair in which a girl was helplessly tied. The girl was Ethel Sherman. A dirty gag was jammed tightly in her mouth, and her eyes were haggard with terror.

But Sherman avoided his daughter's gaze. He kept staring at the floor.

His eyes lifted warily as Tiger Marsh came into the room. Tiger's laughter was clipped and unpleasant. He stood there, tall, red-headed, his eyes a deep, challenging blue as he stared at Sherman.

"How do you feel about meeting the Fifth Napoleon, judge?" Tiger challenged.

Sherman didn't reply. A moment later, a gag ended his chance to talk. A nod from Tiger Marsh ordered his henchmen to pick up the unconscious body of Cardona. Joe was carried from the room. Tiger followed them to the doorway, and then halted.

"Make yourself comfortable," he told Sherman and the girl, with bitter irony. "I'll be back after I finish a certain job. Then I'll attend to you!"

The door slammed. The lock turned. The room became very quiet.

CHAPTER XV. NAPOLEON'S FLIGHT.

ETHEL SHERMAN'S eyes were like pleading flame, as she glared helplessly at her father. He struggled at his tight bonds. It was an impossible task. He abandoned the effort almost at once.

But he had no intention of waiting until Tiger Marsh returned. Slowly, he began to hunch his heavy chair forward, hopping it awkwardly along the floor an inch at a time.

Ethel saw instantly what he had in mind. He was facing a low table near the wall. A glass-shaded electric lamp stood on that table, affording the only illumination in the room. A black shade over the window kept out all light from the outside. Sherman's awkward shoving with his chair was a grim effort to reach the table and upset the lamp.

The heaviness of the chair spoiled his eager plan. As he leaned forward, his body tense with effort, he bent too far off balance. He fell to the floor with a crashing thump. The heavy chair pinned him underneath. He tried to drag it like a tortoise with a huge, unwieldy shell; but the weight was too much.

Exhausted, he lay still.

But he hadn't reckoned on the fortitude of his daughter. Ethel began the same slow advance that had ended in disaster for her father. Her chair was lighter and she was more careful.

She reached the table and managed to get one stiff knee jammed under its low edge. Then she turned sharply with every ounce of energy in her lithe young body.

Her knee threw the table over. The weight of her falling chair carried lamp and table with her.

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There was a crash, the jangle of glass as the lamp shade shattered. A loud pop came from the electric bulb. The glass shade broke into thin, jagged pieces. They fell too far away for the girl to reach.

Her father, however, was able to hunch forward and touch one of the fragments. Its edges were razor-sharp. Blood dripped from Sherman's limber fingers as he twisted them toward a wrist. He began to saw fiercely at the cords that held wrist and arm rigidly to the chair arm.

Bit by bit, he got a cord sawed through. It loosened the tight web of his bonds and made the rest easier. Presently, one hand sprang free. The other followed almost instantly. He snatched the gag from his mouth and freed his legs.

Staggering, he approached his daughter. He jerked the gag from her mouth and slashed her bonds.

"Quick!" she gasped. "We've got to get out of here!"

He didn't reply. Swiftly, he approached the window and lifted the shade. He was staring into a deserted alley, not more than six feet below the level of the sill. He opened the window cautiously and peered.

A sharp look came into his eyes, but he veiled it before he turned to Ethel.

His bleeding fingers caught her tightly by the arm.

"Listen carefully, and you can escape without danger. In a moment, I'm going to lower you to the alley. There's a subway station at the corner. Take the subway straight home! As soon as you get there, telephone Fred Daniel at the Classic. Tell him to come to you at once, that you're in terrible trouble. With Fred in the house with you, you will be safe. And don't notify the police!"

For the first time, Ethel Sherman realized the queer significance of her father's words. Her frightened eyes widened.

"I don't understand. Aren't you coming with me?"

"I'll—I'll join you later. I've—I've got to stay here to get evidence to help"—he swallowed nervously, and avoided her eyes—"to help Joe Cardona."

Ethel shook her head. She refused to leave. But her father's will was stronger than hers. Before she was aware what was happening, she was boosted across the sill and dropped to the alley below by the muscular strength of the district attorney. His eyes glared down at her. They were adamant.

"I'll join you at home in a few minutes. Go!"

SOBBING helplessly, the girl was lowered to the alley. She fled obediently toward the street. She could see the subway station at the far corner. But before hurrying to its protection, she glanced in the opposite direction. At the curb, black and empty, was the motionless shape of a parked sedan.

Something about the appearance of that deserted car gave Ethel Sherman a feeling of cold apprehension. She couldn't tell why, but in some unexplained fashion the limousine made her recall the flush on her father's face, the strange look in his lidded eyes.

She walked toward the subway station. But she didn't go all the way to the corner. Ethel glided swiftly into a near-by doorway and watched the silent black car at the curb.

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For five minutes, nothing happened. Then the skulking figure of Judge Sherman came into sight. He didn't follow his daughter, as he had promised. Hurrying to the parked car, he sprang in and started the motor.

The car glided away like a black wraith through thin sunlight.

Ethel gave a low exclamation of horror. Her father had deliberately lied to her. His only purpose had been to get rid of her.

The girl's heart was sick with terror and suspicion. Then her dazed muscles stirred. She sprang from the doorway, a look of determination on her lovely face.

There was a coupe near the corner where the black limousine had swerved out of sight. Ethel Sherman began to swiftly toward it.

IN the tower headquarters of the Fifth Napoleon, Andy Martin and Con Platt paced nervously up and down. There was worry on their pudgy faces. For the first time in the history of these grim conferences, Mike Hammer was late.

But Martin and Platt forgot about him in the throes of a more definite uneasiness. Their eyes swung toward an empty desk on a raised dais, and toward the smooth wall behind it.

The Fifth Napoleon had not yet arrived. He was late for the conference that he himself had called!

Suddenly, the wall on the opposite side of the room opened. Rosy light gleamed from the interior of the secret elevator. Mike Hammer sprang out and came rushing across the room. His voice was a hoarse bellow.

"All hell was busted loose! Where's the chief? Hasn't he—"

"Quiet! a quavering voice interrupted shrilly.

The three men whirled. The Fifth Napoleon was standing like a pillar of scarlet flame behind the flat sheen of his desk. He had entered the room while the others were staring at the excited face of Mike Hammer. The Fifth Napoleon was panting. He was like a man who has just finished a swift, hard-run race.

Mike Hammer disobeyed the stern injunction for silence.

"We've got to scram!" he yelled. "The police have started to crack down on us! That's why I'm late! The cops are raiding my home right now! They smashed in with axes and crowbars! I'm telling you, we—"

He was interrupted by a buzzing clamor from the black annunciator box on the desk. The Fifth Napoleon's hand darted to a switch.

"Report!" he cried.

Swift, desperate words became instantly audible:

"Operator 6-27-18 reporting—a police raid—front and rear—they're smashing in right now—"

Con Platt gasped. The voice on the wire was one of his own bodyguards. It was Con Platt's house the police were now raiding. A simultaneous attack! Undoubtedly, at this same instant, a third squad of cops was smashing into Andy Martin's home!

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The voice of the man on the wire continued to gasp his panting warning from the doomed dwelling of Con Platt:

"We're trying to—hold 'em off—but it's tough! Everybody's been shot down but me and Biff. We're barricaded in room here—with phone. We—"

A rending crash broke through his words. "There goes the door down!... Let 'em have the Tommy gun, Biff!"

The roar of gunfire was horribly audible over the wire. It was ended by a piercing cry. The voice in the black box ceased. The wire was dead.

THE Fifth Napoleon snapped the switch, closing the circuit. He was no longer panting. He seemed to have recovered his evil wits.

"You're quite right," he told Hammer, swiftly. "All hell has broken loose! We've been double-crossed and tricked! And by a man I thought was dead. We've got to retreat from New York at once, with every dollar of loot in those three sealed trunks! Tiger Marsh has kidnapped the D. A.'s daughter—and has made the police think that we did the job!"

"Tiger Marsh—alive?" Mike Hammer looked incredulous. "How can that be? We blew him up in an explosion! He was smashed to atoms!"

"We only thought we did," the Fifth Napoleon purred. "Platt found that out when I sent him to kidnap Ethel Sherman. Tiger snatched her first; and I have proof he threw the blame for the snatch on me!"

His blood-red arm swept outward in an ominous gesture.

"Get those money trunks into the elevator and down to the basement garage. We've got to abandon headquarters here, at once! The police will have evidence that will bring them straight to the Crown Building. But they'll find neither the treasure nor us. We'll retreat upstate to my personal headquarters on the Hudson River."

In an instant, the room was a scene of efficient energy. The three locked trunks which Tiger Marsh's gang had vainly tried to hijack, appeared from the secret recess where they had been concealed. Men in the uniform of taxi drivers poured into the room. The trunks were lifted and carried swiftly into the rose-lit interior of the elevator. It dropped thirty-five stories to the cavernous garage in the basement of the building.

Hammer and Platt and followed the loot.

The Fifth Napoleon was the last to leave the room. Before he fled he disappeared into the walled chamber behind his desk. He came out, carrying a sheath of papers in a huge metal drawer from his filing cabinet.

He splashed acid over the papers and documents. There was a hissing sound and the soaked papers burst into flame. In an instant, they were consumed to a pale-yellowish ash. The gloved fist of the criminal leader sent the ash whirling into tiny fragments like drifting snowflakes.

The Fifth Napoleon darted to the elevator and descended after his men.

In the dim garage in the skyscraper's basement, there was no evidence of noise or confusion. A steel door that guarded the ramp leading upward to the street level was now shut. Three taxicabs stood in line facing that closed door. Mike Hammer was in the first cab. Con Platt sat in the second. Andy Martin was ready in the

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third. Two gunmen sat with each of the three racket lieutenants.

A little to the left of the taxicabs stood a closed van. As the Fifth Napoleon appeared, the door in the rear of the van was opened by a grim-faced thug. Inside the van, three locked trunks were visible.

"Leave here five minutes apart!" the Fifth Napoleon warned his henchmen. "Remember the schedule, and follow it exactly!"

He sprang lithely into the van with the trunks. The rear was closed and locked. The van rumbled toward the ramp door. As it halted for an instant, the barrier slid aside. The van rolled up the concrete incline and turned into the busy avenue overhead.

The van, with a king's ransom in loot in the trunks, was headed for a stronghold on the banks of the Hudson, where the police or Tiger Marsh would be powerless to interfere.

Or The Shadow!

The Fifth Napoleon swore harshly, as the name of the black-robed enemy of crime swam like an evil portent into his mind. He knew now the secret of Lifer Stone. He realized that Lifer and The Shadow were the same personality.

But he no longer feared The Shadow. He was playing cunningly the cards fate had dealt him. He was content.

FIVE minutes after the van rumbled up the avenue, the first taxicab left the basement of the Crown Building. Mike Hammer's beady eyes could see no sign of danger.

He was followed by Con Platt. Then Andy Martin.

The mobsmen left in the garage basement departed quietly on foot. When the police arrived, they would find nothing except a few empty Blue Star taxi-cabs laid up for repairs. The place was deserted—a cleaned-out shell. The police would be baffled.

But Tiger Marsh knew exactly what was going on. He had anticipated just such a maneuver and was ready for his final blow against the gang he had sworn to wipe out.

The Shadow, too, was ready. He was concealed a hundred yards from the Crown Building's basement ramp when the cunning exodus took place. The Shadow noted the well-spaced retreat led by the innocent van.

Flame seemed to gather in the steady eyes over that strong, hawklike nose. Sibilant laughter came from between the tightly compressed lips. The Shadow, too, held cards dealt to him by fate. He was ready to play the final hand.

CHAPTER XVI. LABYRINTH OF DEATH.

A MAN peered warily from interlaced branches that formed a thick screen along a country road. The man's nose was thin, with cruel, flaring nostrils. He had beady, cunning eyes. He had used those eyes to good advantage on the wooded terrain that lay between this unfrequented road and the near-by Hudson.

He knew that a quarter mile to the south, a lane led to a clearing atop a sheer bluff that overlooked the broad river. He had discovered more than that: things that made his beady eyes glisten with triumph.

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In a bend of the road just ahead, he could see a group of highway workers repairing the rutted surface. At least, they were supposed to be highway workers. But the man with the thin nose knew better than that. He approached them at a quick trot.

His glance darted past a supply truck and a trailer drawn up at the road's edge. He hurried to where the foreman sat on the stump of a tree, whittling carelessly at a stick.

The foreman was tall and muscular. He had bristly red hair, and blue eyes that were uncannily bright and piercing. He uttered a quick exclamation when he saw the approaching spy. The foreman of this fake road-repair gang was Tiger Marsh.

Tiger's eyes gleamed as he listened to a shrewd and comprehensive report.

Leaping to his feet, he blew a shrill summoning note on a whistle he jerked from his overall pocket. The effect was magical.

The half dozen workers ran toward the truck. Shovels and picks were tossed aboard with a clatter. Tiger Marsh had already unlocked the closed trailer in the rear. From beneath its steel lid came an amazing assortment of deadly weapons. There were lean-barreled rifles, a Tommy gun, rounds of ammunition, tear-gas bombs.

Tiger Marsh motioned to one of his men to follow him. He sprang up into the truck on the heels of his leader. A rubber poncho was drawn aside from a bulky bundle. The pale face and staring eyes of Joe Cardona were disclosed!

Tiger chuckled as he saw the helpless rage in Cardona's eyes. The detective was gagged and bound. Cords held his wrists and ankles immovable. But Joe's expression of rage and despair was a deliberate effect to deceive his red-haired captor.

He was too old a hand to allow hastily applied bonds to sink too deeply into his flesh. He still had a precious amount of flexibility in his joined wrists. His fingers had patiently wormed into a slitted pocket of the poncho that covered him. He knew that the pocket contained a carelessly overlooked knife.

Joe was waiting for a reasonable chance for his life, before he slashed his bonds and went into action against Tiger's gang.

Tiger threw the loose end of the poncho back over the prisoner.

"Watch this dick with both eyes," he told his henchman, who now had an automatic in his hand. "Croak him if you have to; but don't shoot unless he tries to make a break. He's a lot more valuable to me as a living hostage than he is as a corpse."

THE thin-nosed spy led the gang into the green fringe of trees that lined the road. Tiger was the last one out of sight, but he moved up quickly to the head of his attacking party as the gunmen slipped silently ahead under cover. They crossed a narrow lane that led inward toward the Hudson. Hidden by pine and spruce, they followed its course.

Suddenly, the trees thinned out and a clearing was disclosed. A cottage stood in that clearing, its front facing the tiny lane, its rear perched on the top of a sheer cliff that dropped vertically to the river.

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Tiger was staring at the last retreat of the Fifth Napoleon. He knew it from the report of his spy. He knew it also from the steel shutters that covered the windows. The shutters were painted green to resemble wood, but Tiger was not deceived. The frail-looking door of that cottage was chrome steel, tougher than the protection afforded many a bank vault.

Directly in front of the cottage was a grassy hollow in which an enormous stone boulder rested. The grass was long and unkempt. Tiger sent three of his men bellying through the weeds to the protection of the boulder. Their purpose was to rain bombs and bullets toward the front of that silent house as a cover for Tiger's activities in the rear. They awaited only the signal.

The remaining three thugs accompanied Tiger through the screen of underbrush that paralleled the clearing. There was no sign of a covered van or of three taxicabs. The only evidence was the track of their tires in the soft earth.

The tracks led to the edge of the cliff. Apparently, van and taxicabs had been driven straight into space, and had plunged hundreds of feet into the depths of the river far below!

But Tiger chuckled. The last ten feet of the trail was faked, deliberately made with a spare tire. The vehicles had not gone over the edge of the cliff. They had descended into the cliff itself, on the platform of an enormous freight elevator.

Its platform was covered with earth and leaves, but it was possible to see the square crack in the earth, uncovered by the sharp eyes and busy hands of the spy. Overhanging the platform was the apparently dead branch of a near-by oak tree.

The branch was the key to the hidden elevator. The end of it was hinged. About six inches or so could be lifted upward to a vertical position.

Tiger waited, watching the hands of his timepiece. Suddenly, his fingers closed on the camouflaged lever. As he did so, all hell seemed to break loose in front of the besieged cottage. The thugs behind the boulder in the grassy hollow had opened up with rifles and Tommy guns. The crashing roar of tear-gas bombs added to the din.

Tiger shoved the lever on the branch end upward. Instantly, the earth under his feet began to drop smoothly downward. The elevator was descending into the unexplored depths of the cliff. It carried with it Tiger Marsh and three grim-faced killers.

THE steep walls of the earthen shaft rose higher and higher. The opening at the top dwindled to a tiny square of daylight. Then the elevator halted without a jar. It had reached the bottom of the shaft.

The mystery of the vanished vehicles was immediately solved. Van and taxicabs were parked to the left of a dimly lit tunnel in what proved to be a huge underground garage. Tiger wasted no time on the garage and its empty vehicles.

He sprang rapidly through the tunnel, followed by his men. They passed groined openings in the wall leading to smaller chambers. But all of the earth-floored chambers were silent and empty.

Suddenly, the tunnel opened into a large rock-floored gallery. The invaders halted, eyes startled, weapons grimly alert. There seemed to be only two exits from this queer gallery—and both of them suggested peril. The peril of the fantastic and the unknown!

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In the center of the rock floor was a deep well. It had a hinged metal cover, but the cover was turned back. A stout hook in the masonry supported a dangling length of knotted rope that descended into black depths. Tiger's electric torch was unable to pierce to the bottom of those depths.

He turned. He stared at the opening of a long, horizontal corridor.

The corridor, unlike the rest of the underground labyrinth, was brilliantly lit. It was paved with neither earth nor rock. It was like a modernistic experiment of a man gone mad. Walls and floor and ceiling were paved with broad alternate strips of colored tile, red, white and yellow.

The distant end of the passage was not visible. Tiger sensed unexplained danger as he gazed at that brightly colored maze. Sternly, he forbade his men to set foot in it. He posted two of his henchmen at the entrance, with guns ready for action. He took the third man back with him to the circular opening of the well.

Reverberations of distant firing sounded dully through the earth. It was the echo of Tiger's front guard; attacking grimly to create a disturbance and draw the defending mobsmen of Napoleon to the front of the house perched atop the cliff. The hijack plan was proceeding as smoothly as the tick of Tiger's watch.

With an oath of satisfaction, Tiger seized the knotted rope that hung straight down into the well. He lowered himself until he was hanging with one hand on the rope and the other supporting himself on the circular stone edge. The henchman with him was frightened. He spat a warning to his red-haired leader.

"Take it easy, boss! You don't know what's down that damned hole!"

"I'm gonna find out. I've got a hunch this is the way to their hidden dough! That tiled corridor over there looks phony. Don't let any one set foot in it! Watch this rope, and cover me up here while I take a look."

His red head vanished. The rope swayed from his dangling weight as he went down, down, into black circular depths. The light of his torch flickered like the pale-yellow spark of a firefly.

Suddenly, there was a tremendous explosion. The earth shook from a distant concussion. Its source was above the surface of the ground—from the front of the cottage atop the cliff.

A yell came from the eager throat of the thug guarding the well—His shout was echoed by the men at the mouth of the brightly lit tiled passage. Their brains recorded an identical thought: Their pals up above had succeeded in blasting down the steel front door with their bombs. Front and rear, the Napoleons were now under attack. The way was open to finish them!

OBLIVIOUS to the orders they had received from Tiger Marsh, the men darted into the tiled tunnel. They divined that this passage led directly into the cottage, through an opening in the cellar floor. They rushed headlong toward doom.

The man on guard at the well saw the grisly thing happen. There was no warning sound. For an instant the rushing mobsmen were clearly visible, racing along the tiled floor. Then the whole floor vanished! The tiles pivoted into a vertical position. Through a black yawning chasm the henchmen of Tiger Marsh fell to their death. They had no time to even utter a scream.

The floor became solid again, as the colored tiles returned to a horizontal position.

The attackers' blind eagerness had betrayed them. They didn't know it, but only the red tiles were solid. The Napoleon mobsters, when they used this tunnel, stepped only on the scarlet slabs.

The Fifth Napoleon

The source of that distant explosion, too, was not what Tiger's men had divined. It marked the bloody end of Tiger's attacking party out front. The ground under the huge boulder in the grassy hollow had been carefully mined. The Fifth Napoleon had expected attack from that spot. With the energy of a single electric spark, he had blown his enemies to atoms.

Except for a lone terrified gunman, crouched above the lip of the stone well, and the red-headed leader clinging to a rope far down in the known depths, Tiger's mob had been wiped out!

The thug on guard screamed a hoarse warning into the pit. He began to heave desperately at the knotted rope; trying to drag Tiger back to the surface.

CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW FLEES.

SUDDENLY, the thug's terrified face jerked round. Behind him, a barking laugh had echoed.

A tall figure in blood-red robes was pointing an automatic pistol at the doomed mobster. The Fifth Napoleon had appeared swiftly from nothingness to finish the slaughter of his foes.

He fired a split-second before Tiger's henchman could press his own trigger. His bullet struck the dazed thug squarely between the eyes, killing him instantly. He crumpled alongside the open mouth of the well.

The Fifth Napoleon hurdled the limp corpse. He stared down at the twisting rope in the well. He knew that below him, Tiger Marsh was a helpless target. His gun made hollow thunder as he fired straight down.

There was a faint cry of pain. Then silence. But the silence was only of momentary duration. It was followed by an eerie echo. The sound of something splashing into unseen water.

The Fifth Napoleon's laughter was like the bubbling mirth of a maniac. He bent and seized the slack body of the dead thug. He threw him headlong into the well. Again the distant splash from those black depths below was repeated.

The robed criminal leader bent to cover the top of the well with its hinged lid. But his gesture was not completed. The rapid clanging of a bell sounded. It was exactly like the brisk clamor of an ambulance bell.

The Fifth Napoleon had not expected to hear that signal. It meant that the freight elevator that led from the surface of the cliff to the underground garage was again in motion. Some one was descending as Tiger Marsh and his men had done.

The red Napoleon raced with noiseless steps to intercept this last enemy. He didn't go all the way to the garage. He halted alertly in an opening of the tunnel, waiting to catch a glimpse of his visitor before he cut him down with a stream of hot lead.

THE passenger on that descending elevator was a swarthy-faced man with a resolute mouth and steady eyes.

Joe Cardona!

The fact that he was on the elevator and not a helpless prisoner guarded by a thug on a highway truck, was due to Joe's calm will and the swiftness of his muscles. His opportunity had come from the roar of the explosion that had wiped out Tiger's advance party and the boulder behind which they were crouched.

The Fifth Napoleon

Joe's hands and wrists were free of bonds when that booming blast had echoed through the trees. Unknown to his captor, he had managed to slide the knife from the pocket of the rubber poncho that covered him. Patiently, he had worked at the cords, until they frayed and parted. He lay quietly, waiting—

Then, as the explosion roared, the thug guarding Joe had turned his face with a startled oath. Cardona, leaping upward, swinging a hard, hamlike fist, had knocked the guard out cold before the man was aware of danger.

Before he could recover, Joe snatched the gun from his paralyzed fingers.

A little investigation around the blasted house had shown Joe where Tiger and his men had gone. A square, yawning hole in the earth disclosed the presence of the elevator shaft.

The platform was down at the bottom. The bough of an oak tree hung across the pit. It didn't take Joe long to discover that the limb held the lever that moved the elevator. He jerked it upright. The elevator at the bottom of the shaft rose at once.

The minute it halted at the ground level, Joe jerked the lever the opposite way, then dropped to the surface of the lift as it began to descend. Steep earth walls of the shaft rushed upward past him. Joe's grip tightened on the gun he had wrenched from the guard's unconscious hand.

At the bottom of the shaft he discovered the underground garage, with its van and three taxicabs. He could see no sign of any human being. He began to glide warily through a narrow tunnel, watching keenly for signs of attack or ambush.

Suddenly, he halted. Ahead of him he had caught a quick glimpse of scarlet. The glimpse was only momentary, but it was enough to identify that skulking figure. It was the Fifth Napoleon!

THE scarlet robe seemed to vanish abruptly through the solid wall of the tunnel. Joe Cardona crept forward.

There was an opening in the side of the tunnel. Through this opening the Fifth Napoleon had glided. The deep shadow in the passage had hidden the existence of the opening until Joe had almost reached it.

He peered through, only one eye and part of his ear visible. Amazement flooded him. The room beyond the tunnel was empty!

He made sure by searching it carefully. Then he began to move quietly along the stone-lined walls, tapping with the butt of his gun to find some evidence of a hollow exit. He had covered almost one side of the chamber when he heard a sharp click. He whirled, crowding close to the dark wall behind him.

This time, Joe was unable to repress a cry. A stone had pivoted from its place, revealing another passage. A figure had already stepped through that opening. Not a man, but—a woman! A slim, pretty girl with crimson lips and wide, frightened eyes.

Ethel Sherman!

Joe's cry warned her. It revealed his presence across the room. She screamed as he sprang toward her. She shrank backward in a panicky effort to escape. As she did so, her ankle turned, throwing her off balance.

Cardona, racing grimly forward, was about to clutch her, when help came to the girl from an unexpected savior.

The Fifth Napoleon

A man's face glared from the black exit where the girl was swaying. His hand caught at her, yanked her swiftly out of sight. As Cardona dove forward, the stone that concealed the exit swung swiftly back into place. He tried to jerk it loose on its concealed pivot, but his adversary was too quick for him.

There was a dull click. The stone refused to budge. It was locked rigidly into place on the other side.

Cardona stared dully at the stone. An expression of utter bewilderment came into his swarthy countenance. He had recognized that man who had snatched Ethel Sherman away. It was the girl's own father! Judge Sherman, special district attorney in charge of the prosecution of rackets!

The revelation was so shocking that for a moment, Joe lost his head completely. An innocent girl, caught in the depths of a criminal labyrinth, snatched from Cardona's helping hands by her own father! And in a spot where only a moment before the sly, blood-red figure of the Fifth Napoleon had vanished with such swift ease!

CARDONA raced recklessly through the garage tunnel, hoping to find an intersection where he could head off Judge Sherman. The suspicion in his eyes hardened into certainty. He knew now that the Fifth Napoleon and Judge Sherman were merely different manifestations of the same criminal identity.

No wonder the police had been helpless! Murder and the deliberate betrayal of public trust linked in the body of one man!

Joe's flying feet carried him to the rocky gallery where Tiger Marsh and his men had met disaster. He saw the well sunk in the floor. Turning, he gazed with amazement at the brightly lighted corridor lined on floor, ceiling and walls with red, yellow and white tiles.

"Drop that gun, Cardona!"

The voice came from a spot directly behind Joe. He knew who it was before he wheeled. But he had no chance to fire. The weapon in the gloved hand of the Fifth Napoleon was lined accurately at Joe's heart. The red wraith's chuckle was like the squeaky scurrying of mice.

Cardona's weapon dropped. He was backed, step by step, toward the black mouth of the well sunk in the rocky floor. He was not allowed to halt that ominous retreat until he felt only empty space beyond the rear of his teetering heels.

"Jump!" the shrill whisper snarled at him. "Jump—or be shot to death! Make your own choice!"

Cardona measured the distance that separated him from his executioner. It was too great to make a forward leap of any practical use.

A faint smile twisted Joe's pale lips. He knew that he had reached the end of his career. He'd take it straight—standing up—like a man.

"I'm not the kind of guy that can't take it," he said, harshly. "Shoot and be damned!"

The crimson finger tightened. The trigger began to squeeze slowly backward. Then it was Joe's turn to chuckle.

"You're a little too late, Mr. Napoleon," he cried in a strained voice. "Look behind you, and you'll know why!"

The Fifth Napoleon

"Really?" There was icy amusement in the quavering tones. "It's just like a dumb cop to pull a moth-eaten trick like that!"

A taunting laugh chilled the underground lair.

Fifth Napoleon whirled. He saw, with a scream of fear, another robed figure confronting him. But the cloak of this second figure was black. A black slouch hat shaded eyes that burned with steady reddish flame. A hawklike nose was visible above the edge of the cloak. Sibilant laughter made eerie rustlings in the rock corners of the gallery.

The Shadow!

THE SHADOW'S curt order sent Joe Cardona circling the motionless Napoleon, to search him for additional weapons. The fact that he had dropped his gun meant nothing. Joe knew the man was clever and treacherous, and swift as lightning. His fingers itched to rip the blood-red mask from the concealed face.

Cardona's hand was actually touching the robe of the master-criminal, when there came a sudden rush of feet. A trio of guns roared with a single stunning report. A bullet painfully creased Cardona's left shoulder. He saw a hole appear in the crown of The Shadow's hat.

Then flame spat from twin guns in the black-gloved hands.

The whole thing occurred in a split-second of time. Three men were attacking from an angle of the walled chamber with maniacal fury.

Mike Hammer's gun was like a spouting volcano. It was he who had creased Joe and forced The Shadow to dive to the floor for safety. But his own ferocity was his death warrant. Slugs from The Shadow's guns ripped through Mike Hammer's heart, plunging him backward in a sodden heap.

Con Platt was crouched near by. He was firing with colder deliberation. Opposite him, Andy Martin's weapons made quick, roaring echoes.

Scooping up the dead Mike Hammer's gun, Joe fought grimly to hold back Martin and Platt. He could hear the racing beat of The Shadow's feet.

The Shadow was fleeing!

CHAPTER XVIII. THE GREEN CLUE.

FLAT on his stomach, his heavy gun jerking from the flaming recoil, Joe Cardona fought alone to hold back Con Platt and Andy Martin. His fury was at white heat from the seeming cowardice of The Shadow. He didn't know that The Shadow's flight was pursuit, not retreat.

The unexpected onslaught of Hammer and his pals had given the trapped Fifth Napoleon a chance to escape. He took it with swift efficiency. As The Shadow ducked to the floor to avoid a hail of snarling bullets, the red Napoleon whirled and raced from the gallery toward the obscurity of the garage tunnel.

He reached the entrance of the underground garage well in advance of the pursuing Shadow. As he sprang through, he ducked inward along the length of the wall. Scarlet fingers groped fiercely along the moldy, cobwebbed surface. He jerked at a steel knob painted the same color as the stone. Instantly, a loud clang

The Fifth Napoleon

filled the open doorway of the garage with a brazen echo. A thick metal barrier had dropped on oiled rollers from a groove in the ceiling. Steel fastenings clicked automatically, as the heavy door crashed into place.

There was no longer any doorway. In its place was a barrier as impregnable as the door to a bank vault. Behind that door, the Fifth Napoleon had eluded capture and destruction. At one swift blow; he had cut off the garage and the rear elevator from the rest of his underground retreat.

The Shadow was powerless to advance farther.

He turned with almost the same impetus that had rammed him against the locked barrier. He raced swiftly back toward where Cardona was battling against Martin and Platt.

A clever feint on Con Platt's part had drawn Joe's muzzle and attention. Andy Martin was waiting for that maneuver. His gun lined accurately on the momentarily turned head of the detective.

The Shadow fired in mid-stride. His bullet beat Martin's by a whiplash. The racketeer's slug flew wide. He threw both hands aloft with a convulsive gesture. The Shadow's bullet had pierced Andy's brain. He dropped across Mike Hammer's sprawled body.

Con Platt yelled in dismay. He saw himself left alone. But there was plenty of sullen courage left in this last of The Four Napoleons. Pumping lead, he darted nimbly back toward a projection of the rock wall. Cardona was about to follow, when the hand of The Shadow restrained him.

He recognized the grim stalemate Con Platt's quick strategy had caused. It was death for them to advance to dislodge him; it was death for Con to peer out and attempt to finish his two cornered foes.

The hand of The Shadow threw Cardona flat to the ground under the whizz of a bullet. The slug split the air where, an instant before, Cardona's head had been. The Shadow's answering shot chipped splinters of stone from the projecting corner of rock behind which Con Platt was lurking. A yell of pain came from the racketeer.

Cardona rose, to dash forward and finish the killer. Again, The Shadow's steel grip restrained him. The Shadow was not deceived by Platt's shrill yell. It was a trick to draw his enemies.

The Shadow's keen eyes had observed accurately the result of his last shot. He was aware that his bullet had merely chipped the edge of the concealing rock. It had harmed neither the hand nor the weapon of Platt.

CARDONA nodded, as he heard the warning whisper of The Shadow at his ear. The whisper acquainted him with the truth. A steel door behind them blocked their retreat. And a head-on charge around the chipped corner of the rock to finish Platt was plain suicide.

There was a queer, mirthless smile on the taut lips of The Shadow. He never allowed himself to be maneuvered into a hopeless position. He still had an ace up his sleeve!

While his gun pumped bullets toward the rock angle behind which Platt was waiting to be attacked, his whispers eddied swiftly into the ear of Joe Cardona.

Cooperation with The Shadow on many desperate occasions had taught Joe the value of instant obedience to his orders, no matter how strange. But this time, Joe hesitated. A look of amazement swam into his dark eyes. He hesitated, shook his head.

The Fifth Napoleon

The order had been grimly brief. The Shadow wanted Joe to crawl noiselessly backward to the rim of the well that was sunk in the stone floor of the gallery. He ordered Joe to clutch at the knotted rope that hung from the steel hook—and descend as fast as he could!

Straight downward, into the depths of unknown blackness! Where a ghastly subterranean pool waited to engulf with a distant splash the body of a man who might lose his grip on that dangling rope!

Shuddering, Cardona shook his head. But the flame in The Shadow's eyes brooked no disobedience. There was calm assurance in that look. No hint of fear or panic. Cardona ceased to rely on his own judgment. He began to back slowly on hands and knees.

The Shadow covered his retreat. He fired just often enough to keep Con Platt's beady eyes from observing what was going on. The gun duel continued while Cardona swung his legs over the rim of the well.

Joe's hands gripped the knotted rope with a convulsive grip. He lowered himself jerkily from sight. Only the sway of the rope on its steel hook betrayed presence of a man hanging like a fly above a deep void. A man who was descending to face he knew not what!

The Shadow's gun roared as he, too, slid backward toward the well. He fired as he reached the circular opening. He blasted one final shot as he swung over and grasped the rope. Then the steel lid of the well lowered noiselessly above the hook.

DOWN, down, The Shadow wriggled. His black-gloved hands moved easily from knot to knot. His legs twisted tightly, to aid his hands.

He waited for a breathless instant, not knowing how far down Joe had already descended. It was impossible to see a thing in that evil-smelling pit. The stench of brackish water far below became increasingly strong in the nostrils of The Shadow.

Suddenly, a tiny yellow star seemed to bloom deep below the feet of The Shadow. It came from an electric torch in the grasp of Cardona. Joe's body was visible now, crouched flat against the circular wall in a spread-eagled pose.

He was no longer dangling from the knotted rope. He had seemingly stepped to the vertical sides of the shaft. The end of the rope trailed empty a few feet below where he was crouched. He stared upward behind the thin ray of his electric torch.

The Shadow joined him with swift jerks of his sinewy hands, that brought him racing down the knotted line.

The mystery of Cardona's strange halt midway in the well was now explained. He was standing on a narrow ledge of concrete. The ledge was not more than an inch or two wide, and extended completely around the shaft of the well.

With arms spread and feet planted rigidly, Joe was able to keep his balance and avoid a plunge to the bottom.

His torch twisted as The Shadow arrived beside him on that ghastly perch. The light sent a revealing beam downward. It lit up the surface of black, sluggish water. There was no trace of a ripple on that flat, dead surface. It glimmered faintly, far down, with the thick sheen of asphalt. From it came a nauseous, stench of decay.

Cardona's worry expressed itself in a quick gasp: "How are we to get out of this hell-hole? We're trapped!"

The Fifth Napoleon

His words were prophetic of peril. He had hardly uttered them when, in the darkness above their heads, a clanking sound was audible. High above, a tiny circle of light was disclosed, no larger than a dime. The steel cover of the well had been forced open. A face was peering intently.

It was Con Platt.

He saw instantly the tiny gleam of Cardona's flashlight before Joe could snap it off. A yell of exultation came from the lips of the racketeer. The boom of a pistol shot filled the well with resounding echoes.

A bullet hit the brim of The Shadow's hat and ripped past Cardona's extended sleeve. He shrank back, his convulsive movement almost toppling him to death from his slippery foothold.

The hand of The Shadow anchored him, preventing him from falling. With the same grim motion, The Shadow's other hand whipped upward like a rigid arrow. There was a blue-barreled gun in that steady hand. It fired with a deafening echo on the heels of the first explosion from above.

A trained marksman, The Shadow had aimed at a well-defined target. Con Platt's shot had been answered so swiftly that the racketeer had no chance to withdraw his head and shoulders from the orifice into which he was peering.

This time, there was no exultation in his scream. It was thin with terror. It rose in volume as the toppling body of the wounded racketeer fell straight down with whizzing velocity.

THE falling body grazed The Shadow's hunched shoulder and rebounded from Joe's stiffly bent knee. Then it was gone.

From the pool below came a sullen splash. The stench from the disturbed water made Cardona gasp. But he was still hanging fast to the narrow ledge. The Shadow, by a quick clutch, had protected both himself and his companion.

Their joined hands acted as a double balance. The pressure of The Shadow back-flung body counteracted the momentary danger of Joe's slipping feet.

No sound came from below. The water was again quiet. The beam of the electric torch showed it to be as motionless as a smear of ebony paint.

The last of four ugly racketeers was buried forever in those depths. Mike Hammer and Andy Martin lay riddled with bullets on the rocky floor of gallery above. Hammer--Martin--Con Platt--Charlie Boston--The Shadow's grim voice intoned their names like a criminal litany. But there was name he did not mention.

The Fifth Napoleon!

The scarlet leader of organized crime was still uncaught. Joe waited to hear The Shadow pronounce that name. But all he heard was a sibilant laugh. The Shadow's black-gloved finger was pointing to a grim absence of something. Something that, in the excitement of Con Platt's sudden attack and death, Cardona had failed to observe.

There was no longer a rope hanging in the oozy depths of the dark well! Con Platt had slashed it apart with a sharp knife a second before he had fired his one murderous slug at the men clinging to the narrow concrete ledge halfway down the shaft.

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Cardona shuddered. Unable to climb out again, with a death pool below waiting hungrily for their strength to give out and drop them into its depths—Joe could see no sane reason for the sibilant mirth of The Shadow.

"How in Heaven's name are we to reach the top?" he growled. "There isn't a foothold big enough for a mouse! Only a fly could crawl up those slimy walls!"

"Wait!"

The single word The Shadow uttered bespoke confidence. He turned carefully, so that he faced the wall of the shaft. His command brought Joe's hand to brace his back.

To Joe's complete puzzlement, he learned that The Shadow had already been down this death shaft. He knew its secret! That was why he had ordered Cardona to descend the dangling rope a few minutes earlier. The Shadow had not acted blindly. There was always a logical reason for everything he did.

The beam of his torch centered on the stones that lined the shaft. Cardona, peering eagerly, uttered a clipped cry.

On the surface of one of the stones was a symbol that looked as if it had been smeared there in blood. Scarlet paint had traced that revealing mark. It was a four-pointed star. Inside the star was a scarlet circle with lines radiating from it to each of the four points.

The Shadow knew the significance of that strange device. It was a tribute to the overmastering conceit of the Fifth Napoleon. The four points of the star represented his four henchmen. The blood-red circle linked to the points, was himself.

But the stone on which the symbol was painted was more important to The Shadow than the vanity of a master criminal. The symbol marked the particular stone that hid the existence of a horizontal tunnel, which The Shadow had already explored before he had leaped to Cardona's aid in the rock-walled gallery above.

THE SHADOW pressed lightly on a corner of the stone. It remained immovable. Again he pressed, this time with increased strength. Again nothing happened. The stone refused to budge!

A quick glance at The Shadow's face and Cardona knew that fate had unexpectedly balked the plan of The Shadow.

The tunnel was blocked from the other side. Some one had jammed the mechanism!

There was only one answer to that riddle: The Fifth Napoleon! He was still alive and desperate. He was still hidden somewhere within this underground labyrinth.

"We're licked," Cardona cried. "He's got us walled up like rats in a trap!"

"Wait!" the indomitable voice at his ear commanded.

A gloved hand gestured for Joe to move. He stepped carefully around the circumference of the slippery concrete ledge. So did The Shadow. The action reversed their original positions. Joe was now where The Shadow had stood. The Shadow was facing the stones on the opposite sides of the shaft.

Cardona's rigid back had concealed something that became vividly clear in the glow of The Shadow's questing torch. A blood-red, four-pointed star painted on one of the dripping stones—a duplicate of the

The Fifth Napoleon

mark that was on the opposite side.

This time, The Shadow's gentle pressure brought immediate results. The stone pivoted. It swung wide open, disclosing a black, oblong opening.

Cardona watched The Shadow squeeze through. It was a tight fit, and Joe wondered what The Shadow expected to do in so narrow a compass. He found the answer swiftly enough, when he had followed his leader through the aperture. Beyond the hole the passage widened into a comfortable tunnel. Only the entrance was narrow. The rest was easily passable.

The voice of The Shadow explained. The steep shaft of the well was merely a break in the continuity of a hidden tunnel. The tunnel led from the cellar of the Fifth Napoleon's cottage overhead. The well was a grisly protection against the discovery of the secret by strangers.

The continuing tunnel, in which Cardona and The Shadow now found themselves, slanted steeply downward. The Shadow had not yet explored this particular passage, but he was convinced that it led directly to the heart of the Fifth Napoleon's stronghold.

Somewhere ahead were three treasure trunks—and hiding like a wolf in his lair, the genius of crime who had fought victoriously against Tiger Marsh and the police.

The Shadow's torch jerked forward along the floor of the rocky passage. The two men began to press cautiously forward. Suddenly, The Shadow hissed a warning. He stood stock still. His beam had lifted from the floor and was centered motionless on the rocky side of the tunnel.

He pointed silently toward a tiny shred of green impaled on a needle of splintered rock.

It was shred of cloth, a fragment torn from a green silk dress. Cardona recognized it once both the color and the material. It had been ripped from the dress of a terrified girl as she had been hurried ruthlessly along this secret tunnel.

Ethel Sherman!

CHAPTER XIX. UNDER THE MASK.

CARDONA remembered how he had almost saved Ethel, only to lose her as the swift clutch of her father had dragged her into obscurity behind the stone wall of a chamber beyond the garage. The Fifth Napoleon had been visible in that chamber a scant instant or two before the skulking figure of Judge Sherman appeared.

To Joe, the inference was obvious. Both men were different manifestations of the same identity. Ethel had guessed her guilty father's secret. She had been captured, and dragged away to close her mouth forever.

The Shadow listened to Cardona's low, racing words. It was impossible to guess the thoughts that went on behind The Shadow's eyes. He studied the shred of cloth for an instant, turning it over and over in his gloved hands. Then he made a curt gesture, and continued his wary advance. Cardona followed closely, ready for action.

The passage along which they hurried began to slope more and more. It became a steep hill, leading monotonously downward. It curved so frequently that it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead in the yellow oval of the torch. But it was not impossible to guess the general direction in which the two

The Fifth Napoleon

rescuers were going.

The tunnel was a winding route that was leading down, ever downward, to the near-by Hudson River!

More than that. It was leading out under the river, straight through the bed of oozy mud that guarded the bottom the Hudson!

The Shadow was aware of this fact long before the passageway changed. He had noticed the rocky walls give way to earth. As the passage led lower, the earth floor became damp and smelly. Water squished underfoot.

Then mud and water ended. Earth was suddenly replaced by a corrugated steel covering. Beads of moisture hung in chilly drops on the inside of the tube.

The Shadow's feet made no sound. Nor did Cardona's. Both were experienced man hunters. Light became visible ahead. It seemed to come from a spot in the roof of the tunnel. Steep steps were disclosed. They led upward to an oblong opening in the roof of the passage.

An instant later, both men had bellied noiselessly up those steps and were staring into the interior of a strange hiding place. Cardona's eyes popped with incredulity.

A submarine!

FANTASTIC—but true! The cylindrical steel walls, the remains of a dismantled periscope, the steel bed where engines had once rested—all this was apparent at a glance to Cardona's staring eyes.

He could see the swirl of muddy water through a stout plate-glass porthole that had evidently been added to the submarine's equipment before it had been towed to this lonely spot in the river and then submerged.

The undersea boat rested partly in mud, partly in water. It was an obsolete type that was no longer in use in the navy. It had evidently been sold at auction in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and had been purchased by the canny Fifth Napoleon.

There was no human being visible within that grim steel shell.

But Cardona saw something else that drew a quick cry from his lips. Trunks! Piled together in ordered fashion on the floor. Not three—but four! Sealed with double locks.

To Cardona, there was no apparent difference in those four trunks. But the keen eyes of The Shadow soon spied the extra one. He seemed to become suddenly extraordinarily excited. He sprang toward the fourth trunk, anxiety and worry in his eyes.

The lock resisted his efforts. He wasted no more than a second or two in that fruitless task. Placing the muzzle of an automatic against the lock, he shot it away with a booming report.

Cardona realized that something urgent and dangerous was behind the haste of The Shadow. He sprang to his aid. Together they lifted the heavy lid of the trunk.

Doubled up cruelly inside was the unconscious body of Ethel Sherman. She was almost smothered. Her face was congested and purplish from the poison of carbon dioxide expelled from her own lungs in that confined space. But she gasped as she was lifted out into the cleaner air.

The Fifth Napoleon

Her eyes fluttered open. She was limp and weak, but she was able to whisper with a twisting effort of her pale lips.

She answered the quick questions of The Shadow. She had followed her own father to this hangout of the Fifth Napoleon. She had refused to leave him. Together, they had penetrated to the caves under the cottage perched on the cliff.

Sherman had tried to dissuade his daughter, saying that he was determined to capture the Fifth Napoleon or die in the attempt. In the end, both had descended to the caves.

They had lost each other in the underground labyrinth, after Cardona's unexpected appearance had so startled the girl. But she found the tunnel that crossed the well and had raced heedlessly deeper into the earth, to the hidden submarine. She had rushed up the steps, had seen the pale face of her father—

"Here?" Cardona gasped. "Where is he? What happened?"

"I—I don't know," Ethel shuddered. "Before I could move, the lights went out. I was struck on the head. I—I felt myself carried. Then I heard a thump, and found myself doubled up in darkness inside that horrible trunk!"

"I told you!" Cardona yelled. "Sherman's the man we want! The treacherous hound tried to smother his own daughter to death! He's here somewhere in this submarine!"

JOE'S gaze swung toward the bow compartment. Unlike the stern, it was not fully open. It didn't taper to a tip like the inside of a hollow cigar. A steel bulkhead closed off the entire bow.

Joe started forward, his gun a grim glitter in his big fist. But the hand of The Shadow restrained him. He drew Joe's attention to something else. Something that had happened without sound, while they had worked recklessly to free the imprisoned daughter of Judge Sherman.

The stairway entrance from the tunnel in the bed of the Hudson was no longer open. A steel plate covered it completely, blocking any escape from the submarine!

The next instant, Cardona saw The Shadow throw Ethel Sherman headlong to the floor. Before he could register a protest at this seeming brutality, he himself was dragged downward in the quick clutch of The Shadow.

They rolled over and over on the floor, behind the protection of the trunks. Bullets spattered through the air where, a moment before, the three had stood.

The slugs roared from behind the steel surface of the bow compartment. A circular piece of metal like a steel eyelid had moved away, disclosing a small hole in the bulkhead. Through this peephole the treacherous shots had come.

Silence ensued, as the hidden marksman realized that the quick action of The Shadow had spoiled his ambush. The Shadow turned his attention to the crouched form of Ethel Sherman, making grimly sure that no portion of her body projected into view behind the protection of the trunk. She was safe from harm, if she didn't move.

The heavy trunk—one of the three that were loaded with currency and records—formed a screen against bullets as effective as if it were armor plate. The girl understood The Shadow's warning whisper. She lay

The Fifth Napoleon

perfectly still.

But Joe Cardona was not so tractable. Rage and eagerness spurred him to action like the lash of a whip. While The Shadow devoted his attention to Ethel Sherman, Joe slid the muzzle of his gun toward the edge of the shielding trunk.

His eyes peered. He fired.

The bullet missed the small circular eyehole in the steel bulkhead. It spanged against the flat metal with a clang like a bell.

Answering flame spat from the hidden marksman. The slug struck Joe's extended wrist and plowed through flesh and sinew. The gun dropped from his wounded hand. He fell forward.

Like a snarling echo, the sinister eye hole in the bulkhead again spat flame.

But Joe's exposed head and shoulders had vanished behind the trunk with incredible speed. The Shadow, whirling from the girl at the roar of the first shots had witnessed Joe's reckless action. As Cardona swayed forward, his pierced wrist dripping blood, The Shadow caught at him and saved his life by a quick, backward yank.

Other bullets pumped furiously against the crammed trunks, making them quiver under the vicious impacts. The Shadow made no effort to reply to that grim fusillade.

THE silence was broken by a shrill, quavering laugh. The voice of the unseen Fifth Napoleon became audible.

"You can't escape! You're sealed in a living tomb! All three of you! Do you understand?"

Ethel Sherman gave a shrill cry of terror, as she heard the words. Cardona, too, gasped audibly. But it wasn't the words that had produced that effect. It was the blurred sound of the voice.

"You can make your own free choice, gentlemen—and lady!" the voice purred "Stand up and be shot to death. Or remain where you are behind those trunks, and die a much more unpleasant way!"

The tone was strangely familiar. To Joe Cardona, it wiped away the last shred of doubt as to the identity of the master-criminal in the scarlet mask.

"I was right!" His mouth twisted with pain from the wound in his wrist. "It's Judge Sherman!"

"No, no! Not my father!" The girl's moan was a heart-rending cry of tragic horror. She knew Cardona was right, but she was trying desperately not to believe it. Suddenly, her cramped body collapsed. Mercifully, she had fainted.

There was neither pity nor mercy in the shrill laugh of the criminal behind the bulkhead.

The Shadow peered briefly around the edge of the trunk. Lead whistled toward the spot where his eye showed. But so swift was his appearance and withdrawal, that before the brain of the Fifth Napoleon could telegraph an impulse to his trigger finger, there was no target for his whizzing bullet.

The Fifth Napoleon

The face of The Shadow was deathly pale. Not because of his hairline escape, but for a different reason. The single, darting glimpse he had taken had shown him a startling difference in the appearance of the steel bulkhead. There was no longer only one opening in the armor plate. There were now two!

A second metal eyelid had slid aside. The two tiny circles in the steel were but an inch or two apart, staring at The Shadow like the lidless scrutiny of a dead man.

No more shots came from the peep hole where the gun was concealed, but a queer rhythmic sound was now audible. Clank—whoosh—clank— A noise that resembled the hiss of air was spaced between those rhythmic clanks.

Cardona looked puzzled. But there was no bafflement in the eyes of The Shadow. He had guessed instantly what the Fifth Napoleon was up to. The killer was using an air pump! The clank was the rise and fall of the piston. The woosh was the air being compressed under pressure.

A deadly liquid or an equally deadly gas was about to be forced through the second aperture in the bulkhead.

FOR a second, The Shadow was in doubt. Then he saw with narrowed eyes that a strange liquid was trickling down the steel wall like a lazy thread of white. It looked exactly like condensed milk. It spread and thickened as it dripped from that second eyehole opening.

The Shadow was able to observe the phenomenon unharmed, because of a quick order he had whispered into the ear of Cardona. Joe shoved immediately at the heavy trunk behind which he was crouched, moving it slightly. Slugs rained at the quivering trunk. As they did, The Shadow watched intently from his own hiding place.

He saw a queer thing happen. The thick white fluid seemed to grow thin and disappear as it ran downward. It was evaporating with swift rapidity. The Shadow's nose and throat verified the evidence of his peering eye. His mucous membrane burned with raw pain. His eyes began to smart. He heard a strangled cough from Cardona.

Liquid—and gas! The thick, white fluid was a volatile poison, converted instantly into a lethal gas upon exposure to the air! It was being slowly pumped from a closed tank behind the safety of the submarine's bulkhead.

The telltale odor of the gas identified itself instantly to the mind of The Shadow. He had experimented with it himself under the glass hood of his own chemical laboratory. He knew that it killed in less than two minutes, if it were allowed to reach the proper degree of concentration in the air.

Knowing its properties, The Shadow's eyes gleamed. A desperate plan occurred to him. If he acted swiftly, without regard to his own life, he might be able to turn the result of that gas back upon the killer himself.

In the open air, the milky fluid was inflammable but not explosive. In a closed space, the reverse was true. A flame reaching the interior of the tank in which the liquid was contained, would blast it asunder with a wrenching roar!

Cardona, turning his crouched head stiffly, saw The Shadow take a small box of matches from his pocket. Coughing, he listened to the swift words that flowed into his ear. His coughing drowned out the fragile thread of The Shadow's whisper from the killer so busily pumping air behind his steel retreat.

The Fifth Napoleon

Cardona nodded. His right arm hung helpless, now. The shattered wrist had paralyzed the muscles from finger tips to shoulder. But his left arm was still all right. He began to shove with arm and shoulder against the heavy trunk in front of his crouched body.

As it moved slightly and slid ahead an inch, the pumping sound ceased. Bullets spat at the trunk. Joe continued doggedly, sweat beading his pale face. He knew that every bullet aimed at him was one that could not harm The Shadow.

The Shadow dived headlong into view. He plunged forward like a diver, landing flat on his belly. As he struck the floor, he writhed and rolled over and over. The bullets swerved away from Cardona's trunk and lashed wickedly at the jerking body of The Shadow.

But The Shadow profited from the split-second of surprise and panic into which his unlooked-for appearance had thrown the Fifth Napoleon. A bullet nicked the heel of his shoe, another dug a red furrow through the flesh of his extended forearm.

But there was a flicker of yellow at the end of that outstretched arm. The Shadow had struck a match as he writhed to his knees.

The flame wavered and almost went out, as he thrust it quickly toward the tracery of milky fluid on the steel wall above his head. It touched the liquid just in time.

There was a faint hiss, then the yellow of the match flame was converted into a blue ripple. The bluish flame darted up the bulkhead like the swift race of fire along a powder fuse. It vanished into the circular eyelid like the darting tongue of a serpent. Ploooooom!

THE hollow roar of an explosion boomed behind the steel barrier. The barrier seemed to sway and buckle. A square portion of it near the ribs of the submarine burst outward, disclosing a brightly lighted aperture.

A scream echoed piercingly. It died into a horrible gurgling.

For an instant, The Shadow saw or heard nothing of this. The heave of explosion lifted the floor of the grounded submarine to a slant and sent The Shadow sliding headlong on his face. He was up immediately, whipping around on hands and knees, climbing to dizzy feet and throwing himself forward with almost the same motion.

He saw the square opening that had been burst asunder by the force of the blast. He wriggled through. Cardona was swaying on weak feet, crying a warning for The Shadow to be careful.

The Shadow didn't hear him. He was reaching gingerly to seize the fallen body of the Fifth Napoleon. One arm was torn completely from the masked criminal's body. Blood stained his robes with a wet, glistening hue.

Milky liquid from the exploded tank was spattered all over him, and wherever a drop of the horrible stuff had touched, it had burned through the cloth and the flesh beneath.

But the Fifth Napoleon was not yet dead. He was groaning feebly. He had seen The Shadow's match an instant before the flame had ignited the fluid, and had thrown himself desperately to the other side of the bow compartment. He had cheated death temporarily, but only at the cost of agonized suffering.

Death for him would be slow and painful—and certain! The Shadow knew that five minutes would finish the career of this warped genius of crime who had for so long defied the law.

The Fifth Napoleon

As he lifted the dying man, his eyes swerved. He saw with grim satisfaction that there was another exit from the submarine behind the bulkhead. He had suspected as much. It was the private tunnel that led directly from headquarters above to the spot where the treasure trunks were hidden.

It made escape for Cardona and the girl certain. Otherwise, they would have been faced by the empty shaft of a deep well, and a stone that had been jammed and rendered useless from the other side by the hand of this dying murderer.

The Shadow dragged his captive back to where Joe Cardona waited. Ethel Sherman had recovered consciousness. She screamed as she saw the maimed criminal. Her scream was wordless, but it contained the same horrified thought expressed by the husky cry of Cardona:

"Judge Sherman!"

He reached out a trembling hand to unmask the captive. But The Shadow blocked the move. He shook his head.

"Not Judge Sherman," he rasped.

He pronounced another name. Ethel uttered a cry of amazed wonder. Cardona blinked. It was plain he didn't believe The Shadow. The name of that man was some one Joe had never once suspected of evil. Tremblingly, he reached downward.

He jerked the scarlet mask from the Fifth Napoleon's face. The Shadow's prediction was correct.

The face of the Fifth Napoleon was that of a young and powerful man. The cricket voice had been merely a clever disguise. So was the mean, quavering laugh.

The Fifth Napoleon was Fred Daniel! The shrewd, unscrupulous, greedy-minded managing editor of the Classic! The man who had fooled the special district attorney; who had pretended to be in love with his pretty daughter.

CHAPTER XX. TIGER'S END.

CARDONA received further proof of Judge Sherman's innocence as he straightened with the ripped mask in his hand. The Shadow had again gone into the bow compartment of the submarine. He returned, carrying the helpless body of Judge Sherman.

The special district attorney was bound hand and foot. A gag covered his distended jaws. He had escaped death from the explosion only by the efficient hatred of Fred Daniel. The Fifth Napoleon had shoved his captive into a stout chest, similar to the one in which he had tried to smother Sherman's daughter.

Ethel bent sobbing over her father. The Shadow pushed her gently away and released the district attorney. It was a moment or two before Sherman could gasp out words, but finally he managed to make intelligible sounds in his parched throat.

He corroborated his daughter's testimony, and added things that explained his queer behavior. He had begun to suspect Fred Daniel, and for the same reason The Shadow had. Every time the Fifth Napoleon had pulled some vicious raid or murder, the managing editor of the Classic was mysteriously missing from his desk at the newspaper.

The Fifth Napoleon

Sherman was afraid to disclose his suspicions. He decided to act when he escaped from Tiger Marsh. A chance word from a Tiger Marsh henchman told Sherman an attempt was about to be made to hijack the Fifth Napoleon's home on the Hudson. Sherman knew that Fred Daniel owned a cottage upstate on the river.

He raced there in the black limousine, attempting to elude his daughter to keep her from peril. But the stubborn girl followed her father and insisted on accompanying him into the labyrinth below the cliff. In the darkness underground, Sherman had mistaken Cardona for one of the crooks and had snatched his daughter backward through the stone panel. They fled, and then became separated. The Fifth Napoleon had captured first the father, then the daughter.

When Ethel had seen her father glaring at her in the submarine, he was helpless under the menace of a hidden gun. It was the Fifth Napoleon—Fred Daniel—who had doused the lights and slugged the girl.

Cardona sighed. There was weariness in his tone, but a grim relief, too.

"That ends two of the most dangerous criminals in the history of New York: the Fifth Napoleon, and Tiger Marsh! I figure Tiger must have been tossed down that well to his death."

"He was," The Shadow informed. "But he's not dead."

Cardona blinked as he heard the calm words of The Shadow. "Not dead?" he echoed.

"Not dead. And yet Tiger will never live again."

"What is this? A riddle?"

The sibilant laughter of The Shadow made a brief sound. He turned away, his black-swathed back hiding his actions. He removed his slouch hat and his head bent low. A ripple seemed to pass over his back. When he turned, Cardona uttered a startled cry.

The man who faced him was a tall, red-headed stranger with pitiless blue eyes. The blue eyes seemed to glare into Joe with unwinking ferocity. Tiger Marsh had risen from the grave in the body of The Shadow!

THE SHADOW laughed thinly. The red wig came off with a quick jerk. He was holding a small pencil-like rod in his gloved hand, a rod that was tipped with a tiny disk of rubber. He moistened the rubber disk with his tongue. He applied it first to one eye, then the other.

It was a tiny suction device. As The Shadow lifted gently, a pair of thin optic lenses came away from his eyeballs and slid out from beneath his raised eyelids.

Contact lenses! Joe recognized what they were before The Shadow handed them to him for examination. They were the latest development in optical technique—used by actors, wealthy society women, professional beauties and the like, to disguise the fact that they were wearing eyeglasses. The paper-thin lenses were placed directly over the eyeball, and removed in the same manner—with the tiny suction device now gripped in The Shadow's hand.

Joe examined them. In the center of each lens was painted a cunning replica of the iris of a human eye. It was a bright, startling blue. In the center of the painted iris was a tiny pin-point hole, sufficiently large for the pupil of The Shadow's eye to see through.

The Fifth Napoleon

Thus he had been enabled to play without difficulty the part of the blue-eyed criminal, Tiger Marsh. Even at close range, the contact lenses were not too shiny. The tear ducts from The Shadow's own eyes had washed the lenses and covered them with a film of moisture.

Joe Cardona no longer doubted the truth of the double identity. But a host of puzzling questions swept into his mind. His tongue stuttered as he tried to ask them.

"How--what--when--"

"Read!" the voice of The Shadow commanded.

He drew folded sheets of paper from his inner pocket. The paper was filled with the precise, beautifully legible hand-writing of The Shadow. Line after line of jet-black script. Joe began to read with absorbed attention.

The Shadow stepped quietly back, watching with a faint smile. Judge Sherman was at Joe's left shoulder, peering avidly. Ethel Sherman, too, could not tear her gaze from that strange report of a master criminal-hunter.

THINGS that had puzzled Cardona became clearer as he read. He understood now the reason and the manner of Charlie Boston's death in the darkness of his own home. Boston had been killed because of his evil personal interest in the daughter of Judge Sherman.

When Charlie had snickered over the telephone wire to the Fifth Napoleon, he was sealing his own death warrant.

Fred Daniel wanted the girl for himself. He had killed Charlie Boston and rifled his safe of its papers and documents.

The Shadow, robed in black, had recovered the papers, but had not been able to prevent the escape of Fred Daniel. When he fled from the house through a rear window, The Shadow had immediately raced around to the front.

He was in time to hear the whistled signal of Tiger Marsh's men. He knew they'd be there, because he himself had sent them.

It was the matter of but a moment to change to the red hair and the blue eyes of Tiger, and to pretend rage at the disappearance of the papers. Escaping the police as Tiger, The Shadow had immediately assumed the role of Lifer Stone, and delivered the evidence of Charlie Boston's guilt to the district attorney. He had balked Con Platt's plan to kidnap Ethel Sherman by stealing the girl first. He used her to get hold of her father and Joe Cardona. Tiger's thugs thought his purpose was evil, but in reality it was benevolent. He merely wanted to keep Sherman and the girl in a safe place while he went after the Fifth Napoleon to wind up his career.

He took Joe with him, bound and gagged. He wanted Joe to be present at the climax and receive the credit for the final arrest. It was The Shadow's hand, as Tiger Marsh, that had left that "careless" knife lying in the pocket of the rubber poncho that covered Joe Cardona. He meant for Joe to escape.

Other things became clear to the puzzled Cardona, as his eyes raced down the fine handwriting that covered the pages of The Shadow's confidential report.

The Fifth Napoleon

When the Fifth Napoleon had fired down the well at the unseen figure of Tiger Marsh, he had heard a yell of pain and the sound of a splash. Both the yell and the splash were deceptive. The Shadow, in his red-headed disguise, was no longer clinging to the rope. He had gained the circular rim of concrete which he later used to help Joe Cardona escape. His yell was to make the Fifth Napoleon think he had been hit.

The splash came from one of his guns, which he tossed swiftly down into the depths of black water below him. He found the stone with the symbol of the four-pointed star and made his way along a climbing passage, back to the stone gallery above.

By this time, Cardona had escaped from the big highway truck with the help of The Shadow's knife and was already underground. The Shadow arrived just in time to save Joe's life from the leveled gun of the Fifth Napoleon. His previous "death" in the well made his role of Tiger Marsh no longer practicable.

He had discarded his red wig and his blue-tinted contact lenses. As The Shadow now, he beat off the attack of the red Napoleon and helped Cardona to escape—again down the deceptive depths of the well.

The rest Joe knew.

JOE took a deep, shuddering breath. He knew now what was behind the strange criminal disguise of The Shadow. So great were the difficulties confronting him, that The Shadow had deliberately entered the underworld to achieve his purpose. As Tiger Marsh, he built up a gang of crooked specialists. He declared war on the Fifth Napoleon.

He sealed a strange compact with his crooked henchmen. They were well paid. They were offered immunity only on the basis of their attacks against known criminals. No innocent person had been killed by Tiger's gang. The weight of their guns fell on the mobsmen of the Fifth Napoleon.

Now, every one of those hired thugs was dead. Half of them had been blown to atoms in the explosion in front of the cottage. The rest had died in the caverns under the cliff.

The Shadow felt no remorse for their deaths. They knew the risk they took, and had been well paid. Their deaths removed criminals who, previous to their employment by The Shadow, had preyed like wolves on society—and would again, if alive.

Their end, and the end of the Napoleon mob, closed an ugly chapter of organized crime.

Joe Cardona finished reading the strange document in his hands. He turned, ran toward the sealed trunks that still stood, scarred and battered by bullets, on the floor of the submarine. With the help of Judge Sherman, he raised the heavy lids, after his gun had smashed the locks.

He gasped at sight of the contents. Each trunk was crammed to the top with bundle upon bundle of bank notes. The complete hoard of a gang who had always insisted on cash from their victims, in order to elude the income tax and the power of the Federal government.

There were records and books, too. Judge Sherman knew that with this evidence in his hands he could clean up the city with one swift blow.

He turned to gasp out excited thanks to the strange personality in the black cloak and hat, who had made this victory possible. He saw only emptiness where The Shadow had stood.

The Fifth Napoleon

The Shadow was no longer in the submarine. He had glided noiselessly to the bow compartment and had vanished through the private tunnel of the dead Fifth Napoleon. He knew Fred Daniel was dead before he departed. The waxen face of the crooked managing editor was blank. The eyes stared sightlessly.

THE SHADOW was already above ground. He paused only long enough to pick up a telephone in the partially wrecked cottage and send a crisp warning over the wire to police headquarters at the near-by county seat.

His message created wild commotion at the other end of the wire. The voice of the police operator yelled harshly "Who are you?"

Soft, sibilant laughter was the only reply.

The Shadow glided like a ripple of blackness through the greenery of trees. He gained the road and ran to a covert, where a fast little coupe was concealed deep in underbrush. He worked with swift energy, because he knew how speedily police would race to this spot on the heels of his news of the death of the Fifth Napoleon.

The car backed to the road. The Shadow sent it racing swiftly northward. As he rounded a curve, he glanced back. Far behind him, to the south, he could see the hazy outline of a cloud of dust kicked up by his car. It rose funnelwise from the same road on which he was driving.

But it was too far away to give pursuing police a glimpse of the little coupe that raced so swiftly away under the impetus of the powerful motor beneath its hood.

The Shadow's most dangerous exploit was ended. Except for the kidnapping of the real Lifer Stone by Clyde Burke and Moe Shrevnitz, not a single agent of The Shadow had helped him. A long-distance call to Clyde would turn Lifer Stone loose. After that, it was up to Lifer whether he stayed free or was sent back for good to Sing Sing. At any rate, Lifer would find it hard making criminal contacts after the special district attorney finished his grim work in the courtroom.

The coupe shot smoothly along the road. The Shadow was free to accept the next challenge of supercriminals. The sibilant laugh that echoed in the air held little mirth. It was both a promise—and a threat!