

# **JUDGE LAWLESS3**

Maxwell Grant

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# JUDGE LAWLESS

**Maxwell Grant**

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## CHAPTER I. COURT OF CRIME

IT was a strange room, this underground place buried in the foundations of an old Manhattan garage. A long room, with low ceiling and stone walls, which gave it the semblance of a prison cell.

The room should have been such a cell, considering the renegades who occupied it. They were the scum of the criminal sour cream, men wanted by the police for misdeeds of many sorts.

Not that they looked like what they were.

For one, Dave Channey didn't have a criminal air, nor did he note such expressions on the faces which he observed in the dull light. Most of them were a lot like Menz, the garage man, who had conducted Dave to this underground domain.

They were waiting here, a score of outcasts, on benches that filled the center of the room. In front of them was a table on a platform, with a chair behind it. Over to the right were a dozen chairs of the folding pattern,

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arranged in two rows. They completed the furniture in the room.

As for the room itself, it had doors in the long side walls. Dave and Menz had entered through one of those doors, and some of the crowd had come through the other. But there was another spot that might prove to be an entrance.

Behind the platform where the table stood, Dave saw shabby curtains that apparently hid an alcove. It was toward those curtains that Menz and the rest kept staring in expectant fashion.

In fact, at that moment Menz was nudging Dave in impatient fashion. Turning, Dave faced the front of the room again and saw why Menz wanted his attention. The shabby curtains were parting. Through them stepped a bowed, crablike figure, whose hair was a powdery gray.

Without even raising his face, the new arrival took the chair. Picking up a gavel, he gave the table a solid rap that brought everyone, Dave included, to their feet.

Across the shoulders of the group, Dave saw a shambling man step up beside the table, to receive a nod from the man with the gray hair. Facing the throng, the shambler piped in a sharp voice:

"Oyez, oyez, oyez! The court of Judge Lawless is now in session, and will come to a state of disorder!"

To disorder it did come, as the crowd sat down again. Dave heard loud guffaws, which showed how the throng appreciated this mockery of justice. Among the chortles that sounded in Dave's ear were many wisecracks. One in particular that brought a round of laughter, was when someone said:

"Oyez? Oh, yeah!"

Again the gavel pounded, proving that even in this mock court there could be a limit to travesty. As the group quieted, Dave looked toward the platform and saw the bowed man raise his head. As sharp as a knifestab, the significance of that man's title struck home.

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More than a title, it was a description. Never could any other man have so fitted his name. From hunched shoulders glared a face that was ugly, bloated, to a satanic degree.

Wide lips showed the bulge of teeth above an underslung jaw. Topping a flattish nose were narrowed eyes that could only be called glinting slits, considering the beadlike gaze behind those nearly closed lids. The grizzled hair of this self-styled judge, instead of giving him a dignity, added to his demoniac expression.

There was a clatter on the table, and Dave saw that from beneath it Judge Lawless had brought a small pair of scales. Dave suddenly realized that the table, of boxlike pattern, was supposed to represent a judge's bench; or, rather, a bar of injustice.

As Dave watched, Judge Lawless dropped weights on one side of the balance, but instead of going down that side of the scale moved up, much to the merriment of the assembled unworthies.

Again, Judge Lawless pounded with his gavel, producing what could be termed a quiet disorder. Surveying the group with those gimlet eyes of his, he singled out men and beckoned them to the bench. There, in undertones, they conferred with Judge Lawless, evidently giving him reports on criminal activities in which they had been engaged.

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To others, the "judge" obviously issued instructions that must have pleased them, considering that when they left the bench their lips carried an imitation of the Lawless leer, which seemed to be remarkably contagious.

It wasn't easy to make out faces in the dim light, but Dave managed it, though without the success he wanted. Not one of those faces belonged to Delker, the man he had hoped to find here.

Menz turned his sallow face Dave's way. It was a narrow face, with sharp chin, and it looked sharp-toothed, too, as Menz grinned. The crook who posed as a garage man thumbed toward the bench, where Judge Lawless had finished his conferences. Again the shambly stooge was stepping forward.

"That's Fleech," stated Menz. "He's the court crier. He's going to call the roll. We'll add your name to the list when he gets through."

Obviously, though, some persons who should have been here, were not, for when Fleech paused at unanswered names, Judge Lawless threw vicious glares about the place. Fleech didn't have to mark off the absentees. Judge Lawless would remember them!

From the start of the list, Dave harkened for the name of Delker, but it didn't come. Either Delker had skipped town, or wasn't showing himself at these meetings. That Delker belonged to the tribe that served Judge Lawless, Dave couldn't doubt. For the scene in this "court" was a greater revelation than any that Dave Channey had anticipated in his wildest dreams.

He'd expected to meet with crooks, Dave had, and to pose as one of them with Menz as his willing sponsor. But he'd pictured a crowd of toughs in some back room, not an organization such as this. The loose manner of this crowd was purely superficial – part of its travesty on a court of justice. One smash of the gavel and Judge Lawless could make the whole scene serious. For these followers of the evil judge were not hoodlums, with the possible exception of a few.

Delker, for instance, had posed as a gentleman; Menz could pass as an honest garage man. All the rest unquestionably had manners and vocations which made them suitable cogs for the smooth criminal machine controlled by Judge Lawless.

Tonight, Dave was to become one of those cogs, though he would have liked far better to be a monkey wrench thrown into the works. It was better, though, to be a cog for the present.

What a feather it would be for the police, could they learn the headquarters of this criminal gang and raid while the illegal court was in full session, with Judge Lawless, master of iniquity, presiding on the bench!

As Dave played with that thought, it happened.

JUDGE LAWLESS had just beckoned in the guards. He was speaking to them in an undertone on the matter of any late comers and the excuses they might offer.

Those side doors, where the lookouts should have been keeping tabs through peepholes, were totally unwatched. Of a sudden, the doors flung inward and with each came a flood of blue-uniformed police.

Eight in all, that squad, and one of them a beefy-faced lieutenant. Every officer had a drawn revolver, and they showed themselves a picked squad by the way they brandished those stubby guns. Instantly, assembled crooks became a snarling ratpack, and Dave found himself one of the rodents, as Menz dragged him to his feet.

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Had Judge Lawless merely thumped his gavel, the scene would have become a bitter battle wherein outnumbered crooks would have suffered badly, considering that the police had them covered for a start. But the Judge wasn't even able to grab his mallet, let alone swing it.

The beefy police lieutenant had reached the bench and was holding the fake judge powerless under the muzzle of a revolver. Though his leer was ugly and his lips spat venom, Judge Lawless was raising his hands, and at the sight of his action, crooks did the same. Then cops were among them, frisking them, tossing an assortment of guns on the stone floor.

It was all over, very, very quickly, this round up of the Lawless gang, and Dave Channey stood much bewildered and somewhat horrified, as he wondered at his own status.

Dave's name wasn't on the list; nor had the police found a gun on him. Of those two points in his favor, the list could be the more important.

Fleech, the so called court crier, had that list; what he had done with it, Dave didn't know. Probably Fleech hadn't found a chance to eat it, but he might go to that extreme if he saw the opportunity. If only the police would search the fellow! Raised hands clenched Dave was almost on the point of offering such a suggestion, when Fleech acted on his own.

As police produced handcuffs to slash on the wrists of prisoners, one approached Fleech. Near the bench, Fleech turned excitedly to the uniformed attendant, and exclaimed:

"Not yet! Don't take them yet... they aren't all here! The list... in my pocket... it will tell you! If you wait –"

The lieutenant gestured for Fleech to lower his hands. The squealer did so and produced the list. Taking the sheet, the officer turned to the bench and proffered the list with a bow. Judge Lawless received it with his left hand, while he picked up the gavel with his right.

Then with a hard swing, that seemed inspired by his vicious grin, Judge Lawless drove the gavel to the table. Its resounding smash was an announcement that the court of injustice was again in session, with Judge Lawless presiding on the bench!

## CHAPTER II. CRIME'S VERDICT

SO swift was the reversal of events, that the result left Dave Channey breathless. Judge Lawless wasn't the only performer in the startling drama; the police were running him a close race. In their case, the term "police" fitted them about as well as the title "judge" suited Lawless. For they weren't police at all.

From the beefy-faced lieutenant down, they were crooks like the rest of the assemblage, the very ones who had not answered to the names that Fleech called from the list! They were peeling off their uniforms, costumes fitted with zippers, and Judge Lawless was giving them the leer of a happy demon, amid the plaudits of "prisoners" like Menz and the rest of the early comers.

Judge Lawless had provided a complete surprise, particularly for Fleech. Now in the grasp of the men he had mistaken for police, Fleech was listening while Lawless called the roll himself. Cleverly, the self-styled judge had run in followers not well-known to the rest, and through his ruse had uncovered a traitor.

What was to happen to Fleech, the crier who had become a squealer, Dave Channey was soon to see. Pointing his gavel to different men, Judge Lawless waved them to the rows of chairs at the side of the room.

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Among the dozen who followed his gesture was Menz, and Dave suddenly realized that his companion was becoming a member of a jury appointed by the judge himself.

Again the gavel rapped; as silence came, Judge Lawless spoke. His voice was a hard, cold rasp. To Dave, the tone had a grating effect that set one's teeth on edge.

From where he sat, Dave could see Fleech tremble and sag in the supporting hands of the gloating men who gripped him.

"Only an ignorant man would attempt to betray us," announced Judge Lawless in his raspy scoff. "Such a man would not be acquainted with the methods used by organizations of our sort to make traitors betray themselves.

"My trick is not a new one. It was an invention of the famed Camorra, which I revived for this occasion. Suspecting that police might visit us on our last evening at this meeting place, I resolved to have them arrive earlier than the traitor – should there be one – would wish."

Those words "should there be one" were the consummate expression of the speaker's mockery. Turning as he spoke, Judge Lawless fixed his beady eyes on Fleech. Then, with lifted gavel, he stared beyond the quaking prisoner to view the jury.

"You have heard the evidence," spoke Judge Lawless. "What is the verdict?"

From a dozen throats, Dave heard the same word:

"Guilty!"

Judge Lawless fixed his withering glare on Fleech; even before the harsh voice spoke, Fleech was sinking to his knees, trying to force whines for mercy from his lips, only to have his voice fail him.

"You have heard the verdict, prisoner," sneered Judge Lawless. Down came the gavel with its deadening slam. "The sentence is death and may the devil take you!"

SENTENCE was scarcely uttered before men were springing forward to handle its execution. Dave was swept aside by the onrush, which included Menz and the other jurors. Yet Dave couldn't sicken at the thought of the fate about to overtake Fleech.

He'd had his own share of dealing with a double-crosser, Dave had. His thought flashed back to Delker, the glib salesman who had so neatly tricked him into handing over the combination to the safe in old Moyland's private office, thus rendering Dave responsible for the ten thousand dollars that had later disappeared. Delker, the man whom Dave had treated as a friend!

What difference would it make if Dave should prove that Delker had been working for Judge Lawless? Even a crook could play fair, where friendship was concerned. Which was why Dave so suddenly sided against Fleech for trying to trick Judge Lawless. Fleech was a rat and deserved all that was coming to him!

Again, Judge Lawless was rapping with the gavel. His voice was stentorian, as he commanded his men to molest Fleech no further. This judge preferred disorder in his court, but when it had taken a sufficient run, he was lenient enough to let orderly conduct disturb the usual routine.

Reversing his gavel, he pointed across the room to a V-angle in the end partition, indicating that Fleech was to be taken there. Dragged by his captors, the mauled victim was carried to the spot in question and flung into the angle where Lawless had ordered him deposited.

That was to become a bloody angle!

Still using his gavel as a pointer, Judge Lawless was graphically gesturing what came next. He was indicating men to the number of six; as he pointed each one out, he stabbed the gavel handle Fleech's way.

They understood well enough, for Dave saw them either draw or pick up discarded revolvers in order to form an impromptu firing squad. Cringing with battered face half buried in his hand, Fleech didn't witness the process, but Dave did, and it snapped him from his trance.

No longer could Dave side with Lawless and his murderous tribe, not when death was in the balance. He was shocked to think that his mind had actually dwarfed itself to the point where it could countenance crime.

Dave still belonged in the realm of honesty, even though the world wouldn't include him there, if it listened to Homer Moyland and the tale of ten thousand stolen dollars. Murder was about to happen before Dave's eyes, and it behooved him to stop it.

Or – did it?

Again Dave's thoughts were in conflict. He was seeking justice for himself in his own way, otherwise he wouldn't have let Menz bring him to a meeting of the Lawless clan. It wouldn't be crime to stand by and see Fleech die in a manner that might not be classed as murder at all. These men who made up the firing squad were acting according to their own lights – just as was Dave Channey. At least, Dave could keep hands off.

Teetering on that decision, Dave sat down on a bench and stiffened himself sufficiently to watch proceedings.

For the first time, Dave noticed that the judge was playing further travesty with justice by the garb he wore. His robe, an imitation of the sort worn in court, was merely an inverted burlap bag, a hole cut in the bottom for his head, and with slashes down the sides so that it hung loosely from his shoulders.

Judge Lawless had a gift for farce, enough so to have brought a laugh from Dave, if a human life had not been involved.

For Fleech, the victim, had suddenly turned very human – too human, for Dave to still remain obdurate about the fellow's case.

Fleech's face was lifted; his moans had turned to pleas. Half up from his knees, he was stretching his hands from the bloody angle, beseeching Lawless to spare his life. If Fleech had just been whimpering at the gunners who flanked him, Dave's better nature might not have sprung to the doomed man's cause. But Fleech was addressing Judge Lawless in person, and the pitiful tones made sense.

He'd been forced to treachery, Fleech claimed. The proof was plain, if only the judge would consider it!

"I didn't give the cops the list," argued Fleech. "They don't know who belongs –"

"Of course they don't," interrupted Lawless. "If you'd given any names, they wouldn't have waited for the mass betrayal. They would have taken a few prisoners beforehand, to corroborate your testimony. You knew, Fleech, what that would mean. Word would have reached me, and I would have guessed your treachery!"



"No, no!" pleaded Fleech. "I stalled the coppers, honest I did! They aren't due for another hour, and I knew the meeting would be all over by that time. I was going to tell you all about it afterward, judge – honest!"

"Honesty has no status with this court," mocked Judge Lawless. "Nor has any evidence in behalf of the accused. All that you have stated, Fleech, is off the record. Your case is closed—forever!"

HARD on his heel, Judge Lawless swung about. He was turning his back on Fleech not through any qualms at seeing the fellow die, but to prove his total disregard for the fellow's life. One hand raised, Judge Lawless was about to fling it sideward as a signal for the firing squad to blast Fleech into oblivion.

Ready to risk his life for any man whose cause would not be heard, Dave was actually poised for a lunge upon the burlap-robed judge – when something stayed his move –

From somewhere came a laugh so outlandish, that even the taunting echoes of its challenge seemed more formidable than the rasped utterances of Judge Lawless. A laugh that could well have come from some other sphere of space, so ghostly was its arrival. It left men staring blankly, that weird mirth, for its author was invisible!

Not for long did he remain so.

To cap that mockery, to give his challenge teeth, he preferred to show himself – and did!

Curtains parted behind the platform where Judge Lawless had so recently held the bench. From between those curtains issued a figure cloaked in black that seemed a materialization of space beyond. There were certain features that rendered this ominous being visible despite the gloom.

First, the burn of fierce eyes that shone from beneath the brim of a black slouch hat. Next, the presence of two .45 automatics that pointed from gloved fists emerging from the cloak front.

Staring, Dave Channey knew that this master from the dark must stand for justice to the same degree that Judge Lawless represented its opposite, evil.

As to the identity of the being in black, Dave did not have to wait to learn it. That identity was voiced in unison from the hoarse throats of startled men of crime:

"The Shadow!"

### **CHAPTER III. DEATH DELAYED**

IF Judge Lawless liked disorder in his courtroom, The Shadow was the proper person to provide it. The hoarse shout that greeted him was proof that foe-men had accepted his challenge and intended to meet it before disposing of the helpless victim that they had been ordered to kill.

The fact justified Dave Channey's own decision in the question of Fleech. If this avenger, The Shadow, planned to rescue Fleech, it was right that Dave should have done the same. For The Shadow, by his defiant mirth, had proclaimed himself a champion of justice as opposed to men of evil.

To side with The Shadow was Dave's proper course, but he hadn't time to act, so swiftly did events follow. Though equipped with two guns, The Shadow was immediately confronted by half a dozen, swung by the men who composed the firing squad.

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It was small wonder therefore that he wheeled back toward the curtains from which he had just come. His fade-out was both rapid and surprising; literally, he seemed to dwindle into the black background.

Revolvers barked before The Shadow could complete his whirl. Gunners were shooting across the judge's bench; others were springing to the sides of the room to angle their fire at The Shadow.

Flat-footed where he stood, Dave couldn't do a thing to help. He thought it was all up with the Shadow, until he heard the snarl that Judge Lawless gave; a snarl which was fortunately lost on the ears of others because of the roar of their guns.

Only Judge Lawless had guessed The Shadow's ruse – and his guess was too late!

Crooks had reached the box table that served as judge's bench, when it came heaving upward, sideways. Flung into the midst of three attacking gunners, it staggered them, while off in the opposite direction ricocheted a shape in black – The Shadow!

He hadn't ducked behind the curtains; instead, he had dived to the bench. Using it as a missile, he was blocking three fighters with it, while making a drive into the trio on the other side. The Shadow was amid those three, slugging hard with his automatics when Dave next glimpsed him.

Again revolvers barked, once more without result. Crooks were sagging as they fired, and The Shadow, reserving ammunition for new combat, wheeled about with another taunt to blast doom upon the three who were hopping over the upset table.

They fired as they came, but The Shadow's shots were sooner, and accurate. Two stabs of his guns felled a pair of wild-shooting opponents; side-stepping, he downed the third with a sideward swing of his gun.

Too late, Dave tried to shout a warning. Judge Lawless had drawn a gun, and weapons were flashing from the hands of Menz and others. They were driving for The Shadow, intending to blast at such close range that they couldn't miss.

But The Shadow didn't need the warning that Dave couldn't give in time. He was already on his way to a new position; this time, he was actually choosing the alcove beyond the curtains.

The Shadow yanked those curtains as he reached them. Crooks close on his heels saw the curtains coming their way, rod and all. The foremost was caught in the tangles, while those behind them blasted shots into the alcove. The answer was The Shadow's laugh; not from the space where bullets bashed, but from an inner corner of the room!

He'd tricked them again, this human streak in black, reversing his direction as he flung the curtains. Flanked by The Shadow, they were in for trouble – or would have been if they hadn't come around at a shout from Lawless. The gray-haired man with the uncanny eyesight had again spotted The Shadow's course.

In that moment came Dave's chance for action.

It concerned Fleech. Out from the triangular niche that was to have been his death spot, came the condemned man, snatching up a dropped gun from the floor. He jostled Dave as he passed him, and from the fellow's wild manner, as well as the direction of his drive, Dave guessed the fellow's objective.

Fleech was seeking to kill The Shadow!

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Dave didn't wait to guess Fleech's reasons; the fellow's purpose was enough.

WITH a long lunge, Dave intercepted Fleech and grabbed for the man's gun. The shot that Fleech fired did more than rip wide.

Swung about by Dave, Fleech turned his gun in a new direction – toward Judge Lawless. Coming around when he heard the shot, Lawless took it that Dave had acted in his behalf, not The Shadow's. Seeing that the strugglers would serve him as shields, Lawless hurled himself upon them, and in the melee, Fleech broke loose.

Driving in from the other side, The Shadow was suddenly met by Fleech, who then – apparently for the first time – revealed his real purpose.

As only a condemned man could, Fleech battled far beyond his normal strength. His energy, returned, he was a human wildcat as he grappled with The Shadow.

Seeing Fleech as the adversary of the moment, The Shadow made the most of it, reeling back into his corner dragging Fleech along. Nobody could get a shot at The Shadow without winging Fleech first, and the man's combat was so vehement that others preferred to let him continue it.

All thugs that could went dashing for the bloody angle at the far end of the room, and Judge Lawless followed, dragging Dave along. Why they were boxing themselves in, in the worst place possible, Dave couldn't understand—until he saw that the worst place was the best.

That angle wasn't merely part of a partition. It was a revolving door!

Swinging to the left, the door took men through in fours. As it swallowed each quartet, another section came around to gobble another batch. Dave was among the last, and after him came Judge Lawless, who threw a swift glance over his shoulder to see how The Shadow was making out with Fleech. With the look, Lawless aimed his gun.

The move saved his life.

Already The Shadow had divined how matters stood with Fleech. He'd beaten off the frantic man's attack and was shoving Fleech away. Making a quick side-step, The Shadow was starting an elusive fade-out, knowing that Lawless would never clip him with a hasty shot. Pivoting, The Shadow was about to blast his master foe, when Judge Lawless fired.

Wise as ever, Lawless didn't aim for The Shadow. He picked Fleech instead.

The traitor jolted. His sideward spill, a chance result of the bullet that felled him, sent him right into The Shadow's path. The cloaked fighter was forced to make another feint, and during it he lost his chance to reach Judge Lawless.

Without waiting to see what happened, the gray-haired criminal hurled himself through the revolving door after Dave and the others.

What surprised Dave was the fact that the door didn't carry them fully through. Instead, it ejected them at the first quarter into a passage at the left, behind the very partition that marked the limit of the courtroom.

Dragged by two men ahead, shoved by Lawless from the back, Dave could only hope that The Shadow would follow. If the cloaked fighter appeared, Dave intended to delay the rush.

The Shadow didn't get through the revolving door to learn the secret of its tricky side passage. As he reached the open angle that appeared, the door took another quarter spin before The Shadow could enter it. Having no men to scoop up, the door disgorged four, instead; four who came flinging through from the right.

They were men in blue uniforms, police of the genuine variety. They'd come from a passage on the right, having found this inlet when they heard the thunder of guns. Just short of the door, The Shadow was squarely in their path, and the police, glimpsing him, flung themselves on the intrepid fighter who had just cleared the ground of actual enemies!

WITH a sweeping wheel, The Shadow cleared himself of these misguided attackers, flinging them back into their niche. He was weaving across the courtroom as they fired; first toward the door on the left, next to the one on the right. He planned that zigzag anyway, but it seemed encouraged by the things that happened at those doors.

First one door, then the other, burst inward to admit batches of detectives, who aimed their guns blindly to join in the fire. The cops were shouting as much as shooting, because they didn't want to hit the detectives, and in the midst of the ineffective action, The Shadow was gone.

Gone with a laugh that reverberated throughout the room where the law had prevailed in empty-handed style. Having won his own battle, The Shadow hoped to follow it up in his same inimitable fashion, without waiting to hold parley with the police.

To the men who stared in search of the vanished fighter, The Shadow had performed an amazing vanish into the same thin air that was at present absorbing the echoes of his departing mirth. Actually, he had blended into blackness, choosing the alcove behind the platform, the route which Judge Lawless normally used and which The Shadow had found for himself.

By that route The Shadow hoped to cut off the master fiend and his escaping tribe, wherever they had gone.

Among the men who caught the parting tones of The Shadow's laugh was a stocky police inspector, Joe Cardona by name, and he understood its full significance. It was plain to Joe that Fleech and a few others who hadn't managed to escape, represented only a portion of the band that The Shadow had scattered. Looking about the room, Cardona saw the angle at the far end and realized that some of the officers had come from that direction.

Heading for the niche, Cardona shoved through. Naturally, the revolving door continued its turn to the left and as Joe beckoned, the police followed him, surprised to learn that their lurch into the underground room had merely left them at a stopping-off point.

As he led the chase along the passage to the left, Inspector Cardona could fancy that he still heard The Shadow's laugh, carrying a note of approval.

Outside, however, matters proved quite different. The Shadow had reached a corner near the old garage beneath which crime's headquarters was hidden. Past that corner, he could see men darting out from a doorway climbing into cars that were coming from the public garage. There was one way to stop this exodus: with bullets – so The Shadow swung in from the corner with that purpose.

Then came the surge that ruined The Shadow's tactics. Cardona and the police had found a shorter route to the street. They were springing from the same door that Lawless and his gang had used. Protected by a cluster of followers, and hence immune from The Shadow's fire, Judge Lawless saw the police sortie and rasped for his men to counteract it.

The Shadow's laugh rang out and with it, his automatics pumped a long-range fire that brought an immediate response, not only from the killers that Lawless had told off but from men in other cars as well. The Shadow had picked himself a hot spot where his gun spurts, visible in the darkness, were targets for shots from several angles.

Forced to wheel as the volley came, The Shadow whipped back around the corner, with bullets chipping bricks from the edge of the wall above him. But the interim was sufficient for Cardona and his men to dive back into the opening that crooks had used for exit from the old garage.

By then the cars themselves were gone whisking around the corner into the next street. As for following them in person, The Shadow knew it would be futile.

The Shadow's only course now was to fade off into the night. As he went, The Shadow saw a taxicab flash across that corner of the next block, where crook-manned cars had turned. Sight of the cab was at least a token of a chase.

Reaching the spot where The Shadow was no longer, Cardona and the bluecoats with him heard the fleeting tones of a laugh that was both weird and grim. The Shadow's laugh, telling that no matter how long or how often his plans would be delayed, he would eventually settle scores in person with a superfoe who styled himself Judge Lawless!

## CHAPTER IV. THE BLANK TRAIL

HOW long or how far his present ride was taking him, Dave Channey didn't know. He hadn't a watch handy to time the trip, nor was he able to check on passing landmarks, for he was on the floor in an overcrowded car, where his companions had thrust him. Judge Lawless wasn't in this particular car, and in a way, Dave was glad.

Dave feared that he had definitely betrayed himself to Lawless by his effort to stop Fleech's attack upon The Shadow. Certainly Dave's companions weren't trusting him, the way they kept him down on the floor. Which made Dave wonder just what would happen when he met up with the judge again. The short shrift that Lawless had given Fleech was a most discouraging precedent for Dave to consider.

The car was taking devious turns, so frequently, that at times it seemed to be circling a block. Whether or not the driver was trying to shake someone off the trail, he was at least doing a good job at fooling Dave as to his present whereabouts.

At least, until the car spurted across an avenue, at which time Dave, looking up from the floor, saw an illuminated sign upon a water tank over the edge of a roof top. The sign blinked twice as Dave glimpsed it, and each time it said:

### AVENUE THEATER

The place was evidently a neighborhood movie house, though in what neighborhood or on what avenue, Dave couldn't tell, because he had never heard of the theater before. The name, however, was something to remember, and from that point on, Dave tried to keep track of the car's course – this time, with some success.

The next thing was to pick a landmark when the car stopped. It finally halted in the middle of a gloomy brownstone block, which might have been anywhere in Manhattan. Men gripped Dave's arms and one of them growled:

"All right, guy – shove out!"

Dave "shoved out," and across his shoulder he saw just what he wanted across the street. It was a lunchroom bearing the sign:

### ECLIPSE LUNCH

Not that Dave was hungry, nor that he liked the looks of the broad-built, greasy-faced proprietor who was staring from the window of the eating place. In fact, he didn't care for either, but they were both something to remember.

Dave would know this block if he ever found it again, and that confidence regarding the future gave him some for the present.

It was nice to think that there might be a future after Dave met Judge Lawless again!

Curbing heavy doubts on that question, Dave let his companions guide him into a basement entry on this side of the street, under brownstone steps that were almost directly opposite the Eclipse Lunch and certainly where they could be observed by the greasy-faced man in the lunchroom window.

The door opened when a signal was rapped and the group moved through the basement to a flight of stairs. At the top they reached a hall where a single light was glowing; there, one of Dave's companions knocked at a door. A voice answered, and Dave was thrust into the room alone.

What Dave saw amazed him.

These rooms were the chambers of Judge Lawless!

THE white-haired master of injustice was seated behind a desk where a single lamp burned, and by the glow – which was directed away from Lawless, rather than toward him – Dave could see the other furnishings.

There were many books that looked like volumes from a law library, but among them Dave saw other titles, that dealt with varied phases of crime.

Between the book cases were pictures which dealt with many forms of punishment, from ancient horrors through medieval modes of torture. From the unpleasant things that were happening to the victims in those pictures, Dave began to feel that Lawless had been most lenient when he decreed a simple firing squad for the traitor, Fleech.

Emboldened by that thought, Dave Channey turned to face Judge Lawless.

In the light, the features of Dave Channey showed stolid, handsome in their way, but definitely hard. Dave was maintaining that pose for specific reasons.

First, he hadn't the slightest desire to look sleek, not after the dealings he had held with a smooth-mannered rat named Delker. Moreover, he was playing a tough part, that of a man who felt himself against the law because he believed that the law would soon be against him.

"You did well this evening, Channey," spoke Judge Lawless. His voice, though sharp, was modulated to suit the confines of this smaller room and held only an indication of its raspiness. "I liked the way you handled Fleech."

Dave immediately played a strong bluff.

"I liked your way of handling him too, Judge," spoke Dave, his own tone matching the hardness of his gaze. "All rats squeal when they're trapped, and that's all the more reason to get rid of them."

"The fault lay with the firing, squad. They should have settled Fleech first."

"But they didn't, Judge, so I went after him. Too bad I didn't have a gun. I'd have saved you some later trouble."

Whether Judge Lawless knew that Fleech had originally charged toward The Shadow, Dave wasn't sure. At any rate, it was logical that Dave should have supposed the fellow to be after Lawless, so he intended to stick right to that story.

Judge Lawless didn't question it, which pleased Dave thoroughly. So Dave sat back with a confident air that seemed to announce that he regarded the matter as settled.

Promptly, Judge Lawless dismissed the subject, whereupon a thought flashed home to Dave. He understood why The Shadow had done nothing to return his favor. In a way, The Shadow had returned the favor by ignoring it.

A keen customer, that fighter in black! He'd foreseen from his own observation that Dave, his lone friend in court, would be able to alibi himself with Judge Lawless; hence, it was better that The Shadow should not have even attempted a rescue of the man who had swung to his side.

From papers on his desk, Judge Lawless thumbed to the few he wanted. After glancing at them, he addressed Dave:

"I've studied your case, Channey. It involves a little matter of fifty thousand dollars."

"Forty, to be exact, Judge," put in Dave. "You see, a fellow named Delker got away with ten thousand of it."

Judge Lawless raised a hand to his chin. Dave noted gnarled, bunchy fingers as they pressed the heavy jaw.

Judge Lawless wanted to hear more details. Dave didn't tell him the real facts. They were too simple. Moyland had given Dave fifty thousand dollars to put in the office safe. Deciding that ten thousand would be sufficient to keep in the office, Dave had banked the rest to Moyland's account. Delker had robbed the safe, expecting to find fifty thousand, but had only gotten ten thousand.

Actually, Dave's foresight had saved forty thousand dollars for Homer Moyland. But old Moyland, far from being grateful, accused Dave of stealing the ten thousand! Dave's banking of a much larger sum was mere subterfuge, according to Moyland – an effort on Dave's part to cover up a theft!

Now Lawless and his crowd didn't know that Dave had banked the bulk of the money. They only knew that their man, Delker, had made a haul that was forty thousand short. Dave was bluffing that he had stolen the forty thousand, because he wanted to join the crooked crowd and get an inside trail to Delker. So Dave proceeded thus:

"I STOLE forty thousand," Dave lied coolly. "I left the ten grand in the safe just to keep Moyland guessing. When Delker robbed the safe, he ruined my alibi. Naturally, old Moyland is on my neck."

How heavily?" queried Lawless.

"Well, he fired me, for a beginning," replied Dave. "But he hasn't much evidence against me yet, except the circumstantial facts. I thought if I tied up with a right crowd like yours, I'd be where I belong. I'm certainly smarter than Delker. Menz thinks so."

"What about the money you took?" demanded Lawless suddenly.

"I intend to keep it," returned Dave bluntly. "That job is my recommendation. I'm ready to work for you on a future basis, not a past one."

All during his harangue Dave had warped the truth far out of shape, though keeping within the bounds of plausibility. His spirit evidently pleased Judge Lawless, for the crime specialist leaned back with a harsh, though not unpleasant, chuckle. Bluntly, Lawless queried:

"You expect trouble from Homer Moyland?"

"I'd like to learn if he intends to make any," returned Dave. "That's why I'd like to drop out of sight for a while, under proper auspices, the sort that you can probably provide. We can wait to learn what Moyland does, and act accordingly."

Of course, Dave didn't really need a hide-out, but he felt he'd better ask for one. Otherwise, Judge Lawless might begin to wonder how Dave was keeping clear of Moyland, after robbing the latter with no alibi. In brief, the first part of Dave's bluff – his talk of robbery – made it necessary for him to bring in the other pretense, his claim that he would have to stay where Moyland couldn't find him.

Actually, Dave intended to visit Moyland soon, and thrash things out with him. It would be easy enough to make a secret trip to Moyland's house without Judge Lawless knowing it. Dave would simply sneak from the hide-out and come back again, between times.

There was a nod from Judge Lawless. With his knobby hand, he scrawled something on a sheet of paper and thrust it to Dave. As the young man started to read it; Lawless arose.

"Put it away," rasped Lawless. "You can read it later. Come along with me, Channey."

They went downstairs and through the rear room of the basement, where they passed a group who were eating sandwiches around a table. Among the group, Dave saw Menz, and from the grin the sallow man gave him, Dave knew that he belonged. Merely passing by in the companionship of Judge Lawless was a passport for the future.

Out through a back door, Judge Lawless motioned Dave to a parked limousine. Dave noted a chauffeur in the front seat, an ugly fellow who kept his hat well over his eyes. He observed too, that the limousine was something of an antique, an old-fashioned town car that no one would connect with crooks. Once in the car with Lawless, Dave found out something else.

The windows of the old limousine were blacked out. In this car, Lawless had absolute privacy. Even the glass partition to the front was blacked. There were two dim lights glowing within the car, enough for Dave barely to make out his companion's face, but no glow could arrive from outside.



Judge Lawless spoke something through a speaking tube, and they started off on a leisurely journey that included many turns. During the ride, the judge said nothing, but his beady black eyes were constantly fixed on Dave to make sure that his companion was indifferent both to the speed of the car and its direction. Finally, Lawless spoke sharply through the tube again.

The limousine stopped. Judge Lawless didn't even offer a handshake. Instead, he opened a door and gestured Dave out to the street, speaking meanwhile:

"I shall know where to find you when I want you, Channey, and that will be very soon."

The car was in motion as Dave's foot reached the sidewalk. The door slammed, and Dave turned to see the rear lights twinkling round a corner. He hadn't a chance to spot the license-plate number, for the old-fashioned car had two spare tires on the back and the plate was nested deep between them, hence invisible when the car made its swing.

But Dave Channey merely grinned. Looking about the neighborhood where Judge Lawless had dropped him, Dave spotted a taxicab and beckoned it. Once in the cab, he asked the driver:

"Do you know where the Avenue Theater is?"

The driver nodded.

"Take me there," ordered Dave. "I want to find the manager. If the show's over, I'll go to his house. It's somewhere near the theater, so I ought to be able to find it. He's a friend of mine, the manager, and I've been to his house a couple of times."

Thus did Dave Channey embark along a trail that he had learned, with the determination to do his part for justice by gaining more facts on Judge Lawless and the latter's own hide-out. A trail that was not only to prove a blank, but one that would precipitate Dave into the very sort of trouble that Judge Lawless could so ably provide for those who tried to learn his secret ways.

## CHAPTER V. WORD TO THE SHADOW

THE two men who prowled the alleys between the side streets formed a peculiar pair. Whenever they came within the range of lights, the difference was very plain. One was the type of rugged individual who looked ready for a fight; the other was a furtive, darty of manner, prepared to sidle off into darkness at the slightest sign of danger.

Despite those superficial differences, the two had much in common. The rugged chap was Cliff Marsland, well-known in the less-select circles of Manhattan. His furtive companion went by the nickname of Hawkeye, a sobriquet that he had gained through his ability at spotting trouble and keeping out of it.

So both were equally alert, and therefore of an ilk. More than that, they shared a similar secret.

Cliff and Hawkeye were secret agents of The Shadow. Their presence in this neighborhood dated back to the flight of Judge Lawless and his band.

At that time, The Shadow had seen a taxicab trail after the fugitive crooks. The cab was piloted by Moe Shrevnitz, known as Shrevvy to his intimates, and Moe was another secret agent of The Shadow. Moe's passengers were Cliff and Hawkeye, and he had dropped them in the general neighborhood of the house where Dave Channey had met Judge Lawless for the second time.

Ever since, Cliff and Hawkeye had been trying to pick up the incomplete trail, with little success. At present, they were debating matters according to their individual lights.

"We've seen one thing, anyway," argued Cliff, as he paused in the gloom of an alley. "A truck rolled out from hereabouts, and this isn't the time when truckers are doing business."

"What bothers me," said Hawkeye, "is that side-arm joint we went by in Shrevvy's hack."

"You mean the place called the Eclipse Lunch?"

"Yeah. If that guy gandering from the window wasn't Hog Logan, I'll eat the dirty apron he was wearing."

Cliff gave a shrug, and grunted:

"So what?"

"I'll tell you what," Hawkeye persisted. "Hog is as smart a lookout as either of us ever met. Too smart to be hanging around a dump like that place, unless there's real dough in it."

There was another grunt from Cliff.

"Guess it's the Eclipse Lunch for us," decided Cliff. I'll order a ham on rye and you can eat the apron. I don't think it was Hog that you saw, but I'm willing to humor you, Hawkeye."

It was several blocks to the lunchroom. While Cliff and Hawkeye were on their way there, a cab pulled into the block in question and a passenger alighted. The passenger was Dave Channey, and he lost little time in paying off his driver, because he didn't want the fellow to know that he was looking for a lunchroom instead of a brownstone house.

Dave was still pretending to look at house numbers when the cab rolled away; then, cutting across the street, he reached the lunchroom, only to stop short as he stared at its window. This wasn't the Eclipse Lunch, the place Dave wanted. The sign on the window read:

### EUREKA LUNCH

Nor was the man in the window the greasy-faced husky who had been in the Eclipse Lunch. This proprietor was a wan, thin-faced chap who actually looked pleasant. So pleasant, that Dave considered it a good idea to go into the lunchroom and order a sandwich and coffee, while he tried to figure how he'd gone wrong on his bearings, coming from the Avenue Theater.

THE thing really had Dave puzzled. So puzzled, that when his coffee and sandwich came, he didn't ask the cost but simply handed the proprietor a dollar bill. A few minutes later, Dave heard a tapping sound and looked around. The proprietor was busy at the counter tacking shut the back of a picture frame, and as he lifted the frame itself, it displayed Dave's dollar bill!

"Looks nice, eh?" queried the proprietor. "The first dollar I take in! She hangs right here" – he lifted the frame to the wall behind the counter – "where everybody can see."

Dave was on his feet, leaning eagerly across the counter.

"Let's get this right," he insisted. "You say you just took over this place?"

The proprietor nudged at the clock.

"Ten minutes ago."

"And that sign in the window," persisted Dave. "You put it there – ten minutes ago?"

The lunchroom owner shook his head.

"Not me," he said. "Mr. Logan took down his sign and put mine up for me. Nice man, Mr. Logan. He calls me and says everything is all fixed and ready for me. No need waiting for the first of the month. Come right over and he'll give me the business –"

Dave didn't wait to hear more. Out through the door he was speculating on the fact that Logan had indeed "given the business" to the man who took over the lunchroom.

It was plain enough that Logan was the greasy man who ran the Eclipse Lunch, and that he was also working for Judge Lawless. Finished with lookout duty, Logan had changed the window sign from Eclipse to Eureka, and called up the customer to whom he had sold a good lunchroom cheap.

From this, Dave assumed that the entrance to the judge's headquarters was unguarded. There was something more that Dave should have calculated, but he didn't have time, for he was already across the street.

Trying the door beneath the brownstone steps, Dave found it unlocked. Entering, he drew his only weapon, a flashlight, and turned it toward the stairs.

This time there was no light burning at the stair top, which suited Dave quite well. He found the door to the room that Judge Lawless termed his "chambers." Opening the door, Dave thrust across the threshold and made a triumph sweep with the flashlight. His halt of astonishment was far more sudden than the one that had gripped him when he found the wrong lunchroom.

Of the elaborate furniture, there wasn't a solitary sign! Even the framed pictures had been taken, leaving gaunt walls in their place. Just as he had abandoned his courtroom, so had Judge Lawless deserted his chambers. In one case, he had left cheap chairs and benches for the police to find; but in the second instance, he had ordered the removal of furnishings that he really prized.

Indeed, there wasn't an item of evidence to prove that Judge Lawless had ever occupied this place!

Not an item – unless Dave Channey should choose to count himself as such!

That moot point did not occur to Dave until later. For the present, Dave was reconciled to the fact that there would be no use tipping off the police to the existence of this house, since there was no way to trace Judge Lawless through it. So Dave simply made his way downstairs and started toward the front door of the basement.

It was a creak of that door that made him stop quickly and extinguish his light. Then, before Dave could turn about two men lunged in and grabbed him.

Watchers, posted by Judge Lawless!

Such was the thought that rang home to Dave Channey. This was a trap, this house from which the evidence had been removed, set to snare him should he return against the judge's order!

SHOWING a surge of strength, Dave wrested from his assailants and punched out hard in the darkness. The smack of his fists against chins was happy music, until another flashlight beamed in from the door and revealed the pair that Dave had staggered.

The flashlight brought glints, not just from the revolvers that the men were groggily drawing, but from badges.

The pair were headquarters men! Someone else had steered them to this place, and they were enmeshing Dave. Then did the thought strike Dave that he himself was evidence of the sort that the police sought in their raid. Human evidence in the shape of someone who was working for Judge Lawless. The canny master of injustice had arranged this very thing, for the undoing of any members of his own band who might return as Dave had!

Madly, Dave dashed back through the basement. A voice was yelling after him, and when Dave didn't stop, a police gun began a raucous bark. It was fortunate that Dave had turned a corner, for Inspector Joe Cardona was a tolerably good hand at chopping down fugitives who were running on a straightaway.

When Cardona heard footsteps, following the gun echoes, he raced through the basement after Dave, who managed to slam and bolt the door of a rear room almost in Joe's face.

Then with Cardona smashing at the door, Dave was striving frantically to yank open another barrier that led outside, only to find it locked. Dave's wrenches at the knob couldn't match Joe's gun-bashing tactics on the panel of the other door.

A panel splintered and Joe's light was flashing through, when Dave's last tug at his own door brought results. The door slashed inward, pitching Dave to the floor almost in the beam of Cardona's flashlight.

More than night air entered. Following the door's give came two men who caught Dave by the shoulders, scooped him to his feet and were rushing him outdoors, when Cardona began to use his remaining ammunition through the wrecked panel.

Safely ahead of the shots, Dave's rescuers tumbled him into a cab and told the driver to get started. The two men were hardly in the cab themselves before it was under way.

A mad chase this; one that threatened to end almost as soon as it began, for as Dave looked back, he saw Cardona arrive in the rear street and heard the whine of a police car coming from another block. The cab rounded a corner, but the siren's wail was getting stronger, proof that Cardona had pointed the police car to the chase.

Only some singular intervention could have saved the cab from capture – and it came, from an unexpected quarter.

Back near the corner, shots rang out. They were from the mouth of an alley, and the police car halted in answer to the challenge. Another look back and Dave saw two bluecoats out of their car firing blankly into darkness at a target that must have vanished, for they stopped their shooting to stare at one another.

By then, the cab was darting around another corner and into the clear. As it took the turn, Dave heard a thing that he could scarcely believe. From far back, somewhere near the spot where an unknown fighter had exchanged shots with the police, came a sound that Dave Channey recognized.

A strange, weird laugh that faded into vague echoes; a mirth that had, earlier, defied men of crime, not those who represented the law. The laugh of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER VI. A QUESTION OF CRIME

THE two men riding with Dave Channey formed a remarkable contrast. One was Cliff Marsland, the other Hawkeye, but they didn't introduce themselves. That wasn't the system that The Shadow's agents used in a case like this. They just talked right through Dave, and let him form his own incorrect conclusions while he listened.

"Lucky the Judge had us cover up," gruffed Cliff. "If he hadn't this guy would have been caught in the middle."

"Yeah," piped Hawkeye. Between the coppers and The Shadow. Neat, I call it, this getaway, leaving 'em shooting at each other!"

There was a certain truth in what the pair said. Cliff and Hawkeye had spotted two things while Dave was in the empty house: first, the change in the lunchroom across the way; next, the arrival of the police. In ducking through an alley, they'd heard Dave rattling at the back door, so they had let him out.

Good business, this, rescuing one of the Lawless crowd to hear what he had to say. With Moe's cab handy, Cliff and Hawkeye had played for a rapid getaway, with Dave in tow.

Fortunately for them, The Shadow had arrived in the wake of the police, to see the move his agents made. His diverting shots not only assured the flight; they also substantiated the part that Cliff and Hawkeye played, so far as Dave's mind was concerned.

"We saw the truck off, all—right," growled Cliff. His tone was genuine enough, because he'd suspected the truck in question as belonging to Judge Lawless. "But this guy" – Cliff nudged at Dave – "the judge didn't say anything about him."

"Naw," conceded Hawkeye, "but he belongs. If he didn't, he wouldn't have been around when the bulls showed up."

With that, Dave found himself under the mutual gaze of his rescuers, who were giving him looks that could be defined as both questioning and suspicious. It was the right time for another bluff, so Dave played one. Since these cover—uppers didn't recognize him, it seemed good policy to introduce himself before they met up with other members of the Lawless band and began describing him.

"I'm Dave Channey," announced Dave. "Just joined up tonight. Ask Menz about me when you see him. He's the fellow who took me to the meeting. Only, don't mention that you found me back at the house, because" – Dave's tone lowered to a confidential pitch – "the judge doesn't want the rest of them to know that he sent me back there."

There were nods from Cliff and Hawkeye, but it was obvious that they expected to hear more. So Dave let his imagination grow upon a groundwork of fact.

"You see," said Dave, "Menz and the rest were to get the stuff away in the truck. The judge took me in his car and while we were riding along he told me to slide back and see how neat and quick a job they did. I was still checking up when the police found the place, with me in it."

"I wouldn't want the judge to know that I jammed myself, any more than I'd want to tell Menz that his nibs was checking on the truck job. You fellows understand."

Now there was this about Dave's fabricated story. Its texture looked like true wool to both Cliff and Hawkeye who, themselves, were trying to piece together certain facts. Mention of a man named Menz was helpful information, so Cliff and Hawkeye, still posing as followers of Lawless, promised to keep Dave's statements to themselves.

When the cab stopped in front of a very shoddy pool parlor, Cliff and Hawkeye told Dave to wait while they went in to find a friend who used the place as a hangout. Leaving the cab, they signaled Moe – one with a thumb nudge, the other with a nod – indicating that they had won Dave's confidence.

So Moe made no objection when Dave left the cab, later, saying he was going to make a phone call from a corner drugstore. Around the corner, Dave found another cab and rode away in it, at the same time opening the slip of paper to learn the address that Judge Lawless had given him.

He felt that he'd said enough to his two rescuers; that when the cabby told them he'd gone to make a phone call and hadn't returned they would decide that he had talked directly to Judge Lawless and received some new assignment from the brain of crime.

It was a better gamble than Dave supposed, considering that Cliff and Hawkeye didn't belong to the Lawless crowd!

ABOUT the time that Dave Channey so neatly slipped The Shadow's agents, a Gentleman, Lamont Cranston, was entering his favorite lounging spot, the exclusive Cobalt Club.

A man of calm countenance and leisurely air, Cranston seemed quite annoyed when he was buttonholed by his friend, Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, who was also a member of the club.

"Come to the grillroom with me, Cranston," insisted Weston briskly. "I'm expecting Inspector Cardona back from another raid."

Cranston's eyebrows rose in query.

"Another raid?"

"That's right," laughed Weston. "You didn't hear about the first one." On the grillroom stairway, the commissioner's tone went grim. "However the first raid didn't bring the results we expected. I'll tell you about it while we wait."

In the grillroom, Weston told about it with diagrams drawn on a table cloth. Cranston was quite interested in the commissioner's description of crime's secret meeting place beneath an old garage, an underground lair that was arranged in parody of a courtroom. However, Cranston finally shook his head.

"You can see it any time you want," rejoined Weston. "I'll have to take you there. You wouldn't be able to find the place yourself."

Kind of the commissioner to offer such services, considering that Cranston had actually found the courtroom of Judge Lawless ahead of the police. For this leisurely gentleman who posed as Lamont Cranston was none other than The Shadow!

Attentively, Cranston listened to Weston's tale of a traitor named Fleech, who had told the police much – but not enough. What had soured the raid was the fact that Fleech had been killed along with a few other lesser thugs who, wounded in some earlier fray, had tried to shoot it out with the invading police. Not that Fleech's life was valued on its own account; it simply happened that the police had counted on him for further information.

"But we obtained that information anyway!" pronounced Weston triumphantly. "We had a detective posted in Fleech's rooming house, and a friend of Fleech's called up to tell him where the crowd had gone. The detective phoned Inspector Cardona and gave him the address."

So that was it!

Roving the neighborhood of the underground courtroom, The Shadow had noted Cardona's sudden departure on a new trail, and had followed without knowing on what authority Cardona was working. It now was plain that the call received at Fleech's must have come from Judge Lawless, as another jest at the expense of the police, sending them on a trail that would end at a vacated house.

Naturally, Cranston couldn't disillusion his friend, the police commissioner, so he sat back and waited for Inspector Cardona to arrive and perform the deed. Meanwhile, Weston showed a most enthusiastic mood. He laid a stack of police reports in front of Cranston, stating:

"I want you to go over these duplicates, Cranston. They cover recent crimes, all of a pattern. Swindles, embezzlements, even robberies – in fact, everything short of murder, and we're not even positive that it isn't included. Every one of these crimes has been directed at men of wealth and influence – all with some success.

"There is a brain behind it; that of a clever schemer who uses human tools to accomplish his vicious work. Tonight we have reached through and found the brain himself, but it may be difficult to prove his guilt. That is why I should like you to study these cases, Cranston – because they involve victims of importance, men with whom you may be acquainted."

Hardly had Weston finished, before Cardona arrived. Cranston didn't have to study the glum look on the inspector's face to know what his report would be. Eyeing the ace inspector, Weston showed doubts that were realized as soon as Cardona spoke.

JOE'S story of the trip to the empty brownstone house would have been a perfect blank, but for the near capture of Dave Channey, which, however, proved nothing more than the fact that the place had been occupied prior to Cardona's arrival. Cardona hadn't gotten a good look at Dave, but was willing to define him as an odd member of the gang, like those who had stayed in the meeting room.

"Those fellows stuck around too long," declared Cardona bluntly. "They got theirs along with Fleech, but this fellow at the house didn't. We'll catch up with him, though, when we find the big-shot. Because we've tagged the brain!"

There wasn't much of triumph in Weston's expression any longer. His gaze was more of a glare when he spoke.

"So you've tagged your man," declared Weston testily. "And who, might I ask, does this big brain happen to be?"

Cardona waited a few moments before he replied. Then, in a note of finality, the inspector announced:

"Judge Lawless!"

The name didn't impress Weston, though he had heard it before. The commissioner simply sat back in his chair and stared hard. Cardona began to describe Judge Lawless as a man with white hair, blunt face, big teeth and long jaw. Suddenly, Weston punched the table with his fist.

"Judge Lawless!" he stormed. "What does that name mean, even with the vague description that you give me? Until you find him, Judge Lawless is officially a myth!"

"He's tough to catch," retorted Cardona. "Why, tonight, when he was on the move, even –"

"Even what?" snapped Weston, when Cardona hesitated. "Go on, inspector."

"Well... well, tonight, even The Shadow couldn't catch him."

This time, the table really rattled under Weston's pounding. Cranston had never seen the commissioner in a more violent mood.

"The Shadow!" Weston howled. "Another myth! So he was there, too! This is wonderful, inspector" – Weston's tone was reducing to a sarcastic pitch – "more wonderful than anything I've ever heard! You've imagined that there's a Shadow for so long, that now you're creating another hallucination to keep him busy – a criminal called Judge Lawless! Those benches and chairs reminded you of a courtroom, so you had to put somebody there to run it!"

"But Fleech told us about Judge Lawless –"

"Fleech – bah!" broke in Weston. "He imagined Judge Lawless just as other crooks have imagined The Shadow. I want facts, inspector, not fancies!"

Facts – not fancies.

Lamont Cranston was smiling over that one when he left the Cobalt Club. The smile became a whispered laugh as soon as he stepped into his waiting limousine. A laugh that was certainly The Shadow's, despite the opinions of Commissioner Weston.

The Shadow, master of justice, in quest of a superman of crime, Judge Lawless. Just one myth looking for another!

## CHAPTER VII. THE ROAD BACK

DAYLIGHT glistened upon Manhattan's towers, the glow of late afternoon that turned the heights of skyscrapers into a fabulous array. Yet that remarkable vista could not compare with the small, compact scene that existed somewhere deep among that vast horde of mammoth buildings.

The Shadow was in a hidden realm known to himself alone: his sanctum!

Burrowed in Manhattan, The Shadow's sanctum was a goal that criminals galore had sought to find, and failed. Once they had stormed the older sanctum practically at its owner's invitation, but that was another sanctum and another story.



This sanctum was not only where they couldn't find it, but in a place where they wouldn't dream of looking for it, though it was within a reasonable radius from Manhattan's teeming center, Times Square.

Not only was the bustle of the city cut off by the thick walls of the sanctum; so was daylight. For in this secret room there existed a strange stillness and an absolute darkness. Those elements were broken only by the whisper of The Shadow's laugh and the click that came when a gloved hand turned on a bluish light.

THE weird, light glowed upon the polished surface of a table. Into that gleam came ungloved hands, and from a finger of the left hand shone a gem that was The Shadow's lone symbol.

That jewel was a girasol, a matchless fire opal that burned with the mysterious glow of The Shadow's eyes. Its hues were deep, yet ever-changing, running the gamut from deep maroon to rich ultramarine.

Like creeping creatures detached from their black-cloaked arms, the hands brought papers into the light. Along with the reports that Weston had given Cranston were newspaper accounts that corroborated them. In addition – and these were most important – came reports from The Shadow's agents.

Commissioner Weston was quite right on one thing.

Crime was rampant on a vast but elusive scale. Men of wealth had been sheared like fuzzy lambs. Their cash was gone and they couldn't, or wouldn't, trace it. But Weston was wrong on another point. The report that he had marked "Unimportant" was the most important of the batch. Indeed, The Shadow regarded it as the key to the question of Judge Lawless.

It concerned the Moyland Importing Co.

Homer Moyland, owner of the importing company, had entrusted fifty thousand dollars to his office manager, David Channey. Of his own volition, Channey had deposited forty thousand in the bank, leaving only ten thousand in the safe. The next day, the ten thousand had been missing, and Homer Moyland had held Dave Channey responsible. Moyland had discharged Dave and reported the case to the police.

Theft, embezzlement, or robbery – whichever it might be – the law was merely awaiting Moyland's word to arrest Dave on the chosen charge. So far, Moyland had preferred to wait, declaring that he was seeking further evidence.

Meanwhile, two agents of The Shadow had met Dave Channey and learned that he had just signed up with Judge Lawless. Though they had let Dave slip them, Cliff and Hawkeye had gleaned certain facts about him from another source, a man named Hog Logan. Their report lay on The Shadow's desk.

Hog Logan was an outside member of the Lawless gang. He'd served as a lookout, and was no longer needed. Cliff and Hawkeye had found him, later, in his favorite poolroom hangout. Posing as two of the Lawless boys, they'd heard an interesting story.

According to Hog, Dave Channey claimed to have made away with forty thousand dollars belonging to Homer Moyland. The reason he hadn't taken the other ten thousand was because he'd left it in the safe as a "blind" to cover his larger theft.

But the ten thousand had disappeared anyway, thanks to the deft hands of Delker a salesman working for the importing company. Which put Dave Channey in a difficult position, the sort that would induce a man to join up with Judge Lawless Co.

A WHISPERED laugh crept through the sanctum as The Shadow compared the police report with the one supplied by Cliff. Between the two, Dave's actual story lay like an open book.

Dave Channey was doing some sleuthing on his own. He knew that Delker was the crook but couldn't prove it. But for Dave, Delker would have taken fifty thousand dollars instead of only ten thousand. To clear himself, Dave had checked on Delker's former associates, and had found one named Menz.

Classing Menz as a crook, Dave had claimed that he had personally stolen the forty thousand dollars that Delker hadn't found. On that claim, Menz, the go-between, had introduced Dave to the Lawless gang.

Out of this, The Shadow produced a conclusion that would have utterly stupefied Commissioner Weston.

It was this: Judge Lawless wanted to rob Homer Moyland. He tried it, had Lawless, for a fifty-thousand-dollar stake, with Delker as the instrument. Ten thousand dollars wasn't enough to interest Commissioner Weston; therefore, it wouldn't be sufficient to suit Judge Lawless. Crime's big brain would have another, and a bigger, try at shearing Homer Moyland.

Again a whispered laugh stirred the sanctum. With it a hand stretched across the table and plucked earphones from the wall. A tiny light gleamed, denoting a connection. From the earphones came a methodical voice:

"Burbank speaking."

"Instructions," spoke The Shadow. "Instructions to Vincent –"

The sibilant voice continued, heard by Burbank alone. To his contact man, The Shadow was giving special orders involving a trusted agent named Harry Vincent. When The Shadow finished, Burbank's steady tone replied:

"Instructions received."

The Shadow removed the earphones, replacing them on the wall. The tiny light disappeared; so did the bluish glow upon the table when an unseen hand clicked the switch. Blackness caught the echoes of a departing laugh. Complete silence pervaded The Shadow's sanctum.

FROM the window of his little apartment, Dave Channey watched the sunset. This wasn't exactly his apartment; it was one which Judge Lawless had assigned him, the address on the slip of paper the crime master had given Dave. As a hide-out, it was as snug a place as could be pictured for that purpose.

There was a phone in the apartment. It hadn't rung all day and Dave wondered when it would. He didn't care to be absent when Judge Lawless phoned, should the judge decide to do so; nevertheless, there were no strings to Dave's deal. Dave wanted a hideout and the judge had given him one. If Dave felt that he could safely fare from it, that was his own business.

Naturally, though, Dave had been waiting until dusk, and dark was approaching rapidly. So Dave consulted a timetable, waited ten minutes more, then left the apartment.

Dave caught his train at Grand Central with a few minutes to spare. It was dark when he reached his destination, a suburban station in Westchester County. The only lights were those of the station platform, and they were quite dim, including the line that went up the steps to the street where taxicabs parked.

One of the local cabs was on hand, but before taking it Dave looked about to make sure that he wasn't observed. Entering the cab, he gave an address to the driver, who nodded, for every cabby who operated from this station knew where the residence of Homer Moyland was located.

Dave was recognized by a man seated in a coupe parked beyond a row of cedars that decorated the station landscape. He'd never seen Dave before, but he knew him from a very careful description that Cliff Marsland had furnished to The Shadow, who, in turn, had added his own brief recollections of Dave from the meeting in the courtroom of Judge Lawless.

So Harry Vincent started his coupe and took up the trail of Dave's cab, keeping far enough behind that Dave couldn't get a glimpse of the following car. In fact, Harry was so far behind that he met Dave's cab when it came out of the driveway leading into the Moyland estate.

Letting the cab pass, Harry followed the driveway, until he saw the looming bulk of a well-lighted mansion; then he turned his coupe into a side drive, where trees and shrubbery offered a good hiding spot, but from which he had a good view of the house. Dave Channey had taken the road back to Moyland's – the same road that The Shadow believed would be used by Judge Lawless. Along that same route The Shadow had sent his trusted agent, Harry Vincent, to watch for symptoms of coming crime!

## CHAPTER VIII. TURN OF THE WORM

DAVE CHANNEY wasn't ushered to the sunporch, where Moyland's special guests were taken. A new footman showed him into a stuffy reception room just off the front hall. There Dave paced impatiently, wondering if Homer Moyland would see him at all.

He was beginning to think his visit a total blank, when he heard light footsteps coming from the stairs. Instantly, Dave sprang to the door of the reception room and whispered:

"Elaine!"

The girl stopped suddenly; too suddenly, to please Dave. She stopped with the quick toss of her blond head that Dave had seen Elaine Moyland use with others, but never with himself. At the office, they'd always claimed that Elaine was a snob, but Dave had deemed her quite the opposite.

No one ever disturbed Elaine's poise; she just wouldn't let them. And Dave, to his credit, had never tried, which was probably why Moyland's daughter had liked him on sight and had always treated him as an equal. From that first meeting there had been many more, wherein Elaine had expressed true admiration for men of Dave's type, who won their place in life through their own effort.

Dave had long ago held the hope of becoming Moyland's son-in-law, rather than a junior partner of the Moyland firm, though both had loomed within his horizon. But whatever he held of the first hope was gone as completely as the second, the moment he faced Elaine this evening.

"I am very sorry," the girl declared, in a tone so blunt that it belied the statement. "I do not remember that I have ever met you!"

Turning on one high heel, Elaine crossed the hallway and disappeared, leaving Dave quite too humiliated to express the anger that surged within him. Nor could his anger rise; instead, it dwindled, for the cut of those words made him feel that he deserved them. From Elaine's viewpoint, he did deserve them, for she knew only her father's version of Dave's case.

His anger squelched, Dave was losing even his indignation, when Homer Moyland appeared to revive it.

When Homer Moyland thrust his crabby face into sight and approached with a gait that also befitted a crustacean, Dave regarded him as a creature quite unrelated to the very lovely girl who had just departed.

Old Moyland looked glad to see Dave. Glad in an ugly, spiteful sort of way. With a gesture from one clawish hand, he waved Dave back into the reception room. Once they were inside, Moyland demanded in a sharp, high pitch:

"Well? Have you brought my money?"

Dave steadied himself.

"I told you before that I didn't steal the ten thousand dollars," declared Dave stolidly, wishing that Elaine had stayed within hearing distance. "Instead, I saved you forty thousand –"

"Bah!" Moyland fairly spat the ejaculation. "You wouldn't have dared steal more than ten thousand! All dust, your depositing the rest! Dust to blind my eyes!"

"I put the ten thousand in the safe," declared Dave firmly. "I changed the combination, as you ordered. I wrote out the new combination and gave you the notation in your office. Perhaps you were careless enough to let someone find it –"

Moyland clawed the air in interruption. His voice became a low, harsh undertone.

"You have relatives, Channey," he reminded. "They are wealthy enough to provide you with ten thousand dollars. At least" – he cocked his head and gave a sour stare – "you can say they did, and I shall ask no questions."

"How long are you giving me?" asked Dave.

"Another week," replied Moyland. "Unless you bring me ten thousand dollars within that time, I shall set the law upon you."

Dave calculated. He might be able to locate Delker within a week, or at least get evidence to prove the fellow as the real thief of Moyland's cash. It was risky, playing along with Judge Lawless, but Dave regarded it worthwhile.

Of course, he'd keep pretending that Moyland might be clamping down at any moment; and if Moyland did start legal proceedings, Dave could gain a time extension by staying in the hide-out that Judge Lawless had provided at Dave's own request. Dave was glad now that he had included the hide-out as part of his bluff.

Moyland was standing with folded arms, his manner so smug that Dave felt like taking a punch at his crabby face. Knowing Moyland, however, Dave realized that the skinflint would gladly add an assault and battery charge to his unproven claim of robbery. So Dave relaxed and felt himself quite fortunate, for at that moment the new footman appeared in the doorway, as a very handy witness in Moyland's behalf.

"Show the visitor out, Tobias," ordered Moyland. "And remember him! I do not care to have him admitted to the house in future!"

THERE was a car swinging up the driveway as Dave left the front steps, and he took to shelter to avoid it, as the gravel was very narrow. The car stopped, and away from its range of lights Dave paused long enough to see the two men who stepped from it. He recalled them both quite well.

One was Roger Helmbroke, a blocky man whose broad chin looked as wide as his bulgy forehead. He was a wholesaler for various products that Moyland imported, and Dave recalled that Helmbroke was very much in Moyland's confidence.

The other man, suave and of dark complexion, was Simon Le Carra, and Dave had never figured out his nationality. Le Carra represented Moyland in South America, but claimed no particular country as his birthplace. It was Dave's private opinion that Le Carra was a sharpshooting New Yorker with just enough foreign extraction to put himself across in other lands.

It would be interesting indeed if Moyland should mention Dave's case to these two cronies, particularly on the sunporch where they could be overheard outside of one of the open windows. It would be very nice, Dave also thought, if he could be an eavesdropper to such a conversation.

As soon as the front door closed, Dave moved around the house and beneath those very windows.

Already glasses were clinking on the sunporch, as Tobias brought drinks for Moyland and his guests. By the time the servant was gone, Dave was clinging to the outer rail of the porch, his head just below the level of the solid sill. Amid the lessening clinks of the highballs, Dave heard Moyland speak in a confidential tone.

"The proposition is perfect, Roger," said Moyland to Helmbroke. "Le Carra has already arranged the purchase of the Bolivian tin, and I am ready to import it. I prefer to sell it to one large customer, at an importer's profit – small, but with quick turnover – rather than fill a multitude of orders at a larger gain."

"And the excuse," put in Le Carra, in an oily tone, "is that Mr. Moyland wants spot cash in order to order more tin."

"I understand," acknowledged Helmbroke. His words struck Dave as showing shrewd insight. "But if I'm to go partners with Mordaunt Tharn –"

"No, no," interrupted Moyland. "You act as though you intend to go partners, putting up a hundred thousand dollars each. Actually, I list you as separate buyers. All the legitimate retail sales go to your credit, but the half we bootleg to the industries that lack priorities will be charged as Tharn's."

"And can I get real prices for that half!" chuckled Le Carra. "We'll mark Tharn for the usual profit, and the rest will be ours, paid on the side."

"If the government traces those sales back," added Moyland, "the trail will stop cold at Tharn. Even his sales records will be used against him, because they will look false."

A whistling sound came from between Helmbroke's big teeth. He followed it with the question:

"These sales are already made?"

Both Moyland and Le Carra chimed an affirmative. Whereupon, Dave heard the crinkle of many papers.

"There's my hundred thousand," stated Helmbroke. "All cash and negotiable– securities. That ought to convince Mr. Mordaunt Tharn when he gets here. But remember, Homer–"

"I'll remember," interrupted Moyland. "We'll do just as I told you over the telephone. The idea is to convince Tharn that everything is thoroughly legitimate."

"That won't take us long," added Le Carra, "because I hear the doorbell and it probably means Tharn."

DURING the next few minutes, Dave's thoughts were popping fast. He'd known Moyland to handle transactions like this one, but always on an honest basis. No wonder Moyland didn't want Dave back on the job! Dave was the one man who could have seen through the coming game!

Moyland had often shaken his head when he thought of the huge profits from unscrupulous industrialists who would pay double money for imported essentials like tin that the government would not let them have. So those qualms of Moyland's were because he couldn't find a way around it!

He'd found one now. Simply by duping someone into becoming the actual purchaser. Dave had heard of Mordaunt Tharn, a man who was wealthy and of high integrity. Evidently Moyland had sized up Tharn as a man who would be too cautious to put up cash on a proposition unless it interested someone else, so Helmbroke was to be the bait.

If this deal went through, it would mean everything to Dave. Not only could he ruin it; he intended to do so. But he'd do it by offering Moyland a chance to call off the proposition, or be exposed. Dave's price for such service would be an honest one. He'd merely insist that Moyland drop all charges against him for stealing money he hadn't taken.

This evening, Dave had felt himself a worm. His contact with Judge Lawless had put him in that mood, and Elaine Moyland had shown her contempt in a way that stirred Dave's guilty conscience. Maybe Dave was still a worm; but it was his turn to invoke a worm's prerogative and become a worm that could turn!

How far that turn of things would carry Dave Channey before this episode ended, was something far beyond his comprehension. For Dave was forgetting that he was no longer his own man. He now belonged to Judge Lawless!

There was one person who had not forgotten. He, alone, could change the events that threatened destruction to Dave Channey, and to others, once Judge Lawless took a hand.

That being was The Shadow!

## CHAPTER IX. THE DEATH WATCH

THERE were times when the most trifling of actions could shape the destinies of many men, along with the causes that they represented. This was one such time, and the person who did the shaping was Dave Channey. Yet, to Dave, the thing itself seemed quite inconsequential.

Dave merely wanted a look at Mordaunt Tharn when the new arrival reached the sunporch. To gain that look, Dave raised his head above the level of the window sill.

There was an outside watcher in a car parked deep in a side driveway. His name was Harry Vincent, and he was particularly interested in where Dave Channey had gone after leaving Moyland's mansion. Moreover, from his vantage point Harry couldn't fail to recognize Dave when the latter's face appeared against the sunporch lights.

Totally oblivious to the outside factor, Dave was busy studying Mordaunt Tharn. From his first look at the new visitor, Dave was more than surprised. He'd expected Tharn to be a man of benign appearance, but he'd also pictured him as an elderly fossil. Quite the contrary, Tharn was youthful, a man who didn't look to be past thirty.

Tharn was tall and quite handsome. His bluish eyes were frank, friendly as they looked about. Among such leeches as Moyland, Helmbroke and Le Carra, Tharn shone like a sunburst pressing through ugly clouds. Not only did Dave accept Tharn on sight; he was inclined to break in upon this conference and shout the warning word "Fraud!" rather than have a man of Tharn's fine caliber suffer grief through the plotters who were so politely welcoming him.

A sudden sweep of envy ended Dave's desire to take a hand in matters.

The men on the sunporch weren't the only persons greeting Mordaunt Tharn. Elaine Moyland appeared in the doorway to bestow a smile upon the dark-haired guest. Though the girl looked about the group, it was evident that her gaze was all for Tharn. Nor was that the only feature that impressed Dave.

When he'd seen Elaine earlier, she'd been wearing a plain sport's suit. Since then she'd changed to a blue evening gown, that not only did more justice to her figure but completely revealed her perfect shoulders and her long slender arms.

Elaine was ready to go places, and it was evident that she hoped Tharn would take her when he finished his conference with her father.

Elaine had never tossed herself at Dave; he'd never believed that it was in her nature. But she was now making a play for Mordaunt Tharn to a point that outraged Dave – until he saw how Tharn was taking it all.

Promptly, Dave lost all grudge against Tharn. The handsome millionaire was deporting himself most admirably. His smile toward Elaine was purely indulgent; if Tharn had spoken, Dave felt that he would have told Elaine to go back upstairs and play with her dolls, for he obviously regarded her as very much a child.

As for Moyland, when his eyes met Tharn's, there was a change in the latter's smile. Observing Tharn's profile, Dave noted a contemptuous curl to the corner of the handsome man's lip, something which escaped Moyland's observation.

Quite definitely, Elaine was getting nowhere with her "come hither" pose, and as a factor in Moyland's swindle proposition the girl was nil. Dave saw disappointment betray itself on Elaine's face; to cover it, the girl smiled quickly, then turned and left. Subsiding, Dave settled down below the window sill. It was then that he received the "come hither" call himself.

Dave's invitation was in the form of an icy touch that formed a round spot in the middle of his neck. He'd never felt such a touch before, but it didn't take guesswork to define it.

Someone approaching through the shrubs had stalked up behind Dave's back and reached high with a gun muzzle, to place it right where Dave would feel it most.

His hands releasing the rail, Dave dropped the few feet to the ground, his arms staying right where they were, which brought them above his head. The gun descended with him, sticking to his neck as though glued.

No voice accompanied the pressure. It wasn't necessary for Dave's captor to furnish verbal orders. The gun point, turning in its owner's hand, simply guided Dave on a slow march away from the sunporch, off to the

rear of the house.

WHEN his feet crunched gravel, Dave saw that he was crossing a driveway to a three-car garage a few hundred feet from the house.

Dave's captor thrust him through a little side door that led into the garage. The gun stayed on Dave's neck while the door closed. Then, as the weapon was removed, Dave heard the under-toned order:

"Turn around!"

Dave turned, stared at his captor, and gave a short gasp that changed to a forced chuckle.

The man with the gun was Dave's old friend, Menz!

When it came to surprise, Menz's sallow face showed quite as much as Dave's. Menz slowly lowered the revolver and started it toward his pocket. While Menz was seeking words, Dave thought rapidly and felt sure that he was getting enough ideas to put across a bluff. So Dave spoke first.

"The Judge didn't tell me you'd be here," said Dave. "I guess he didn't figure we'd be running into each other.

Menz nodded.

"I only took the job today," he returned. "Moyland wanted a chauffeur and he had my application, but I didn't think he'd need me until next week. Maybe the Judge wasn't sure I'd landed here already."

"Well, I'd better be getting back," remarked Dave. "I was listening in on some big stuff when you came along, Menz."

"Wait a minute!" There was a trace of suspicion in Menz's tone. "The Judge wouldn't have told you to bring a car out here and park it right where somebody would run into it if they took the short-cut out through the back gate."

Dave's stare showed frank puzzlement.

"What car?"

"Wasn't that yours?" inquired Menz. "The one over by the trees? If it wasn't – again the sallow face showed suspicion – "how did you come to be sneaking out of it, over to the porch?"

Dave retorted with the cold truth. He told Menz that he had come from the station in a cab, and that he had moved around to the sunporch directly after leaving Moyland's front door.

Menz, listening, believed him – with a marked result. Suddenly lifting his gun again, Menz pressed it close to Dave and whispered in a tone that was confidential:

"Start out that door again, Dave. With your hands up and me in back of you. But don't get out of the light!"

Still somewhat puzzled, Dave obeyed. He wasn't across the threshold before he stopped. Into the small glow from the garage stepped another man, also with a gun. But he meant the weapon for Menz, not for Dave.



He was a clean-cut chap, who fulfilled Dave's idea regarding those who might be working for The Shadow. A good surmise on Dave's part, for this was Harry Vincent.

It was Harry that Menz had trailed from the parked car, only to spot Dave at the sunporch instead. When Menz had taken Dave to the garage, it had become Harry's turn to follow from darkness. After quizzing Dave, Menz had smartly guessed the existing situation, but he hadn't outguessed Harry so far.

For The Shadow's agent, with a quick sidestep, managed to angle his automatic past Dave and cover Menz instead. A scowl registered on the crook's sallow face when Menz found himself outwitted. In turn, Dave realized exactly what had happened.

It was Menz's plan to poke his revolver between Dave's arm and body and cover the clean-cut outsider, but Harry by his sidestep had thwarted that little stunt.

It was a stalemate, and Dave, though apparently helpless, was the man who could break the deadlock. His choice was to side with Harry, who represented The Shadow; rather than with Menz, the creature of Judge Lawless. Dave hesitated, only to await the most timely moment. Before it came, his chance was gone.

So suddenly that Dave couldn't at first understand it, Harry Vincent lowered his gun, shut his eyes with a sickly expression and dropped forward into the light!

STARING at the man he'd wanted to help, Dave saw that Harry was completely out. Looking up, Dave then observed another man standing right in back of the spot where Harry had tumbled. The newcomer was Tobias, Moyland's droop-faced footman, and in his hand he was juggling a blackjack.

"Good work, Tobias!" commended Menz. "I thought you'd be along if I stalled long enough. This fellow belongs." Easing his gun away, Menz gestured it to indicate Dave. "He was helping me stage a bluff."

Stepping forward, Menz nudged his foot against Harry's ribs and got no response. So he told Dave to help him lug the stunned man into the garage. As they stooped to raise their burden, Menz added comments for Dave's benefit.

"Tobias has been here a week," explained Menz. "He's the Judge's inside guy, finding out the best way to trim old Moyland. It was Tobias who tipped us off that Moyland needed a new chauffeur."

Seeing that Menz and Dave were handling Harry without trouble, Tobias turned away, remarking that he'd better be getting back into the house in case his services were required.

Entering the kitchen, he paused to pocket his blackjack; then turned hurriedly as a bell announced another visitor at the front door.

Going through the house, Tobias reached the door quite promptly and ushered in a calm-faced man, who tendered a calling card and asked to see Mr. Moyland. Tobias took the card, and read it on the way to the sunporch. The card bore the name:

LAMONT CRANSTON

A singular situation this! The Shadow being received by the very servant who had just slugged Harry Vincent and left him in the custody of Menz, the lieutenant of Judge Lawless!

The Shadow as Lamont Cranston; Tobias as Moyland's footman – neither as yet aware of the other's true identity. A situation which might have had some merit under ordinary circumstances, but very disadvantageous considering what had just occurred.

It wasn't The Shadow's way to be merely playing the part of Cranston while servers of a master crook like Judge Lawless were keeping death watch over The Shadow's helpless agent, Harry Vincent!

### CHAPTER X. THE SHADOW'S CLUE

HOMER MOYLAND was more than glad to receive Lamont Cranston. He knew Cranston both by acquaintance and reputation and could not have wanted a better visitor.

During the past dozen minutes, Moyland and his foxy associates had practically clinched their deal with Mordaunt Tharn, and had reached the point where a reliable witness would render it just perfect. So Moyland told Tobias to bring Mr. Cranston to the sunporch, at once.

Beaming a smile as he shook hands, Moyland introduced Cranston to the others; then said:

"You're just too late, Cranston. A few minutes sooner and you could have shared in a very profitable transaction."

Cranston being interested, Moyland explained further. His words were very precise, but Cranston's keen eyes observed that Helmbroke and Le Carra were listening very closely, as though they feared the chance of a serious slip.

As Moyland put it, Helmbroke and Tharn had each taken a half-interest in a large importation of South American tin, for which each had an individual market. Not a word about the two being partners; in fact, Moyland indicated quite the opposite.

He showed Cranston the securities and cash that Helmbroke had paid for his share, and they made a very imposing exhibit. Locking the bundle in a small steel box, Moyland pocketed the key and tendered a receipt to Helmbroke. During his harangue Moyland had spoken occasionally to Tharn, who had replied quite in accordance with the answers that Moyland wanted. For Tharn's mind was off the track of business. He was over by the doorway talking with Elaine, who had reappeared, as Moyland hoped she would. Thus, through his daughter's unwitting aid, Moyland was getting by with statements to Cranston that were quite different from the proposition that he had sold to Tharn.

Elaine was using a new technique with Tharn. She was acting in the grown-up style that Dave admired; hence Tharn was giving her a hearing. When Elaine stated that she was going in town but wasn't sure that her father would care to have her ride with a new and untried chauffeur, Tharn invited her to come in his car – which was exactly what Elaine wanted.

An interruption came when Tobias arrived bringing a telephone, which he plugged into a special switch in a corner of the sunporch, announcing that the call was for Mr. Cranston.

It happened to be from Burbank, but The Shadow carried on his conversation in Cranston's style, his calm tone giving no indication as to what the call was about.

Burbank simply reported that he hadn't heard from Harry at the end of a stipulated interval. That negative report meant quite as much as a positive one. There could only be one reason why Harry hadn't reported. He must have spotted Dave Channey and followed him to Moyland's, the place where The Shadow expected

Dave to pay a visit.

As soon as Cranston hung up, Moyland stepped across the sunporch to speak to Tharn.

"You heard everything, of course," Moyland said to Tharn. "I mean the details as I gave them to Cranston."

"Of course," responded Tharn in his pleasant tone. "You simply recapitulated the proposition."

"That's right," agreed Moyland, his crab face hiding its smirk. "Helm broke has just given me his funds. You may send me your check tomorrow, or the next day, whenever convenient to you. There is no rush."

Elaine smiled when Tharn said he'd heard all that her father told Cranston, because she was quite sure that Tharn hadn't. Not wanting to lose her present grip on Tharn, Elaine remarked:

"Mr. Tharn is taking me into town, dad. You know, you said you didn't want to trust the new chauffeur too soon –"

"Of course not!" The alacrity with which Moyland interrupted really surprised Elaine. "My thanks, Tharn, for inviting Elaine. I shall feel quite confident while she is with you. I won't worry at all about when she will be coming home."

Elaine liked that one, because she was planning to turn the car trip into a full evening's date with Tharn. She was further pleased when Tharn bowed them both out from the sunporch, thus putting a prompt end to the conference.

It was a very artful brush-off, this quick farewell to Tharn. Knowing Tharn for a man of absolute integrity, and already mistrusting Moyland because of the latter's attitude toward Dave, Cranston had only to glance at the sharp face of Le Carra and the bluff visage of Helm broke to sum up the facts behind the game.

THE SHADOW'S keen brain was playing with another question, the double disappearance of Dave Channey and Harry Vincent.

There wasn't a thing to prove they'd been around Moyland's, but The Shadow was quite sure that they must have come here. So, as Cranston, he politely shook hands with those three conspirators, Moyland, Helm broke and Le Carra, and announced that he must leave.

As soon as Cranston left, Moyland conducted Helm broke and Le Carra into a little corner room and there opened a safe, chuckling while he did. They'd topped the Tharn deal beautifully, the way Moyland had twisted its terms for Cranston's benefit, with Tharn actually present.

Both Le Carra and Helm broke agreed, but the latter inserted a point of his own when Moyland started to put the steel cash box in the safe.

"You're forgetting something, Moyland," Helm broke reminded. "My hundred thousand dollars is still in that box. Here's the receipt. I'd like my funds back."

"Of course!" Moyland was quite apologetic.

Moyland unlocked the box, took out its contents and handed them to Helm broke. While Moyland was closing the safe, the big wholesaler thrust the thick bundle into his inside pocket. He was buttoning his coat and pressing down the bulge when he stepped from the little room into the hallway.

Seeing Tobias, Helmbroke waved and told the servant to bring his hat and coat. Le Carra also called for his, since he was leaving with Helmbroke.

Taking them to the front door, Moyland advised the pair to wait until they were sure that Cranston's car had left.

Meanwhile, Tobias went to the sunporch, ostensibly to gather the empty glasses. But the thing Tobias really wanted was the telephone. He didn't unplug it from its empty socket. Instead, the servant made a very confidential call, one that would bring prompt action from certain followers of Judge Lawless.

As he spoke, Tobias heard a sound from beyond the sunporch, the slight throb of a motor among the trees on the side driveway. That sound was largely responsible for the specific instructions that Tobias gave across the telephone.

Out front, Lamont Cranston heard the slight sound, too. It was the very clue he wanted, one which he regarded as vital. Cranston wasn't in his limousine at present. Neither, for that matter, was a note that Harry Vincent should have deposited in the big car, had he seen it parked out front. Which meant that Harry had probably disappeared; and as for Cranston, he had definitely done so.

For the limousine was rolling out through the gate without its aristocratic passenger, and Cranston was still in the shelter of Moyland's mansion, garbed in a guise as black as the night itself.

Not finding a note from Harry, he'd taken cloak and hat from beneath the rear seat of the limousine, and had instructed his chauffeur to drive back to town alone.

Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow, prepared to embark in search of a vital clue, only to have it reach him!

Gliding swiftly to the corner of the house, The Shadow followed the motor's throb with uncanny precision. He heard it dwindle, but when it reached a point where ordinary ears would no longer have caught it, The Shadow still was conscious of the throb.

The car had stopped somewhere in back of the mansion; gaining a new angle, The Shadow spied the dim glow from the distant garage and started in that direction.

The Shadow knew that the mystery car from the side drive could only belong to his missing agent, Harry Vincent!

OUT near the garage, Menz had parked the coupe without turning off the motor. He and Dave were dragging Harry into the car. It was Menz who took the wheel, and he told Dave to sit tight and make sure their senseless prisoner didn't roll about too much.

Dave hadn't an idea where Menz intended to go, so he decided to play along. Much better to wait until Harry recuperated before trying to rescue him.

There was a muffled clunk as Menz put the car into gear. Their start was slow, and Menz explained:

"I'll slip away without the lights. Easy enough to stay on the drive, because I can hear the gravel. I'll turn on the glims when we reach the other gate."

Just as Menz was guiding by the wheel sounds, so was The Shadow picking them up to trace the car's course, as he dashed to overtake it on foot. The Shadow was gaining along the curving driveway, until headlights suddenly blazed and tail-lights blossomed like ruddy flowers, along with a sudden spurt from the soft-purring exhaust.

The gate was open just ahead and it offered a slanted turn, that encouraged speed instead of hindering it. The car seemed to lift as it picked up speed, as though it sought to whisk itself away from the cloaked pursuer who was making a final dash to overtake it.

The Shadow's burst of speed won out. As the car surged between the gateposts, the tail-lights blanked as though a cloud of smoke from the exhaust had enveloped them. But no smoke could have produced such thorough blackness. The fleeting blackout was token of The Shadow.

His perch gained on the broad rear section of the coupe, the cloaked investigator was riding alone with the very car that carried his unconscious agent. Harry Vincent wouldn't have to depend upon the lone aid of Dave Channey for a future rescue.

The master rescuer of all time was on the job, to finish whatever Dave might try to start.

The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XI. HUMAN FREIGHT

MENZ stopped the car abruptly and turned off the ignition. Leaving the car in gear, he turned the key on again. The car was on a grade, but the slope wasn't enough for it to get started while in high gear. Reaching under his coat Menz produced a bottle, handed it to Dave and suggested:

"Try a whack of this."

When Dave asked why, Menz laughed.

"We don't want to waste all of it on a guy who won't appreciate it. The stuff is too good!"

Dave decided he ought to take a short drink just to humor Menz. He shifted in his seat, and in doing so looked from the window. When he saw where Menz had parked the car, Dave did take a gulp from the bottle and a long one.

The coupe was squarely in the center of a railway grade crossing that formed a flat stretch on this lonely slope!

Menz reached for the bottle and took a few swallows himself. Between drinks, he told what was to happen next.

"There's a night freight runs this line," said Menz, "and she's about due. Big electric locomotive, a better bet than those suburban rattlers that carry passengers. Those locals can stop too quick to suit. The freight won't."

As if to commend Menz's praise, a long wail floated in from the distance. It was a hollow toot of the sort that electric locomotives give. Whistling, no doubt, for some other grade crossing up the line. Tilting the bottle, Menz began to sprinkle its remaining contents over Harry's coat. He passed the bottle over so that Dave could work the other side.

"Shake it and hop out," ordered Menz. "Take the bottle with you."

Again that hollow whistle, closer, yet still minutes distant. Tensely, Dave tried to catch one of those quick thoughts that had helped him in the past. Then he'd simply been trying to bluff his way out of a jamb and he'd had time to work. This was different: a man's life was in the balance; time was very short.

"Why take the bottle?" queried Dave, for want of something else to say. "We ought to leave it here as evidence to show the victim had been drinking."

"It's been overdone," returned Menz coolly. "Drunks usually pitch bottles out the window after they empty them. So we'll do it for this guy somewhere back along the road."

At that moment, Harry stirred, muttered something feebly. But he didn't seem to hear the next whistle that sounded from up the steel pike. Grimly, Dave stepped from the car and started toward the back, knowing that Menz would follow as soon as he shifted the victim over beside the wheel.

As he reached the back of the car, Dave halted, weighing the bottle he carried. It was a quart bottle, nicely rounded and with a sizable neck. Dave's fingers fixed around the neck and he swung the inverted bottle. It was nice to think of what was going to happen to Menz, even though this meant the end of Dave's connection with the Lawless gang.

Rounding the back of the car, Dave waited just clear of the rear fender. He heard the door swing open, saw Menz silhouetted against the side glow of the headlights. His chance would be just right to slug Menz when his companion slammed the door after adjusting Harry at the wheel. With Menz lying senseless beside the tracks, there would still be minutes remaining for Dave to get the car away with its human freight.

Back came Dave's hand as his body shifted forward. He was showing panther skill in the dark, and his breath sucked in with a hiss that reminded him of a snarl. But it didn't change Dave's attitude; he intended to swing hard enough to kill. It was either Menz's life or that of a helpless man who lay in the coupe.

Then as Dave was at the pitch of his poise, there came a glare of light that changed his determination to absolute startlement.

It wasn't from the tracks, that light, though the howl of the freight was closer and its rattle could be heard. The glow flooded from behind the coupe, produced by the bright lights of another car that had swung suddenly upon this scene of uncompleted murder!

Turned half about, Dave stiffened; then before he could make another move he saw another figure that the lights revealed. A shape that came hurtling up from nowhere, as though disgorged by the back of the coupe, though its rumble seat was closed. A thing of living blackness that lunged for Dave with a pair of gloved hands, one swinging a gun, the other jabbing for his throat! That fighter was The Shadow!

THE right thoughts didn't spring to Dave's mind. He didn't realize that the car that supplied the sudden light could only mean a cover-up crew of the sort that Judge Lawless would certainly have ordered to be close at hand. Such it was, a car summoned by Tobias when he made his phone call, to pick up Dave and Menz after they finished their work of murder.

There was something else that didn't dawn on Dave. The Shadow knew quite well that Dave was intending to slug Menz, and therefore didn't plan to do Dave harm. But the men in the other car didn't know Dave's intentions. Unwittingly, Dave had fooled them by turning when the light struck him. His poised bottle looked ready for a swing at someone on the back of Harry's coupe.

And The Shadow was conveniently there to turn the illusion into a reality!

A sudden lunge at Dave was The Shadow's perfect move, both for his own benefit and Dave's. It made Dave a new hero with the Lawless tribe, so big a hero that they wouldn't chop him down while he was grappling with The Shadow. And grappling Dave was, for The Shadow's lunge had reached him.

Whirled half about despite himself, Dave had become the best of shields for the enemy who was actually a friend – The Shadow!

Even when The Shadow's big gun talked, Dave didn't quite catch on. Paramount in Dave's mind was the fact that he had to rescue Harry Vincent. He didn't realize that The Shadow intended to perform that duty, for Dave had an idea that the cloaked fighter didn't know about the victim in the car.

The rumbling freight was closer; so close, it worried Dave, who didn't understand how The Shadow could chop the work of minutes down to seconds and split those to boot!

The Shadow's shots were meant for crooks who were jumping from the other car, scattering as they went and yelling for Dave to hang on. They wanted the freight to smash the coupe, finishing that job, for they could close in on The Shadow afterward. But The Shadow's gun jabs were zimming close, sending them too far afield to give Dave a helping hand.

With one exception – Menz.

Twisted full about, Dave saw Menz across The Shadow's shoulder. Menz hadn't bothered to slam the car door; he was pulling a gun and springing toward The Shadow, intending to pump bullets into the cloaked fighter's back.

Madly, Dave swung the bottle at The Shadow's head, hoping only to stagger the opponent that he didn't want, to get at the one who really mattered – Menz.

The Shadow's free hand stopped Dave's wrist like a trip hammer. The bottle scaled from Dave's fist and sailed for Menz, who ducked it. While Menz was ducking, he jabbed hasty shots that sizzled wide and high. For neither The Shadow nor Dave were where Menz saw them when he ducked.

The Shadow had given Dave a powerful shove that sprawled him half across the road, and with the recoil the cloaked fighter bounded back and was skidding along the side of the car.

Right to the door that Menz had left open, to the spot where Harry lay within the grasp of rescue! Only The Shadow, calmest of all battlers, could have ignored what seemed a golden opportunity.

Already the glare of the big locomotive's headlight was bathing the curve of the rails, and those same rails were singing with the electric monster's approach. Yet The Shadow was wheeling from the open door that invited him to Harry's aid – and his own doom!

For Menz was up again, swinging with his gun, and converging from other angles were the men from the cover-up car. With Menz's gun to spurt the signal, that tribe could have blasted The Shadow from the wheel of the coupe before he laid a hand on it. That is if The Shadow had tried.

Instead, he drove for Menz, knocking the fellow's gun hand upward just as the weapon spoke. Then Menz had become the living shield, a pliant twisting creature in the powerful grip of The Shadow.

From the spot where he had settled, half dazed, Dave saw Menz heave and squirm as though he'd made accidental contact with the electric wires overhead.

As the pack was closing in to tear Menz away and get at the black-cloaked fighter they couldn't see, the whole brilliance of the locomotive's searchlight bathed the scene. With it, Menz gave a violent lurch off the running board of the coupe, catching others with his wide-flung arms, sprawling them as they popped high with their guns.

Menz couldn't have done half as well if he'd tried that lunge himself. It was the hurl behind it, supplied by The Shadow, that gave the heave its power.

Only Dave saw The Shadow and the thing he did next. A groan came to Dave's lips, for it was too late for The Shadow to grab the wheel of the car, even though he was diving into it. Even worse, The Shadow seemed to trip as he went across the step, landing below the level of the wheel itself, hardly jogging Harry from the driver's seat.

All beneath the glare of a light that would have drowned thousands of candles, a roar that seemed the combination of a dozen cyclones, for the mighty bulk of the mammoth locomotive was bearing down upon the frail car, threatening to crack it like an eggshell and mangle its two occupants all within a mere handful of arriving seconds!

The hand of The Shadow did not fail.

That hand had found the very thing it wanted, the starter pedal. Quicker than footwork could have done it, The Shadow shoved the starter and the coupe gave the forward lurch that he expected, considering that Menz had left it in gear to make the wreck look like a drunken-driving accident.

A lurch that took the coupe half clear of the tracks, throwing its front wheels down the slope. The lurch brought a quick impetus from the motor, a cough that bounced the car still farther.

There was one awful moment, that seemed never-ending to Dave, when the tail of the coupe seemed to blend with the locomotive's slanting front. Then the rear wheels of the automobile were spinning clear, and all sight of the car was lost as the giant engine thundered past, dragging shrieking cars that further blocked the scene beyond.

The night freight had lost its skirmish with The Shadow. It was smashing along the rails, with a train behind it but no debris in front. The coupe with its human freight was away to what Dave thought was complete safety.

The Shadow had a bit of difficulty stopping the coupe at the bottom of the grade, but managed to bring it to a halt by mighty leverage on the hand brake just as it bumped into a stone gateway at a turn in the road.

Up the road, the lights of the caboose were flicking across the grade crossing when The Shadow emerged from the damaged coupe wherein Harry, shaken from his stupor, was stirring with real signs of life. Amid the dwindling clatter of the freight, The Shadow heard the sound of a departing automobile, heading off in the opposite direction.

The men who served Judge Lawless were taking their new hero, Dave Channey, with them, along with Menz, the lieutenant who had failed in his assignment of murder. As they went, crooks carried a recollection to take to their chief, Judge Lawless.



It was a long, challenging laugh that trailed from below the slope, an invitation for any to remain who so wished, and try their hand in further battle with the cloaked master who had foiled their scheme of murder.

Nobody stayed to accept The Shadow's challenge!

## CHAPTER XII. COURT IN SESSION

DRIVING straight to town, Dave's companions let him off near his new apartment. Though Dave detested Menz, he had to admit that the fellow wasn't the sort to hold a grudge toward anyone who outdid him in serving Judge Lawless, for it was Menz who shoved out a congratulating hand.

"Nice work, Dave," commended Menz. "If I'd done as good as you did, there wouldn't be any Shadow left to bother us. I'm going to say as much at tonight's meeting."

"Tonight's meeting?" echoed Dave.

"Yeah. Here's the address." Menz thrust a paper into Dave's hand. "Be over there in half an hour."

Going up to his apartment, Dave gloated inwardly. Here was his chance to crack the Lawless gang, and do it right. A quick tip-off to the police, giving them the address on the paper slip, and they'd be really on the job tonight. If they didn't trap the entire crowd, it wouldn't bring trouble for Dave. He was the hero of the lawless tribe, and therefore immune. Nobody would ever deem him a squealer like Fleech.

As for Dave's own personal problems, he felt he had no further cause to worry. He'd only joined up with Judge Lawless to get a line on Delker and the missing ten thousand dollars. And that only to square himself with Homer Moyland.

From what Dave had learned tonight, he'd be able to square himself of his own accord. If Moyland wouldn't listen, Dave could threaten to speak to Mordaunt Tharn and reveal the truth about the tin imports.

When Dave turned on the lights in his apartment, he was dumfounded to discover a visitor. The visitor was Judge Lawless!

"So!" snarled Lawless. "You went out to Moyland's!"

Dave took a slow breath and gave a short nod.

"Yes, I went out to Moyland's," he admitted. "I wanted to talk to him about the money."

"I suppose you told him that you had found a snug hide-away," sneered Lawless. "One that I provided for you. Did you give Moyland the address, too?"

"Maybe you ought to ask Tobias," suggested Dave. "It was his business to listen in on the conversation, wasn't it?"

For once, Judge Lawless seemed stumped. Those tiny black eyes kept watching Dave sharply. So sharply, that Dave was quite sure that Lawless hadn't received a full report from Tobias. If he had, the Judge would have asked what had happened following the capture of Harry Vincent.

"That chap who was working for The Shadow – " observed Dave very casually. "His boss came along and snatched him right out from under the wheels of the night freight. Menz seems to think it was pretty lucky

that I did come out to Moyland's, but I'd rather have him give the details. He says he will at the meeting."

Judge Lawless didn't furnish further criticism. He reached for the slip that he saw in Dave's hand; opening it, he read the address and nodded. Crumpling the slip, he thrust it in his own pocket and rose to clap his hand on Dave's shoulder.

"Come, Channey," suggested Lawless, in what might have been termed a pleasant snarl. "I'll take you in my car."

DURING the ride Dave didn't try to trace the twisting course, for he preferred to keep established with Judge Lawless. They arrived in an alleyway, where a lookout showed them down a flight of steps into a cellar, that opened through to another.

They reached a room that reminded Dave of the Judge's original court, except that it had only two normal entrances, one on each side. Judge Lawless motioned Dave to join the assembly, and the Judge took his place at the bench.

All the while, even at Dave's apartment, Judge Lawless had been wearing his burlap robe, and he seemed to huddle deeper in the sacklike gown when Menz came up and gave his report.

After Menz stepped a late-comer, Moyland's footman, Tobias, who held brief conversation with the Judge. Lawless was nodding quite emphatically when Tobias finished. Next, the Judge beckoned Dave to the bench.

In his gloating tone, Lawless told Dave the whole inside story of the deal that Moyland had worked on Tharn, adding a very important detail that Dave hadn't even guessed.

"Helm broke put up a hundred thousand dollars," declared Lawless. "Tobias would have brought it here, if Moyland had kept it in his safe. But Moyland didn't keep it. The funds belonged to Helm broke, so Helm broke took them with him."

Dave's face clouded. This might mean the end of his plan to settle his score with Moyland honestly. Not having Helm broke's funds, Moyland might be in a position to deny the whole transaction.

If Dave took it up with Tharn, and the latter questioned Moyland, the result might still be negative. Moyland could simply say that he hadn't managed to import the tin, and that he was refunding Tharn's money as well. And Tharn, a man of unquestioned honesty, would be just the sort to accept Moyland's story.

"Those funds should be ours, Channey," snarled Lawless. "So I am sending you to seize them. A very simple proposition, since Helm broke has them and they are quite unguarded."

It was the sort of assignment that Dave didn't want, but he couldn't say so to Judge Lawless. However, the thought did drive home that the risk might be worth the result. Helm broke could hardly howl about a theft of funds that should have been with Moyland while the Tharn deal was pending.

Once that hundred thousand was in Dave's possession, he could duck Judge Lawless and talk to Moyland instead. And that chat with Moyland would be on Dave's own sweet terms!

So Dave nodded his willingness to take the job, and Judge Lawless appeared to be quite pleased. He drew Dave closer and told him to listen carefully to further details, for the robbery was to take place immediately.

## JUDGE LAWLESS3

PERHAPS Dave would have been more pleased that things were to happen in a hurry, had he viewed a scene at present happening in Moyland's Westchester mansion.

There, in the little room near the sunporch, old Moyland was going through the papers in his safe. From the satisfied wrinkles on his crabby face, he was quite pleased with everything, including the contents of the metal cash box, which he went through with the rest.

Moyland's satisfaction was noted by The Shadow, who had returned here after helping Harry put his coupe in traveling condition. For The Shadow, without giving Moyland the benefit of any doubt in the Tharn transaction, was determined to see that Judge Lawless did not benefit through any robbery, even from a victim who deserved it.

That Judge Lawless would be seeking such an opportunity at Moyland's seemed apparent, from the fact that his workers had been on the grounds.

When Moyland closed the safe and came complacently from the room, The Shadow faded into darkness across the hall. He saw Moyland go to the kitchen and call for Tobias. Getting no response from the servant, Moyland merely shrugged and went upstairs. Whereupon The Shadow immediately glided into the deserted room and went to work upon the safe.

The Shadow already knew the prize that Judge Lawless wanted. It consisted of the funds in the cash box, but it would be wise to learn if there was anything else. Moreover, The Shadow had another reason for examining the contents of this safe; namely, he mistrusted its owner, Moyland.

The Shadow had watched Moyland open this old steel crate and had tabulated the motions of the man's elbow. Practically duplicating them, The Shadow transferred the elbow motions to his hand and hit the numbers with only one miss. A second try corrected the variant, and the safe came open.

So did the cash box, when The Shadow worked its pivot hinges free with the use of a very tiny gimlet. One look into the box and The Shadow considered the effort well worth while.

The box didn't contain a thing that looked like cash or bonds. Nor did the safe reveal anything of more than picayune value when The Shadow gave it a thorough search.

Putting everything back just as Moyland would want it, The Shadow mirthed a low, sibilant laugh. Gliding in a fashion that befitted a ghost, he reached the sunporch; where The Shadow made a low-toned call to Manhattan over the plugged-in phone that Tobias had not removed.

Leaving the sunporch, The Shadow followed an invisible route along the driveway and contacted Harry's car outside the grounds, to head for Manhattan.

Of one thing, The Shadow was certain: Homer Moyland wouldn't be a target for robbery; at least, not tonight. Moyland just wasn't worth it.

It was money, not the man, that made the target. Since Moyland hadn't been worried while looking through his safe, it was obvious that he had personally disposed of the hundred thousand dollars. Its absence fitted The Shadow's analysis of the deal that had duped Tharn.

The money that Helmbroke produced to aid Moyland's bluff belonged to Helmbroke, and had therefore been returned to him, probably on demand, since crook wouldn't trust crook.

Helm broke, as present holder of that wealth, would therefore be the target of Judge Lawless. Which was why The Shadow was speeding into Manhattan as fast as Harry could drive there. This time, The Shadow wanted to be ahead of Judge Lawless – and The Shadow calculated that it would take speed to accomplish it.

Particularly when Judge Lawless had acquired an ace who had a gift for speed; an ace in the person of Dave Channey who, tonight, was working blindly against The Shadow, the personage Dave would have preferred to serve.

### CHAPTER XIII. GUEST OF DEATH

NOW it happened that Inspector Joe Cardona was very busy when the tip-off was relayed to him. So busy, that he didn't think of it in terms of a tip-off at all. Cardona was busy trying to convince the police commissioner that it would take a long while to trace Judge Lawless, and that Joe shouldn't be blamed if he didn't get immediate results.

From Moyland's, The Shadow had called Burbank, who, in turn, had phoned headquarters; with the result that word had been passed to Cardona at the Cobalt Club. Simply word to station men at the Marview Hotel to see that nothing harmed a resident guest named Roger Helm broke. The Shadow wasn't taking chances, should Judge Lawless attempt an early move.

Likewise Burbank was calling in various agents of The Shadow to hold them in the offing. Such agents as Clyde Burke, who posed as a roving newspaper reporter; the stalwart Cliff Marsland and his side-kick Hawkeye. And, of course, Moe Shrevnitz, since Shrevvy's cab might prove of timely value. But this was a bad night for bringing in The Shadow's aides.

With the exception of Harry Vincent, all had been assigned to a search for the new headquarters of Judge Lawless. To a man, the agents were hot on the trail, but the Lawless band was gone from its new courtroom before any of The Shadow's workers could locate it.

Clyde, Cliff and Hawkeye happened to pick up the trails of suspicious characters who were coming from the meeting instead of going to it. Thus engaged, none of The Shadow's agents was where Burbank could quickly reach him.

There was one man whose trail The Shadow's agents did not cross at all: Dave Channey.

Judge Lawless had dropped Dave from the black-windowed car close to the Hotel Marview, where Helm broke lived. From the moment that Dave entered the lobby of that hotel, he was to be on his own. At least, so Dave thought; but he was wrong. Judge Lawless had already provided for the time when crime would enmesh Roger Helm broke. One of the judge's inside men was on the job.

The inside man was the hotel clerk. The Marview was an apartment hotel, and the clerk divided lobby duties with the elevator operator. In expectation of a thrust from Judge Lawless, the clerk was staging a little drama for the elevator man's benefit. Reaching beneath the desk, the clerk brought out a package and at the same time reached up and pressed a plug into the switchboard.

The switchboard was buzzing while the elevator man approached, and the clerk faked a brief phone call in answer to the buzz. With an annoyed headshake, the clerk pulled out the plug.

"Everything happens at once," grumbled the clerk. "This package has to go up to 1264, and now the drugstore won't deliver the order before they close. I'll have to go over there while you're taking up the package."

It happened that 1264 was the most distant apartment in the hotel, which meant that the elevator man would be absent for several minutes. During those same minutes, the clerk would be away; thus the lobby would be deserted. But the clerk took care of that, by speaking over his shoulder while he reached for his hat and coat. He said:

"Better take care of the switchboard while I'm out."

Now the dumb but honest elevator man had a one-track mind, that the crooked clerk had previously tested. By rights, he should have waited and watched the switchboard, letting the package rest until later, but since he was already starting to the elevator, the operator kept right ahead.

By that time, the clerk was on his way through the outer door and Dave Channey, coming along the street, saw the departure.

JUDGE LAWLESS hadn't specified why the clerk would leave. His instructions had included the item that Dave was to enter the hotel when the clerk left. So Dave entered to the tune of a clanging elevator door, and seeing the lobby deserted, did the next thing stipulated in the Judge's very precise instructions.

Dave went behind the desk, stopped at the switchboard and plugged into the socket that represented Helmbroke's third-floor apartment. When Helmbroke answered, Dave spoke in a tone that he could ably mimic, because he'd heard it constantly for the past few years. Dave was using the excited pitch of his former employer, Homer Moyland.

It wasn't that Dave's fakery was perfect. His theme was the important part. What Dave said, in Moyland's style, was that he had to see Helmbroke on urgent business which concerned them both. Learning that "Moyland" was calling from the lobby, Helmbroke told him to come up immediately.

Dave went up by the stairway, since the elevator wasn't available, though he wouldn't have used it anyway. And all the way to the third floor, Dave was congratulating himself on the success of the ruse.

It made perfect sense that Moyland should have dashed in to see Helmbroke, provided that something had happened to disturb the deal with Tharn. Equally sensible was the fact that Moyland would not have given any details over the lobby phone. Finally, when Dave reached the top of the stairs, he saw the fulfillment of another prediction that Judge Lawless had made.

Helmbroke was peering from the door of his apartment, watching for the arrival of the elevator. The stairway was at another angle and if Dave bided his time, he'd be able to steal toward Helmbroke and accost him. Dave didn't have a gun, but the Judge had agreed he wouldn't need one. Helmbroke was just yellow enough to fall for the business of a pencil-sized flashlight jutting through a pocket to fake a gun muzzle.

So Dave folded up his coat collar, pulled down his hat, and took a grip on the flashlight, only to see Helmbroke turn suddenly back into the apartment. But the blocky man left the door open in expectation of Moyland's arrival, so Dave strode right into the apartment. There, he saw why Helmbroke had gone inside.

Helmbroke was at the telephone answering another call; he must have heard the bell from the doorway.

"Why... why—" Helmbroke's stammer was worried. "Why, yes, I suppose you can come up... No, wait! I'll be coming down to the lobby shortly... Yes, wait right there for me. I'll only be a few minutes..."

Who the caller might be, Dave didn't know or care. Some friend of Helmbroke's, no doubt, but a few minutes was all that Dave needed. He strode across the living room while Helmbroke was hanging up, and as the

blocky man turned, Dave spoke gruffly:

"All right, Helmbroke! Stand right where you are, but with your hands a little higher. Stay that way – and listen!"

Helmbroke froze. The bulge of Dave's coat pocket seemed to scare him more than sight of an actual gun would have. So Dave proceeded, gratified by the belief that from now on he would be doing things his own way. He didn't simply demand the hundred thousand dollars, as Judge Lawless had advised. Instead:

"I want you to pick that phone up," Dave told Helmbroke. "Call the police before they call you. Tell them you have a hundred thousand dollars here, and why you happen to have it."

Helmbroke welched beautifully.

"No, no!" he objected hoarsely. "I can't! If Moyland –"

"Moyland isn't around," inserted Dave. "He sent me instead. You see, I used to work for him. Moyland trusted me once, and you can do the same right now."

A blank expression showed on Helmbroke's face, as he inquired:

"How?"

"Give me the funds," suggested Dave, "and I'll take them out to Moyland. I want him to know I'm still trustworthy, and I'm sure that will prove it. You'll get your cash back, Helmbroke, and I'll have my job again. But the Tharn deal will be off."

There were mingled emotions on Helmbroke's face; too many for Dave to analyze. Suddenly Helmbroke turned toward a desk in a corner, as if to get the funds in question. Dave told him to stay as he was, adding that he'd find the funds himself. He was probing in the desk, keeping his pocketed flashlight turned toward Helmbroke, when the telephone bell rang again.

"Answer it," ordered Dave. "And keep cool, Helmbroke." Finishing with a chuckle, Dave added: "It might be the police."

It wasn't the police. The call was from the lobby, and Dave wasn't sure that it represented the man who was waiting there or some newcomer. He inclined toward the latter idea, because Helmbroke showed a trace of surprise at the call. Then, with a worried glance toward Dave, Helmbroke suddenly said: "Yes... You may come up..."

At that moment, Dave had found the stack of cash and bonds. He was turning, a bit angrily, when Helmbroke planked the telephone on its stand and urged pleadingly:

"Take them and get out! Can't you understand? I don't want the funds here! I want them back with Moyland! From the way things are happening – the people who are calling me – I'll have to take your word that you're here from Moyland. So go – and quickly!"

HELMBROKE'S vehemence was genuine. There wasn't need, or time, to inquire why he was staking so much on Dave. In some sort of a jam, Helmbroke was looking for a quick way out. Dave's game was won – or would have been, if he hadn't overplayed it.

Just for the effect on Helmbroke, Dave pulled his hand from his pocket and deliberately thumbed through the stack he held, as though to make sure the full hundred thousand was there which it happened to be.

Dave's idea was to worry Helmbroke by the brief delay, and he calculated that his nonchalance would likewise substantiate the claim he had made regarding his demand for the funds.

But Dave forgot that his presence was actually a threat, backed by an imaginary gun. The moment that Dave's hand came from his pocket, Helmbroke's mind was freed from the basic menace. The sight of his own wealth in Dave's hands was too much for Helmbroke. Grabbing the telephone, he hurled himself at Dave with sudden fury.

Only the shortness of the phone cord saved Dave, as he turned to swing a punch at Helmbroke. The missile stopping short as Helmbroke swung it, the bulky man let the telephone snap backward from his hand and made a grab for Dave's throat. Swinging wide because of Helmbroke's momentary jolt, Dave missed his punch.

And then –

Before Helmbroke could make his grab or Dave could try another swing, a gun roared in Dave's very ear. With the shot, Helmbroke wilted, more suddenly than Harry had outside of Moyland's garage. But Helmbroke's expression wasn't that of someone going unconscious. Instead of closing, his eyes bulged. A rattly gasp issued from his throat as his hands folded over his caving chest.

That bullet had found its death mark. Flattening on the floor, Helmbroke's mortal writhe pronounced him as a murder victim. His bulging eyes, staring upward, were taking their last sight of the guest of death who had done him to his doom. The shot still ringing in his ears, Dave Channey turned to stare horrified at the killer.

The modified light of the apartment showed him to the best advantage, for it was the sort of light this monster preferred. To his added horror, Dave was staring right into the leering visage of Judge Lawless. Wisping up beside the bulging mouth, the curl of smoke from the death gun passed the beady black eyes that stared triumphantly – first at Helmbroke's stiffening form, then at the equally rigid face of Dave Channey.

From the mouth of Judge Lawless came a gloating laugh, far more horrible than the death rattle that had so lately died in the throat of Roger Helmbroke!

## CHAPTER XIV. A QUESTION OF FRIENDS

WHAT happened next seemed logical enough, though Dave Channey was later to dispute the fact. As Dave stood frozen, Judge Lawless shot forth a hand and plucked the stack of cash and bonds that Dave was holding, though how Lawless managed it so quickly with his knobby grip, Dave couldn't quite understand.

For the Judge's other hand seemed very clumsy, despite its speed, when it followed the first action by planking the revolver in Dave's own listless fist. The knotty hand of Judge Lawless closed Dave's fingers over the gun, and at the same time Dave heard a hiss close to his ear:

"A fair exchange! Get out, like Helmbroke told you, and leave me to explain the matter of the funds!"

With that, Judge Lawless turned Dave full about and started him out through the door. Over his shoulder Dave saw an approving nod from the gray-haired head, and kept on going. It wasn't until he was half across the corridor that he realized what he should have done. Given a gun, Dave should have turned the weapon on the man who handed it to him – Judge Lawless!

It was too late now. Going back wouldn't be wise, since Helmbroke had been expecting someone else. There'd be a chance to settle up with Lawless when Dave met him later. Meanwhile, Dave was getting out of here, and his sentiments toward Lawless were just murderous enough to apply to anyone else who might try to stop him.

And at the stairtop something did stop Dave!

It was a low-toned laugh that came from blackness, a touch of sinister mirth that would have faltered any man of crime. On the top step loomed the personage who had uttered the sibilant warning.

The Shadow!

Fully cloaked, The Shadow had one hand – his right – extended. Ungloved, that hand stood out plainly as it reached to take the revolver that Dave brandished. The Shadow hadn't drawn a gun himself, but his other hand – the gloved one – was at the cloak front prepared to draw an automatic.

It was all very plain. The Shadow had come here to talk with Helmbroke, perhaps on terms quite similar to Dave's; but murder had arrived ahead. Seeing Dave – even with a gun – The Shadow wasn't taking it for granted that the young man was the killer. For The Shadow knew how deeply Dave had become enmeshed in the toils of Judge Lawless.

But Dave didn't understand all that.

Dave was practically gone berserk, and sight of The Shadow, who dealt with men of crime and considered their cases later, was just too much. The absence of wits doubled Dave's speed as he swung his gun muzzle straight for The Shadow's face, intent on pulling the trigger before the cloaked blocker could stop him!

There wasn't a chance for The Shadow to grab Dave's revolver. Nor could the cloaked fighter flip his automatic into play in time to stop Dave's shot. So The Shadow neatly snapped his right thumb and second finger.

The world exploded in Dave's face.

Neat, that trick of The Shadow's. He'd intended it for Helmbroke if the blocky man had tried to get foolish with a gun. Since it was Dave who had the gun and was acting foolish, The Shadow gave him the fingersnap instead. For The Shadow's right hand was very dangerous when it gestured without its glove.

A dab of one chemical compound upon the fingertip; another smudge of paste upon the thumb. When those two received the friction of a fingersnap, they spoke in terrific terms. The burst had all the roar of a gunshot, together with a sear of flame and a cloud of whitish smoke. (Note: Because The Shadow's explosive powder used in this instance is too dangerous for any but the most experienced to use, we do not reveal the nature of its formula, so that the inexperienced might not attempt this experiment and therefore suffer harm. – Maxwell Grant)

Dave's eyebrows were singed, his nostrils stifled, as the concussion forced him backward. Rather than see Dave reel down the stairs, The Shadow tumbled him into a corner, and sped on to Helmbroke's apartment.

Judge Lawless wasn't there.

ACROSS the living room, beyond Helmbroke's body, was an open window. The Shadow sprang toward it, finishing with a quick twist that carried him back from the window edge. Along with his twirl he issued a



mocking challenge, that brought an immediate result. Shots rang from the top of a low roof next door, and bullets whined through the window.

Judge Lawless had seen The Shadow; heard the taunt. He'd stopped his flight to pepper away with a reserve revolver, endeavoring to complete a job that he hoped Dave would do. But just as Judge Lawless hadn't been in the room, so was The Shadow absent from the window.

Dropping below the sill, whipping across to the other side, The Shadow returned the fire from the opposite window corner. His shots had the uncanny precision, that Judge Lawless lacked. The Shadow was picking the spot where, from the corner of his eye, he had seen the Lawless gun spurts.

But Judge Lawless hadn't stabbed those shots from the open. He was behind a humpy ventilator on the far side of the adjacent roof. The Shadow's bullets clanged the ventilator and didn't reach Judge Lawless.

Knowing that he had his foe on the dodge, The Shadow thrust from the window to add a telling fire. By then, a crablike figure was rolling over the roof edge, to drop to an alleyway below. It wasn't a long drop, for the roof next door belonged to a garage that wasn't more than a story and a half in height.

The spurt of a car from the hidden alley told that Judge Lawless had provided for his getaway, so The Shadow, his foe having eluded him, went out to find Dave again.

Dave hadn't waited in the third-floor corridor. Though still dazzled by the burst of fire from The Shadow's fingers, Dave was hurriedly groping down the stairs. He came into the lobby and heard a shout from the elevator man, who had returned there. The clerk was behind the desk and he sprang out, too. Dave didn't realize that the pair blundered into one another, which happened to be the clerk's fault – or, rather, purpose.

All Dave wanted was to get out through the door, but before he could start that direction, a pair of police dashed in from the street. Seeing Dave with a gun, they dropped aside to draw their own revolvers. But before they could find their prey to riddle him, Dave Channey was gone.

Gone with a laugh – that wasn't his own!

It was The Shadow, swooping down from the stairs, who whipped Dave from harm's way and yanked him through a rear exit from the lobby, a route that Dave's dazzled eyes failed to spy.

But the rear street wasn't much better than the front. It happened that Inspector Cardona had finally followed the tip-off and was here with some detectives. Too late to help Helmbroke, they were in time to handicap The Shadow, as he rushed Dave across the street.

Detectives saw Dave, even though they didn't make out The Shadow, who was beyond the stumbling fugitive. Police guns talked, nicking the sidewalk and chipping bricks from the corner of an alley where The Shadow shoved Dave onward into the friendly hands of Cliff and Hawkeye, who, like the police, had just reached the scene.

Then The Shadow was out of the alley, skirting the fronts of gloomy houses, jabbing shots in the general direction of the detectives, none of those shots close enough to hit anyone who was less than twelve feet high. The headquarters men answered in kind, their shots as badly amiss as The Shadow's, for they were firing at his gunstabs, nothing more.

The unseen marksman who issued those blazing targets was always across a flight of house steps, and in some instances even across the street when the detectives fired at the places he had been.

Dave was hazily trying to place Cliff and Hawkeye by their voices when they shoved him into a cab. They joined him, but tonight's excursion was only around the block. There, Dave was transferred to a waiting car, and the cab ran interference for it, until both were far from the neighborhood where the police disported.

Parking near a lighted restaurant, the driver of the car looked at Dave, who blinked back with eyes that could see, but wouldn't believe.

Dave's companion was Harry Vincent!

"HELLO, Channey," spoke Harry in a friendly tone. "We've met before. You pulled me out of a jam tonight, and I'm glad I could help return the favor. What say we talk things over?"

Talk things over, they did, while having coffee in the restaurant. Dave was only too glad to tell his full story to a person who represented The Shadow.

"It began when I worked for Homer Moyland," stated Dave. "Outside of Moyland himself, I was the only person who had the combination to the safe. One day, when I changed the combination of the safe, at Moyland's order, I took another precaution. There was fifty thousand dollars in the safe and we didn't need that much cash around the office. So I put forty thousand in the bank, depositing it to the company's account."

Encouraged by Harry's nod, Dave continued with his story, by saying:

"Someone opened the safe and stole the remaining ten thousand." Harry responded as Dave hoped he would. Taking Dave's own honesty as being beyond dispute, Harry asked:

"Do you know who stole it?"

"I suspected a salesman named Delker," replied Dave. "He's been doing a lot of snooping I didn't like. But that didn't go with Moyland. He accused me of stealing the ten thousand. He claimed that I deposited the forty thousand so I would look honest.

"Moyland fired me, and threatened to have me jailed unless I made up the missing ten thousand dollars. Whether or not he thinks I stole the money, he wants that much back, and I'm to deliver it – or else!" Considering the lengths to which Moyland's avarice could carry him, Harry knew Dave's story to be true. Nevertheless, he put the question:

"Why did you go to Moyland's tonight?"

"I wanted him to give me more time," returned Dave. "You see, I'm trying to trace Delker. Here's the system I used. I met up with a friend of Delker's named Menz, and gave him the idea that all of Moyland's fifty thousand disappeared.

"That made sense, because these crooks don't know Moyland well enough to realize that he'd accuse me of stealing ten thousand when, actually, I saved his forty thousand.

"Menz introduced me to Judge Lawless, and I put my story the other way around, that's all. I claimed I took the forty thousand and left ten thousand in the safe, on the idea that Moyland would blame it on someone else, who might have overlooked some of the funds. So when Delker took the ten thousand, my game was queered. Since Lawless knew that Delker only found ten thousand out of fifty, my story stood.

"So Lawless thinks I'm a smarter and bigger crook than Delker. I told him Moyland is ready to land the law on me. That's why I was ready to throw in with Lawless, if he'd give me a hide-out where Moyland can't find me. Lawless did, and my bluff is working out strong."

Harry could understand just how strong the bluff was working. Dave's trip to Moyland's proved it. Staying around after his chat with Moyland, Dave had accidentally met up with Menz and hence had pretended that he was there by order of Judge Lawless. If Dave could keep up the smart work, he would prove valuable to The Shadow as an inside member of the Lawless band.

Dave said as much, himself. Truthfully, he stated that he was seeking justice. He admitted he'd taken on more than he expected when he joined up with Lawless, but he felt that by secretly switching to The Shadow, he would prove highly helpful. With which Harry was in full accord, though he reserved decision until he could contact his chief.

At that moment, The Shadow was reaching the end of another trail. He was in an obscure apartment house, working in a door that bore the nameplate:

SIMON LE CARRA

The door opened under The Shadow's silent persuasion. Inside the apartment lights were burning, but the place showed disarray. From a radio, that was turned quite low, The Shadow heard the finish of a thirty-minute broadcast that began at midnight. The announcer said there were no new facts on the murder of Roger Helmbroke, described earlier in the broadcast.

During the considerable time that The Shadow had taken to trace Le Carra's apartment, the man himself must have tuned in on the broadcast and learned of Helmbroke's death. Unless the turned-on radio was a bluff, to make it seem the reason why Le Carra had packed and cleared out.

The Shadow left the radio as it was, preferring that the police should form their own conclusions from existing facts, should they finally arrive here.

But The Shadow's low laugh was meant for Le Carra, denoting that he didn't trust the fellow. One fact was evident: Le Carra was in a position to know who had the money, Moyland or Helmbroke. Naturally, Le Carra might clear out in order to avoid encumbering factors. But the game might go much deeper and Le Carra's bluff prove stronger.

Again The Shadow laughed.

This time, his tone was definitely reminiscent of the mirth that he had directed toward Judge Lawless. One way to trap that superfoe was to learn his real identity. And The Shadow was rejecting no applicants, unless they had an ironclad alibi.

After leaving Le Carra's: The Shadow made a call to Burbank; one that definitely settled the status of Dave Channey. Having heard from Harry, Burbank was able to relay Dave's sentiments and The Shadow approved them. Dave as an inside man with the Lawless band would be serving in a capacity useful to The Shadow. So The Shadow's orders were these:

Dave Channey was to bide his time in the hide-out that Lawless had provided. Through Harry, Dave was to keep The Shadow posted on all new developments. Should the going become tough, Dave could rely on The Shadow, with the assurance that he wouldn't have to implicate himself in any further crime.

From now on, The Shadow could expect a clear trail to Judge Lawless. Yet clear though the path looked, it was to have its hidden pitfalls, so cunningly laid that even The Shadow's skill might fail to counteract them!

For in seeking Judge Lawless, The Shadow was hunting for the most amazing master mind who had ever written himself into the annals of modern crime!

## CHAPTER XV. TARGET FOR CRIME

LAMONT CRANSTON was lunching with Margo Lane, and in the course of things was patiently straightening out a few details that she didn't understand. Margo had her points, definitely. She was a very stunning brunette, and her brain was as smart as her looks, except that she didn't have a head for figures.

"Ten from fifty is forty," agreed Margo, "but if Dave Channey took the forty thousand dollars, why didn't he take the ten thousand? Or if Delker took the ten, but didn't get the forty."

Cranston explained it again. Fifty thousand, belonging to Homer Moyland. He'd entrusted it to Dave, but since only ten thousand was needed to pay for certain imports, Dave had put the rest into the bank. Thus Delker, the man who robbed the office safe, found only ten thousand to deliver to Judge Lawless.

That was all quite clear to Margo. Before she finished nodding her pretty head, Cranston took up the theme from there.

"Delker disappeared," explained Cranston, "and in checking on him, Dave met Menz, who worked at the garage where Delker used to keep his car. Figuring Menz for a crook, Dave bragged that he had stolen forty thousand dollars from Moyland, but had left ten thousand in the safe, to make it look like cash that another thief had overlooked."

"The ten thousand that Delker took!"

"Exactly! But Dave didn't steal the forty thousand. He only told Menz that he did, so that Menz would think Dave smart enough to be introduced to Judge Lawless."

This time, Margo really understood. So Cranston risked everything and went into details of Moyland's deal with Tharn. He put it very clearly. Helmbroke's hundred thousand, though genuine enough, was merely the come-on to make Tharn put up a similar amount of his own. So Helmbroke – not Moyland – had kept the come-on money, only to have Judge Lawless steal it, using Dave as a tool.

Margo nodded brightly; then asked:

"Did Tharn send Moyland a check for a hundred thousand?"

"No," Cranston replied, "The whole deal is off. Moyland has turned legitimate, not through desire but through fear. His brief excursion into the realm of crookedness has scared him completely. So we can still consider Homer Moyland as the kind of target that Judge Lawless will choose."

While Margo thought over that one, Cranston finished his coffee, then remarked:

"Now tell me what you've learned – aside from all this."

"Chiefly that Elaine Moyland has a fearful crush on Mordaunt Tharn," stated Margo. "For which I don't blame her. I can't think of anyone who combines youthful appearance with mature experience any better than

Tharn excluding present company."

"Thanks for the afterthought," smiled Cranston. "Now tell me, Margo, does Elaine dent Tharn as much as you do me?"

"I dent you!" echoed Margo. "I've been trying to dent you for – well, let's forget for how many years! But I can say this much. I'm so many miles ahead of Elaine that it isn't even funny!"

"I take it then that Elaine hasn't progressed."

"I'll say she hasn't! Why, even her glances are buffed! You should have seen them the other evening!"

Cranston smiled reminiscently.

"I was busy elsewhere," he remarked. "So tell me about it, Margo."

Margo explained that she'd seen Tharn and Elaine just after they arrived from Moyland's, and that Elaine had whispered how she intended to take Tharn to a host of other cafes. At midnight, Margo had crossed their path again, when they were completing the rounds.

"You wouldn't have thought that Tharn had taken a second drink," added Margo, "but we had to pour Elaine into her leopard coat, so that Tharn could take the little girl home. And she was in a sobbing–laughing mood, crying on my shoulder and all the while telling me how happy she was, because she hadn't let Tharn out of her sight all evening, not even in the fanciest of night clubs, with all the beauty and sophistication of New York ganging up to take him away from her!"

When Margo finished her story, Cranston nodded and suggested that they go out to Moyland's. He had business there, and it would give Margo another chance to chat with Elaine. He added that Dave might still have a chance with Elaine, if she could be persuaded to forget her infatuation for Tharn, which, from all accounts, would be quite to Tharn's relief.

ARRIVED at Moyland's, Cranston held brief conclave with the crab–faced importer, after which they joined Margo and Elaine to say that they were going to Tharn's estate, which was only a few miles away.

Elaine did what Margo could have predicted, she begged to go along. Indulgently, her father said she could, but Cranston, watching Moyland, knew that there was more than indulgence in the latter's statement. His old deal with Tharn called off, Moyland was still counting on Elaine as a factor in a new one.

Never had Margo seen a place so gorgeous as Tharn's. The house was magnificent, the grounds exquisite. From the glass walls of the conservatory where Tharn received them, Margo saw a delightful sunken garden, half–surrounded by a cloistered courtyard. In the center of the garden was an outdoor swimming pool that immediately caught Elaine's eye.

Beaming at Tharn, the blonde declared that swimming was her favorite sport, and Tharn politely replied that the pool was at the services of his friends whenever they chose to use it. Evidently Elaine considered herself one of Tharn's friends, though he hadn't so stipulated, for she said that she'd drop over for a swim on the next bright day.

Margo relieved the situation by suggesting a walk in the garden while the gentlemen talked business. Cranston caught Tharn's shrug of relief as soon as Margo had removed Elaine, but Moyland didn't notice it. Moyland had only an eye for business and considered Elaine to be part of it.

Opening a brief case, Moyland spread his papers and went to work. Briefly, his purpose was this: he wanted to enlarge his importing business. Imports were difficult to obtain, these days, hence an expansion was necessary. It was as hard to get imports, Moyland said, as to keep servants.

At which Cranston restrained a smile, because he knew why Moyland's footman and chauffeur had left so suddenly. Tobias and Menz couldn't stay after having showed their hands in the service of Judge Lawless.

For a few more minutes, Moyland grumbled over the servant question, stating that he'd have to hire new help; then he reverted to the matter of imports. He was willing to issue a half a million shares of stock in Moyland, Inc., provided the right people would buy.

By the right people, Moyland meant Cranston and Tharn, or any others that they might consider. Very sincerely, Moyland declared that Cranston and Tharn were men of the highest integrity, the only sort with whom he would deal. Which was true enough, because Moyland had reformed in order to cover up his brief wandering from the straight and narrow.

With Helmbroke murdered and Le Carra still missing, Moyland had to be straight-laced. The police had an idea that Le Carra had killed Helmbroke and had questioned Moyland on the subject.

What Moyland very much feared was that Tharn would ask something about the money that Moyland was supposed to have returned to Helmbroke's relatives. Whatever answer Moyland might have had, he didn't need it, because Tharn didn't bring up the subject.

The chiming of a clock rang through the house, and Tharn raised his hand, saying: "Listen!"

Other chimes followed, beautiful in their tones. As they finished, Tharn reached out and pressed a music box, which began a tinkling melody. Rising, Tharn beckoned; wondering, Moyland followed along with Cranston.

They strolled through the garden, where Tharn paused to smell the fragrance of the flowers, something that Moyland could scarcely sniff.

"You smoke too many of those Havana cigars," Tharn told him. "You can't appreciate real perfume when you meet it. Perhaps my art gallery will interest you, Moyland."

They walked beneath the cloister, and Tharn led them into a room where the sun threw myriad hues through stained-glass panes. Charmed by the colors, Tharn almost forgot the art gallery, until Cranston reminded him. Coming from his reverie, Tharn exclaimed:

"The paintings! Of course!"

The paintings were magnificent. They must have been worth a quarter million dollars, which was why Moyland's mouth watered at sight of them. But Tharn didn't mention anything so base as values. He went from painting to painting, discussing their artistic merits with Cranston, who was interested, ignoring Moyland, who was strictly bored.

CLOCKS were chiming anew when they returned to the conservatory. From the window, they could see Margo and Elaine coming back from a long walk through the lovely paths that spread through the woods of Tharn's estate.

Tharn raised his long, slender hand, keeping time, as though he were the conductor and the chimes the units of an orchestra. And then:

"You see, Moyland?" Tharn queried. "My life involves beauty, melody, fragrance. Why should I mar it through business? I have made my fortune through hard, honest effort. I wish to enjoy the fruits of it."

Moyland set his lips tightly, angered because of the wasted hour. Then a canny glint appeared from between the wrinkles that marked the location of his eyes, and Moyland queried:

"The chimes, the paintings even the rarest of your flowers, Tharn – where did they all come from?"

"From many lands," replied Tharn. "The craftsmen of Switzerland, the painters of Europe, the growers of the Orient – I owe them all a debt."

"Which you can repay," insisted Moyland, "only by enabling them to dispose of more such fruits of labor. Where would you have obtained these wonderful things, Tharn, if someone hadn't first imported them?"

Tharn's eyes lighted.

"You mean your business will include such imports?" he queried enthusiastically. "In that case, you may now expand it even further, and I shall be only too glad to invest!"

Moyland sat down and spread the papers triumphantly. From the batch, he picked a list of names and passed it to Tharn.

"Check the names you deem worthy," suggested Moyland. "We can then invite them to a meeting here tomorrow and learn how much each man is willing to subscribe."

It was all very honest. So straightforward, that it actually bored Cranston, whose inner mind was more concerned with analyzing schemes of crime and thwarting them. But as Cranston strolled from the conservatory to join Margo and Elaine beside the swimming pool, his lips showed a sustained smile.

Elaine's words weren't what brought the smile. The blonde was gushing to Margo, telling the brunette how she'd monopolized Tharn one evening and intended to repeat the triumph on another occasion. Cranston was smiling because of Moyland and Tharn. Between them, they were building a great opportunity.

An opportunity for Judge Lawless, should news of it reach him through any of his spies, some of whom were doubtless planted here at Tharn's. Where wealth grew, Judge Lawless followed. If he could find a way to get at the funds that this new venture would produce, Judge Lawless would surely try it.

And therein would lie opportunity for The Shadow, who was glad – very glad – that as his other self, the wealthy Mr. Cranston, he could be an insider in the enterprise that would attract that master of crime, Judge Lawless!

## **CHAPTER XVI. THE CLOSED DEAL**

IT was another afternoon and Lamont Cranston was again at Tharn's, this time without Margo Lane. For this meeting was to be strictly business, and the men concerned were assembled. A dozen of them, all men of integrity, hand-picked by Tharn, with Cranston's approval, as the proper persons to be included in an enterprise wherein wealth would serve a high purpose.

Smug in the midst of all this honesty, old Homer Moyland found much to make him happy. Honesty was certainly proving itself the best policy in his case, to such degree that he wondered why he'd ever tried anything else.

When such reliable men as Tharn and Cranston expressed their approval of a legitimate venture, others were bound to flock. A dozen subscribers to the stock of Moyland, Inc., were running the pool up to a million.

By unanimous vote, Moyland was made the president of the new organization. The shareholders wanted Tharn as treasurer but he declined, as did Cranston, neither wanting to be bothered with financial details. So the office went to a trustworthy man named Louis Geldon who took the honor very seriously. So seriously, that he launched immediately into the work of ear-marking various funds for different purposes.

All this bored Tharn, who didn't care much for figures. He turned in his chair, stared out to the sunken garden, and let a look of rapture spread across his handsome features.

Watching Tharn, Cranston noted that despite his joy in the exquisite, the black-haired man wasn't noticing the loveliest thing in the garden, which happened to be Elaine Moyland.

At present, Elaine was draped along the brink of the swimming pool, which was appropriate considering that she was wearing a bathing suit. But Elaine didn't intend to take a swim. For one thing, she didn't have a bathing cap, because it would have interfered with her blond hair, which shimmered beautifully in the late sunlight.

She was testing the water, though, to the extent of about three inches below the surface, which was as far as her foot would reach as she swished it idly from the pool brink. This, of course, was simply another effort to attract Tharn's attention.

Seeing Tharn at the conservatory window, Elaine smiled and then tried to act unconcerned. She linked her hands behind her head and leaned back to stare at the sky, still dabbing at the water with her toes. But the appreciative gleam that came to Tharn's blue eyes was brought by something else.

"Look Cranston!" said Tharn. "Those hyacinths! They are magnificent at this season. I purposely planted them in those beds of scarlet gladiolus to obtain a colorful contrast."

The two continued to study the flowers, until an interruption came from the business table. Tharn had just been selected secretary of the corporation. After brief deliberation, he agreed to take the office.

"I can have Blanniger take care of the reports," decided Tharn. "He is my private secretary, and quite competent. Very well, gentlemen, I accept."

At mention of Blanniger, Cranston's eyes showed a gleam that wasn't inspired by hyacinths. During his visit here at Tharn's, The Shadow had analyzed the servant situation and come to the conclusion that if Judge Lawless had placed anyone as a spy, the plant was Blanniger. Looking from the conservatory at this very moment, Cranston saw Blanniger coming along the cloistered walk past the art gallery.

The secretary was sly, sneaky, and unobtrusive. It was the last-named virtue that had caused Tharn to hire him without noticing Blanniger's faults. For Tharn liked people who didn't impose upon his privacy and Blanniger was the sort who wouldn't. The secretary was skillful at making snoopy tactics look like deference.

Even now, Blanniger was sidling a look across the swimming pool without paying the slightest attention to Elaine or Tharn's hyacinths. Cranston was quite sure that the secretary spotted the fact that the conference was ended, and such proved to be the case.

AS the group left the conservatory, who was on the threshold to bow them out but Blanniger, peering politely through a pair of spectacles that gave him the appearance of a friendly owl.



Blanniger was listening while Cranston and the others heard the invitation that Moyland gave to Tharn.

"You'll come over to my house for dinner, Tharn," said Moyland. "I can give you the records and documents that you will need; those referring to my importing business."

"Very well," nodded Tharn. "How soon shall we leave?"

"As soon as Elaine is ready," returned Moyland. He took a look back through the conservatory window. "Apparently, she isn't going to take a swim."

Having noticed that his darling daughter hadn't gone too near the water, Moyland took it for granted that Elaine had attracted much of Tharn's attention during the conference. So Moyland added:

"I shan't keep you long after dinner, Tharn. I know that you have an engagement with Elaine this evening. She mentioned it."

Cranston saw a flicker of surprise on Tharn's face; then the handsome man gave an indulgent nod. Apparently, Tharn found it rather amusing to go places with Elaine and didn't mind being railroaded into another date with the persistent blonde.

It was just as Cranston turned away that Blanniger nudged up beside Tharn to attract the latter's attention. Blanniger must have made some polite but subtle remark regarding Tharn's coming trip to Moyland's, for in departing, Cranston heard Tharn's reply.

"Why, yes, Blanniger," said Tharn. "You'd better come along to Moyland's. We may wish to dictate some notes in reference to the importing business."

Riding into town with the other investors, Cranston listened to their discourse on future profits, but all the while he kept watching Louis Geldon. Quiet, sober-faced and stoop-shouldered, Geldon already seemed to bear the burden that the job of treasurer would thrust upon him.

And what a burden it might prove!

For The Shadow knew that Judge Lawless, once he heard of coming profits that he might wrest from others, would have an eye to the man who held the moneybags, in this case Louis Geldon. Which in turn meant that Geldon was the man over whom The Shadow must also keep strict watch.

EARLY that evening there developed a situation which The Shadow could have predicted. At his hotel, Harry Vincent received a phone call from Dave Channey, and relayed it to Burbank.

Dave had heard from Menz, who gave him the address of the new meeting place, something that Dave hadn't learned the other night, because Judge Lawless had taken the written slip and conducted Dave to and from the courtroom in his own black-windowed car.

Outside Dave's apartment, Cliff and Hawkeye saw the young man come from the building in suitably cautious style. It was Moe's cab that took Dave to the vicinity of the meeting place, with Cliff and Hawkeye convoying in a car of their own. After they had seen Dave slide into the alley, the agents held confab.

What an opportunity they were missing!

Better than the night when The Shadow had raided the judge's meeting room and let his agents follow up the trail. But the orders from The Shadow were to pass up everything tonight, unless Dave in leaving should signal that he was slated for a tight spot from which only The Shadow could draw him. Cliff and Hawkeye saw the logic behind The Shadow's present policy.

The Shadow intended to be far ahead of the next Lawless crime. Things had begun to cook and it was best to let them stew. If Judge Lawless could scheme for the future, so could The Shadow.

Even now at his sanctum, The Shadow was going over reports, comparing them with his own findings, in the calm but solid belief that his own conclusions would run parallel with the results of the meeting where Judge Lawless ruled.

One hundred percent correct, The Shadow's opinion!

In the underground courtroom, Dave Channey was holding back the rage that he felt at sight of Judge Lawless. Seated at the bench, the burlap-robed murderer was beckoning men toward him.

At last, while speaking with a man who wore large, round glasses, Lawless looked for Dave and gave a gesture with his gnarled hand. Dave approached the bench where, with a fisted wave, Judge Lawless introduced him to the other man.

"This is Blanniger," declared Lawless in his raspy tone. "He works for Mordaunt Tharn, who happens to be a good friend of your former employer, Homer Moyland. Hear what Blanniger has to say, Channey."

Dave heard it without comment. Blanniger was fresh from dinner at the Moyland mansion. He'd learned the whole setup of the expanded corporation. Soon large sums would be pouring to its coffers and though Moyland would have the right to disburse such sums, their actual custodian would be a man named Louis Geldon.

The deep-throated gloat that came from Judge Lawless proved to Dave that His Dishonor would soon be working out some plan to get at the hoard of cash. How Lawless intended to trick Geldon, might prove a puzzling problem, but the Judge was expert at solving such riddles. As for Dave, he was listening to something else that Blanniger had to tell.

The owl-faced secretary had managed to get away this evening because Mordaunt Tharn had taken Elaine Moyland to a very fancy country club dance somewhere in Westchester.

Very plainly, this pleased Judge Lawless, who added a chuckle that meant he might be weighing the angle of a romance in connection with his scheme. But Blanniger promptly dropped that theme to mention that Tharn would pick up the Moyland documents after taking Elaine home around midnight.

Judge Lawless gave Dave a sharp, beady glance.

"Be on call, Channey," the judge ordered. "You may be needed in the course of events. Your knowledge of Moyland's business may prove quite profitable to us. In a way" – the rasp was emphatic – "that should enable you to keep your forty thousand dollars, plus a substantial bonus."

Not a word did Judge Lawless utter about the Helmbroke murder, which showed how canny His Dishonor was. To Dave, that episode had smacked of the double cross, though Lawless had tried to make it appear otherwise. By totally dismissing the matter, Lawless was keeping Dave in doubt, rather than make comments which might bear the earmarks of excuses.

Thus did the meeting end, and when Dave Channey reached the outside air, he breathed freely, deeply, happily. He was glad that he hated Judge Lawless, and equally pleased that he had been able to hide that hatred. For it helped the cause in which Dave had become an ardent worker: the cause of The Shadow!

So great was Dave's elation, that he felt he could never lose it. Yet deep within him were gnawing pangs that he didn't realize existed. Small pangs at present, but they were seeds that could grow and bloom if nurtured by the hand that planted them.

If anyone had told Dave Channey that his betrayal of Judge Lawless marked him as a man who might also betray his new chief, The Shadow, Dave's brain would have spun with indignation.

Yet those budding notions that Dave so far didn't recognize, were proof that such could happen!

## CHAPTER XVII. THE LONE MOVE

HARRY VINCENT was waiting near the apartment house when Dave Channey arrived there. Contacting Dave, Harry noticed that the street was quite deserted, so they went in by the front way. Harry thumbed toward the unmarked mailbox that belonged to Dave's apartment, so Dave opened it and found an envelope, which Harry took with the comment:

"From The Shadow."

It rather amazed Dave that The Shadow should dispatch messages to Harry by way of Dave's own mailbox, so he asked about it when they reached the apartment, and Harry explained – in part.

Dave's box, being unmarked and therefore unused, was the sort of letter box that even Judge Lawless wouldn't suspect. Dave nodded at that explanation without realizing that there was much more to it.

Harry was opening the letter and reading its coded contents, which he could translate at sight. Harry had to be rapid, because each coded word faded as fast as he read it.

Such was the way with the vivid blue ink that The Shadow used in all messages to his agents. Words disappeared in rotation once they contacted open air. Thus Harry finished with a blank sheet; but there was still another detail. Hand to his vest, Harry opened a watch charm that he wore there and rubbed his thumb across a tiny spone that the charm contained.

Dave didn't notice the action, nor the way in which Harry applied his moistened thumb to a corner of the note. In that corner appeared the symbol "DC 5", only to vanish as the dabbed corner dried. Crumpling the blank paper, Harry tossed it into a wastebasket.

"DC 5" meant that this was the fifth note in a series relating to Dave Channey. Had Judge Lawless intercepted any of the notes between, Harry would have learned it from the skip in numbers. As for Lawless, he couldn't have discovered anything from a message that went blank before it could be decoded.

It was Harry who talked first. Briefly, he told Dave of events at Tharn's – all learned from The Shadow's message – and then sat back to await Dave's comments.

They were slow in coming, for Dave was gaping, quite amazed. The Shadow had called the turn on everything, even to Blanniger being the spy at Tharn's.

Finally finding his voice, Dave poured for the details of the meeting, and Harry took mental note of how well they tallied. He could recognize Dave's heartfelt hatred of Judge Lawless, but Dave was so vehement in its expression, that Harry didn't catch the importance of comments that followed. Nor, for that matter, did Dave at the time he spoke them.

"Moyland is the man to blame," argued Dave. "He's playing right into the hands of Judge Lawless! Giving Tharn a whole lot of unnecessary documents means that a crook like Blanniger can go through them in detail. What's more, Moyland is tossing Elaine right into Tharn's lap, which will allow Judge Lawless to involve her in some way."

"Elaine wasn't tossed," remarked Harry. "She just fell of her own accord. But these things won't matter, Dave. Tharn isn't in any danger."

"Not while Geldon has the money," agreed Dave. "But you mentioned that they wanted to make Tharn treasurer, first. Suppose Geldon tosses up the job."

"Tharn wouldn't take it," returned Harry. "It would go back to Cranston" – Harry was quite impersonal in his mention of The Shadow's other self – "and in that case, The Shadow would look out for Cranston's welfare."

Harry spoke with confidence. The Shadow had been looking out for Cranston's welfare over a good many years, though Dave didn't know it. So Dave agreed that Harry was right on the Tharn question. Dave thought a lot of Tharn after seeing him at Moyland's. Which carried his mind to something else.

"Moyland and his business!" snapped Dave. "I'll bet he camouflaged the skeletons before showing those papers to Tharn! As for Elaine, she's just a showoff! Tharn knows it and has sense enough to ignore her."

Harry picked up the telephone and called Burbank. Dave heard him report back certain facts, including details of Tharn's date with Elaine. The Shadow's note hadn't stated that Tharn and Elaine were going to a Westchester dance, so Harry thought it worthy of mention.

SOMEHOW, that point kept drilling through Dave's mind after Harry had gone. Pacing the little apartment, Dave kept muttering about Moyland and Elaine, wondering which was really responsible for the girl's silly crush on Tharn. Centering finally on Moyland, Dave remembered the papers again. Two elements united in Dave's mind and he exploded mentally.

Moyland's papers! Among them might be facts tending to incriminate Dave in the matter of the Delker theft. Even worse, they'd show that Dave didn't take the forty thousand that Judge Lawless had mentioned this very evening. Suppose Blanniger found that out and reported it!

And Elaine! She'd played the fool too long. Maybe she just didn't care, now that her father had branded Dave a crook. That could be why she'd quit being sober-minded – or could it? Dave didn't know, but he suddenly found that he cared. His savagery spreading, he suddenly disliked Tharn as the main root of his trouble.

Mentally Dave sprang to action, and his thoughts guided his deeds. Taking hat and coat, he sneaked from the apartment, carrying the gun which Judge Lawless had given him, and which The Shadow had let him keep in case Lawless should ask for it.

Using all the stealth he could summon, Dave was as determined to dodge The Shadow's agents as he was to elude those who worked for Lawless.

He hadn't any trouble. No one was on duty out back of the apartment house. Reaching Grand Central, Dave caught a train out to Moyland's, but he alighted one station too soon. Instead of summoning a cab, he took off on a hike through rural lanes, that brought him to the Moyland place.

After half an hour's lurking near a corner of the house, Dave heard a distant clock strike twelve. Soon afterward, Tharn's limousine pulled into the driveway, piloted by a chauffeur. Tharn alighted with Elaine and another girl, who happened to be Margo Lane. When Tharn went into the house to talk to Moyland, the girls remained on the porch and Dave overheard their conversation.

Elaine was both pleased and surprised that Margo had shown up at the dance and agreed to stay over night. All that annoyed Elaine was the fact that Tharn had insisted upon coming home so early. Then:

"It was wonderful, though, while it lasted!" exclaimed Elaine. "Just think, Margo! I had almost every dance with Mordaunt, except those we sat out together."

"You must have been sitting out a few when I arrived," remarked Margo.

"We were," nodded Elaine. "It was so lovely on the veranda, looking up at the stars and listening to all the wonderful things that only Mordaunt can say. But not so lovely as his garden. I was there this afternoon, Margo, and it was so gorgeous that I forgot all about taking my swim in that perfect pool!"

Dave felt that he would like to wring Elaine's neck, but didn't care to try it with Margo as a witness. It didn't occur to him that he was responsible for Margo's presence. Harry's report having been relayed by Burbank, Cranston had suggested that Margo drop out to Westchester and see how Elaine's romance with Tharn was faring on the dance floor.

Moyland's front door opened and Dave saw Tharn come out with a portfolio which contained the importer's papers. Rather than listen to Elaine's good-night gush, Dave sidled off behind the house and followed the driveway to the back gate. He knew the byroads well enough to take another short-cut over to Tharn's, which was only a few miles away.

On the way, Dave heard a car passing along a roundabout highway and knew that it must be Tharn's limousine. When he reached the extensive grounds, he took another short-cut to Tharn's spreading mansion, and found his way to the very garden that Elaine had mentioned.

There were lights in the house, but the conservatory was dark and its enemy windows looked inviting. So Dave tried them, until he found one that opened.

INSIDE the conservatory, Dave worked through the darkness without stumbling. Once he opened the inner door, his path was simple, for there were occasional lights to guide him. Yet in the depths of living room and parlors, during the crossing of broad hallways, Dave was gripped with a sense of awe.

Amid the chiming of clocks that came like music, Dave paused and heard the soft notes of an organ. Such melody it was! The sort that thwarted banal thoughts and made Dave feel very small.

Everywhere, Dave saw ornaments of wondrous pattern: exquisite vases, gold-woven tapestries, carvings of pure white ivory. His footsteps were soundless on the tufted rugs, thick Orientals as magnificent as they were priceless.

The fragrance from the flower gardens permeated the house with an exotic perfume that no blender could have matched, and all that while, the soft peal of the organ drew Dave with its magic, until he stood, all eyes,

at the door of a music room, where every stick of furnishing was of matchless carving.

There Dave saw the organ; before it sat Mordaunt Tharn, his long, tapering fingers moving along the keyboards. Tharn's face was raised, and on that handsome profile Dave saw an expression that was kingly. Tharn's eyes held a raptured gaze, as though they pictured beautiful scenes that he transferred to music through the touch of those sensitive hands.

Tharn's fingers stilled. His distant gaze remained, while a benign smile spread upon his lips. And Dave, more awed than ever, felt himself in the presence of a majesty that overwhelmed him. Had Tharn stepped from the organ bench and turned toward Dave's doorway, he would have found an intruder full of apology, ready to confess the jealousy that had caused him to invade these premises.

But when Tharn turned from the organ, he went the other way, to a little far door of the music room. When Tharn opened the door and went through, Dave saw a short hallway beyond. He waited until the door had closed; then followed, still undetermined what course to pursue. In the hall, Dave closed the same door behind him and with it cut off the recollections that had awed him.

There was another door ahead, a light beaming from beneath it. Dave laid a hand on the knob, turned it slowly. Looking into the room, he saw that it was a small, simply furnished office; where Tharn was standing with his back toward the door. He was closing a safe, and Dave saw the man's fingers turn the dial.

Dave didn't have to guess what Tharn had put away, for on a desk lay Moyland's brief case, empty. That sight was the thing that determined Dave Channey. He didn't bother to muffle his chin or lower his hat, as he had at Helmbroke's. Conversely, he did not bluff that he had a gun in his pocket. Instead, Dave drew a gun, a real one, and aimed it coldly as Tharn turned.

For a moment, Dave felt a twinge of remorse to think that he must deal thus with a man like Tharn. The twinge came when Dave saw Tharn's face again, still bearing traces of the mood the music had induced. Then Dave emboldened himself with the thought that this was to be a mere threat.

A strong threat, true; but with a righteous motive. Dave's honor, his career, his love for Elaine, were issues that Tharn would understand once Dave explained them. It was only to obtain such a hearing that Dave Channey was making this lone, bold move. With that, Dave tightened his hand on the gun.

At that moment, Mordaunt Tharn looked up and saw the threat that faced him. Into the eyes of the menaced man came an expression of reproach that Dave Channey was never to forget!

## **CHAPTER XVIII. THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP**

HOW Dave managed to keep his grip, he didn't understand. By rights, he should not merely have lowered his gun; he should have flung it from him, to prove he wouldn't harm a man so fine as Tharn.

It must have been the hatred that Dave suddenly directed toward himself, that kept him to his determination.

Dave couldn't regret his actions toward Helmbroke; but with Tharn it was different. Ugly business, from the outset; vicious even to think about. But Dave was in it, so he stayed, crimping to the thing he detested, because once begun, the only way to end this business was to see it through.

Noting the hard look in Dave's eyes, Tharn raised his hands as a matter of course, but his eyes were still reproachful. Fighting off his own better nature, Dave forced an ugly snarl:

"Open that safe, Tharn! I want what's in it!"

Tharn hesitated; then turned, spreading his hands wearily, as though regretting that there were such people as Dave anywhere in the world. He stepped to the safe, placed one hand there and slowly began to turn the knob. Dave approached to nudge his gun against Tharn's back, adding the threat:

"No stalling, Tharn!"

Dave wasn't telling Tharn just yet, that he only wanted Moyland's papers. He'd go through them in Tharn's presence, and state "why" after he'd found what he wanted, such as his own letters to Moyland, covering the Delker robbery.

Meanwhile, Tharn was opening the safe with alacrity, proving that Dave's threat had really driven home. In fact, Tharn's hand gave a tremble as it drew the safe door wide.

Then it came – the thunderbolt!

Tharn's hand was half behind his head when he dashed it forward, sweeping his sleek hair into a rumbled shock. His other hand dropped to his side; his shoulder blade came back and knocked Dave's gun aside as Tharn made a sudden spin.

In the midst of the twirl, Tharn jabbed his elbow with jolting force against Dave's ribs. Completing his quick revolution, Tharn sped crosswise with the hand that had brushed his head and caught Dave's wrist with a hard twist, that actually wrenched the gun from the intruder's fingers.

As the gun hit the floor, the heel of Tharn's free hand met Dave's chin with a shoving uppercut. Reeling back, Dave landed in a chair and sprawled there, staring up at the man who had so thoroughly mastered him. He couldn't imagine how Tharn had managed it, until he took a straight look at his adversary's face.

It wasn't the face of Mordaunt Tharn.

Dave Channey was staring at Judge Lawless! Yes, Judge Lawless, become himself without any tricky disguise.

Tharn's lips were wide, his chin shoved forward, and the contortion changed his handsome face into the leering features of Lawless. As for the beady black eyes, they were Tharn's, so narrowed, that they showed only their dilated pupils, which were black. The grayish hair, however, was the thing that really amazed Dave.

Tharn's hair was dyed, artfully so. Its black looked perfect, and natural. But only when the hair was slicked back and properly, parted, for the dye didn't extend to the roots. Rubbed the wrong way, Tharn's hair let that root gray show – and it became the powdery gray hair of Judge Lawless!

"YOU were a fool to come here, Channey," Tharn snarled, in the tone of Judge Lawless. "But I like fools, because I can use them. I was a fool myself, once!"

Dave could only stare.

"And speaking of fools," continued Lawless, "your girl friend is one, the way she voluntarily fixes me with alibis. Perhaps I should speak of Elaine Moyland as your former girl friend, just as her father was your former employer."

"Say anything you want," returned Dave in a hollow voice. "I'm... well, I'm licked, that's all!"

Judge Lawless snarled a laugh as he picked up Dave's gun and pocketed it.

"Thanks for bringing back the revolver," he said. "And by the way, Channey, I killed Helmbroke on your account. I phoned him from the lobby soon after you did, to help the scare you were throwing into him. When you bungled, I had to do what I did."

Dave didn't stop to analyze whether or not Lawless was speaking facts. After all, Dave had bungled things, his present plight being proof of his aptitude in that direction. So he decided to take Tharn's word on the Helmbroke question. Meanwhile, Tharn – or Lawless, as Dave saw him – was bringing Moyland's papers from the safe.

"I've been through these already," gloated Lawless. "Don't worry about Blanniger; he won't see all of them. He doesn't know that I'm Judge Lawless. For instance – Lawless thrust something into Dave's hand – "Blanniger won't see these."

Dave was staring at a blotter which bore in mirror fashion the combination of Moyland's office safe. The other thing he held was a confession signed by Delker admitting the ten-thousand-dollar robbery!

"Yes, Delker found the combination on Moyland's own blotter," chuckled Lawless. "Moyland guessed it, and Delker was afraid he had. So I told Delker to call Moyland by long distance and try to bluff him. Moyland offered Delker a deal.

"He said he'd try to get the money from you by blaming you for the robbery. If it didn't work, Delker would have to pay up instead. The written confession was to be mailed as security, so I told Delker to send it. You see, all Moyland wanted was to collect ten thousand dollars – the easiest way!"

The savagery that swept Dave was all for benefit of Moyland, and Judge Lawless saw it in a glance. He laid a hand on Dave's shoulder, and Dave noticed that Lawless was keeping it tight-fisted to get the gnarled effect. The judge gave a pleased chuckle.

"No fingerprints, this way," he said. "They've never traced me, nor will they trace you, Channey, while you work with me. But come! Let us go to a more pleasant setting."

They left the simply furnished office and followed the passage to the music room. On the way Lawless unclenched his fist, stroked back his hair and traced the part with his long fingers. He was Mordaunt Tharn again, immaculate in appearance, gracious in manner, when they went through the living room and continued to the conservatory.

There, in a comfortable corner, Tharn gestured Dave to a chair, offered him a cigarette, and questioned:

"You have some wealthy relatives that Moyland knew about?"

Dave nodded.

"An uncle," he said. "A good scout. He'd have made up the ten thousand."

"I had an uncle once," spoke Tharn. His tone was tempered by a sadness that Dave knew must be genuine. "He was very wealthy. A keen man, yet trustful."



There was a pause while smoke curled from Tharn's lips, covering his sad half smile.

"He made his fortune," continued Tharn, "but always regretted the sharp dealing that the task required. So he became ethical, very much so, and soon his wealth was gone.

"Gone to leeches like Moyland, Helmbroke, Le Carra and others. Not to men like Geldon, who are secure enough to show some integrity; but my uncle lost his wealth to persons from whom Geldon and others inherited it. So I resolved to pluck them, the offenders and their heirs.

"I have been doing it ten times over – as Judge Lawless. How easy for Judge Lawless, who knows no bounds, to outwit fools who are afraid to go beyond the limits of the law!"

DAVE felt that Tharn's words applied specifically to Moyland. Greed, avarice, sharp practices, were the source of Moyland's wealth, as with those others, who had helped ruin Tharn's uncle in a way that the world regarded as legitimate. Only once had Moyland gone beyond bounds – in the Bolivian tin deal – and he'd hopped back like a scared rabbit when that game became too risky.

But all these years, Moyland had grasped whenever he could. To him the loss of ten thousand dollars would be as bad as losing an eye. Which was why he'd hounded Dave, even after he'd learned that Delker was the thief! Should he collect from Dave, Moyland would probably tear up Delker's confession and call the matter closed. He could claim ignorance of the whole thing later on, and thus be within the law.

Which marked Moyland as a man with a conscience only where it affected his own hide. He didn't care how unhappy he made others. Tharn's dried gray hair was proof that he had toiled and worried over his uncle's losses to such crafty men as Moyland.

Dave personally had given his best effort in Moyland's service, only to be cast adrift and accused of crime that his miserly employer might reclaim ten thousand dollars in the easiest way.

A sum that was small to Moyland, but far greater than any Dave had ever owned! Still, Dave had heard of multimillionaires who gave out dimes with a show of generosity. To make wealth, a man must have to value its merest fraction as something greater than anything else in life. And Homer Moyland was a man of just such trend.

Tharn was speaking again. He was telling how he'd felt remorse at embarking on a course of justifiable crime; much as Dave had felt, when he dealt with Menz as a way of contacting Judge Lawless in hope of locating Delker.

There wasn't any use bothering about Delker any longer, now that Moyland knew the fellow to be the real thief. What mattered now was to get revenge against Moyland. Meanwhile, Tharn's words dented home to Dave.

"Yes, I felt crime could be justified," Tharn was saying, "since it was the only way to get back the wealth my uncle lost to schemers who had made sure their conniving work was strictly legal. But I couldn't stoop to crime myself. I solved the problem by creating Judge Lawless."

There was a pause; then Tharn's persuasive tone resumed and Dave drank in the philosophy it uttered.

Since money was evil, it could only be gained through evil methods. And all evil methods were crime, whether or not they were so listed. Therefore, all men who accumulated vast hoards of money did so through the practice of crime. Not crime as the world defined it, but as Tharn identified it. And Tharn declared his

definition could be proven.

"Study the statutes in the law books," suggested Tharn, "and you will see that they are measures outlawing methods of moneymaking that were once legitimate. Honest men, in business parlance, are simply those who use ways that have not yet been declared illegal. Consider the past – such things as slavery, privateering, up through the days of trusts.

"All are taboo in this enlightened age, just as the ways of present business will, in the future, be regarded as abuses of the past. I cared not for the past or future; I wanted present wealth. So I took the shortest way to get it: crime! And the thing that justified me" – Tharn's voice was earnest – "was my purpose."

Rising, Tharn led Dave back through the ground floor of the house, pointing out the marvelous treasures, the perfect arrangement of every ornament. They went to the garden, where the pool sparkled in the starlight among the luxuriant flower beds, and they finally reached Tharn's art gallery, where a solemn hush received them. That hush was broken by Tharn's melodious voice.

"Art, beauty, music, nature – such are the real things of life," spoke Tharn. "Not the gross pleasures that most persons buy with money. But wealth rules all things in this world. How can the good things be enjoyed, if one thinks of them in terms of cash?"

"I refused to do so. I became two people: one, Mordaunt Tharn, who reveals in the esthetic because he has no baser things to mar his career. The other, Judge Lawless, seeks wealth and prefers to acquire it the ugly way, because he has shorn himself of every taste for beauty."

THEY were walking along again, Tharn and Dave, while the persuasive voice completed its amazing story. The conclusion came outside the little room where Dave had trapped Tharn, only to be snared by Judge Lawless.

"This is the neutral room," declared Tharn, as he opened the door. "Here Mordaunt Tharn steps away from the true joys of life just long enough to find, awaiting him, the funds for him to pay the bills that a commercial world continually foists upon him.

"And to this same room comes Judge Lawless, his hands steeped, in crime, but dripping with money that he has wrenched from those who love it for itself. He takes delight, does Judge Lawless, in that ugly thing called 'crime.' But its proceeds – money gotten the quick way – give him no joy, except in the acquisition. So he dumps the filthy stuff where Mordaunt Tharn can find it and be free from want.

"One is all good." Tharn spoke softly, with a wave of his hand. "The other is all bad!" The tone turned to a snarl, and the hand went knobby. "But it is right that there should be a man, ugly and hated" – it was a vicious, beady-eyed face that glared at Dave – "hated as Judge Lawless!"

They were across the room, and there Judge Lawless was opening a door that led to the outside. A fistful hand shoved Dave outward, and over his shoulder Dave heard the snarled words:

"Because upon Judge Lawless depends the existence of Mordaunt Tharn, whose ways gladden the world and give solace to those who detest the hideous, sordid things that Judge Lawless has so efficiently removed from the mind of Mordaunt Tharn!"

As the door was closing, Dave looked back. He saw the shape of Judge Lawless straighten. There was a toss of the head that laid the shock of powdery hair into its smooth layer of black. The lipless leer was gone, and the handsome face of Mordaunt Tharn was smiling its finish to the farewell that the snarl of Judge Lawless

had begun!

And then Dave Channey was stumbling along the driveway, feeling like a man who had been carried by a wave so mammoth, that it had taken him to another world, only to bring him back to his own realm. An experience so incredible that it obliterated all Dave's hopes and troubles of the past.

No longer could Dave Channey refuse to serve Judge Lawless. For in doing so he would be contributing to the welfare of that man of perfection, Mordaunt Tharn!

## CHAPTER XIX. THE NEEDED LINK

FROM the window of his little apartment, Dave Channey was watching another sunset. Across the room, Harry Vincent was mentally commending Dave on his patient attitude.

It had been a week since the last Judge Lawless meeting, and in that time the headquarters had been removed. Where Judge Lawless might be, there was no way to tell, except through Dave, who had become a missing link.

Yet Dave was taking it quite calmly, and the fact pleased Harry. For from another source – The Shadow – Harry had learned that crime was not yet ready.

Dave's idleness, and the way Judge Lawless had neglected him, both were explained by the fact that Louis Geldon, secretary of Moyland, Inc., hadn't removed the stock-holders' funds from the bank where they belonged.

So Harry made a cheery departure, telling Dave not to worry over the delay. According to Harry, Dave's vindication was already assured. And on that very point, Dave smiled as soon as Harry left.

Dave knew on the best of authority that Moyland couldn't prosecute him on the ten thousand dollar question. Dave's authority was Judge Lawless, or rather the judge's other personality, Mordaunt Tharn.

With Harry gone, Dave called Tharn's house and talked to the better half of his dual friend. What Dave heard pleased him. Tharn wanted him to come out to the house as soon as convenient. This was the evening when Tharn – in other terms, Judge Lawless – intended to play his trump card for a stake of half a million, and Dave was to be that trump!

So Dave sneaked from the apartment, saw that his trustful friend Harry wasn't anywhere around, and made a bee line for Grand Central Station.

Curiously, Dave felt no qualms over his present course. Mordaunt Tharn, alias Judge Lawless, had completely sold him on the theory of the dual mind and its advantages. For Dave's own mind was dominated wholly by the hope of retribution in the matter of Homer Moyland.

Nothing mattered except to get at Moyland; to help Lawless so ruin him that Moyland would be paying debts for the rest of his life – as he had apparently been willing that Dave should do.

Moyland wasn't a criminal, not in the legal sense. He'd nearly become one when he'd tried to frame Dave, with the aid of Helmbroke and Le Carra. That one lesson had probably cured Moyland of the criminal urge. But Moyland was worse than crooked, in Dave's estimate, because of his effort to collect the ten thousand dollars that Dave hadn't stolen.

He would pay for that dirty business, Moyland would. The more he paid, the better, because then Elaine would suffer, too. She deserved poverty for being such a snob. Elaine and her behavior simply strengthened Dave's case against Moyland, for Dave didn't realize that jealousy was his motive in the girl's case.

To realize that, Dave would have to concede that he was jealous of Tharn. An impossible thing, considering the perfection of Tharn's nature and its utter generosity. For Dave had come to admire Mordaunt Tharn as greatly as he detested Judge Lawless!

MEANWHILE, a bluish glow prevailed in The Shadow's sanctum, that hidden abode where no sunlight ever filtered. On The Shadow's table lay clippings by the score, police records in a high heap, reports from agents in separate batches. All pertained to Judge Lawless and the persons concerned in his schemes, pro or con.

Seeking to penetrate at least one link in the armor that clad the identity of Judge Lawless, The Shadow came back to a point that he had considered oft before. It was Harry's report from the time when he had met Dave officially, after the episode at Helmbroke's. Harry's account was very detailed, and The Shadow had checked it over and over during the past week.

Its singular point was this:

Dave Channey had gone to the meeting with Judge Lawless. On the way, the Judge had chided Dave for having gone to Moyland's. But it wasn't until later, at the meeting, that Judge Lawless had learned the full details of Dave's venture from Dave himself. In brief, Judge Lawless had known only of Dave's open arrival at Moyland's.

Lawless could have learned that through Tobias. The footman might have contacted him promptly, after Dave left. But it had not been more than a quarter hour before Tobias put the slug on Harry, with Dave and Menz as witnesses. Surely Tobias should have forwarded that more important information to Judge Lawless.

Unless Tobias had lost contact, meanwhile, which was hardly plausible. On a sheet before him, The Shadow wrote the name "Tobias" in ink of vivid blue. As it faded, The Shadow gave a whispered laugh. He was counting Tobias out.

There wasn't anything to prove that Judge Lawless communicated with his lesser stooges except at the meetings. Thus The Shadow was taking it for granted that Judge Lawless had not heard from Tobias that evening until the meeting time.

If not from Tobias, from whom had Judge Lawless learned of Dave's preliminary visit to Moyland's?

The Shadow inscribed two names:

ROGER HELMBROKE

SIMON LE CARRA

The first to fade was Helmbroke's. Though later to be his victim, Helmbroke might in some way have been reached before Judge Lawless murdered him. But Helmbroke hadn't seen Dave at Moyland's.

The Shadow's soft laugh was repeated as the name of Le Carra vanished. The disappearance of the written name was like Le Carra's own. The man hadn't been seen since the night of Helmbroke's death, and the police were still hunting him on a charge of murder.

Which, by The Shadow's analysis, proved that Le Carra could not be Judge Lawless, the master schemer who let others take the blame for all his crimes. But the present point was that Le Carra, like Helmbroke, had arrived at Moyland's after Dave's open departure, and therefore couldn't have been the informant who mentioned Dave to Judge Lawless.

The Shadow wrote two more names:

HOMER MOYLAND

ELAINE MOYLAND

Like Tobias, both had seen Dave at the house. Moyland wouldn't have mentioned Dave's visit to anyone, but his daughter might have. Moyland's name faded from the paper, but The Shadow traced Elaine's anew, this time in permanent ink, before the other could vanish. Then beneath, The Shadow wrote:

MORDAUNT THARN

He'd used the special ink, The Shadow had. He always did while his thoughts were still in the speculative stage. But while the name still glistened, The Shadow delivered a whimsical laugh.

By his own speculation, the name faded from the paper, but represented Judge Lawless. The thing was preposterous, utterly so, and to prove it The Shadow inscribed a second name before Tharn's could fade. There they stood together:

MORDAUNT THARN

LAMONT CRANSTON

The inference was plain. To The Shadow's mind, there was no more chance that Tharn could be Judge Lawless than that Cranston could. Both names of honor and integrity: Tharn and Cranston. As they faded each by each, The Shadow's whispered laugh accounted that proposition as forgotten. But the name of Elaine Moyland still remained.

On the evening in question, Elaine had gone to Manhattan with Tharn. They'd made the round of the night spots together. Elaine might have met persons to whom she mentioned her former boy friend, Dave Channey; logical enough, since persons who knew Dave might have asked her why she had dropped him for Tharn.

Maybe Elaine would remember to whom she'd talked that night, even though she'd been quite blotto when the evening finished.

One person could find out: Margo Lane.

At present, Margo was out at Moyland's, for she'd been pushing her friendship with Elaine at Cranston's suggestion. So The Shadow reached for the earphones and contacted Burbank. Not only did he tell Burbank to phone Margo; he instructed him to send Harry back to Dave's apartment. The Shadow wanted Harry to ask Dave the names of any acquaintances that Dave had among the night-club set.

Dusk was dominating Moyland's sunporch when a new servant brought the telephone to Margo, who was seated there with Moyland. All the servants were new, and they greatly satisfied Moyland. This footman, for instance, had once worked for an airline, originally as a pilot, later as a steward.

Moyland's new chauffeur was blunt, but capable; he knew the mechanics of a car, as well as how to drive it. The new chef could cook pancakes and chicken, Southern style, so well that Moyland hated to go out to dinner. The rattle of a lawn mower sounding through the window proved that Moyland's gardener, recently hired, was a good worker despite his frail appearance.

And Moyland had hired a new man as secretary, one who could take shorthand faster than his most-experienced office workers.

So Moyland, dwelling mentally on the servant question and his solving of it, wasn't interested at all in Margo's phone call, which was brief, anyway. Finished with it, Margo said she was going into town, which pleased Moyland because there was to be a business conference this evening and he didn't want any other persons around.

Margo went upstairs to say good-bye to Elaine, who was getting dressed to go to Tharn's, where she and her father expected to pick up Tharn and bring him back to their house. A maid came flying from Elaine's room followed by a shower of evening gowns and a barrage of slippers.

When the door slammed, the maid confided to Margo that Elaine had gone absolutely crazy, so Margo knocked at the door to obtain more details. Elaine told her to come in.

Margo found Elaine completing her attire for the evening. Elaine didn't need the maid to help her, because she was wearing nothing more than her favorite bathing suit, a red polka-dot affair of two-piece pattern. Whereat, Margo exclaimed:

"You're going to Tharn's this evening wearing that?"

"Why not?" queried Elaine. "I think I'd enjoy an evening swim in Mordaunt's pool. But you can do me a favor, Margo. Drop me over there in your car. Dad might consider this new bathing suit too informal for an evening visit."

Smiling at Elaine's mild way of putting it, Margo nodded that she'd take her friend along. Elaine put on bathing slippers and wrapped herself in a beach robe, but didn't bother with a bathing cap. On the way out, she told the maid to inform her father that she'd be at Tharn's when he arrived there.

Riding in Margo's car, Elaine explained about the bathing suit and thus paved the way for Margo's coming questions.

"I've worn every kind of evening gown," said Elaine, "but Mordaunt just won't notice. Every afternoon this week, I've been out by the pool in a different bathing suit. And what does he look at? Flowers! So I'm trying a new technique this evening.

"There are lights around the pool, but you can't see the flowers at night. The lights will show only me, and for once in his life, Mordaunt will have to notice me, while dad is boring him with business bother in the conservatory."

Margo smiled as she glanced from the wheel; then a startling thought struck her.

"How come, Elaine?" she questioned. "Aren't you getting a bit too brazen, considering how willing Mordaunt was to take you on the cafe rounds one night, and I spend another evening sitting out dances with you?"

It was then that a week of effort took effect. Elaine had come to regard Margo as one friend she could trust. The riddle of the bathing suit was the sort that would solve itself, if Margo thought it over. So Elaine confessed the truth.

"Mordaunt wasn't with me when I made the rounds," admitted Elaine. "He left me at the first cafe, and met me later around midnight to bring me home. And he dropped me off at the country club, too. I'd been sitting out all those dances alone, until you arrived at just about the time Mordaunt finally came back to take me home."

DROPPING Elaine at Tharn's, Margo sped for town, stopping at the first place she saw to make a phone call. Her report was forwarded by Burbank to The Shadow, who was still in the sanctum.

It wasn't the first important report that The Shadow had received by phone. He'd already heard from Harry, saying that Dave for some unknown reason, had left his little hide-out.

But it was Margo's news, not Harry's, that gave the needed clue. It clinched a thing already in The Shadow's mind, namely, that name of Elaine Moyland, staring from an otherwise barren sheet, was a weak link in the case. A link that had been a strong one while acceptable, but if disregarded would prove itself the opposite. For the case of Mordaunt Tharn depended solely upon Elaine's two alibis.

Those alibis were shattered. They'd been the product of Elaine's pride, a difficult thing to break. Elaine had lied about her dates with Tharn – not to cover his crimes, for she knew nothing about them, but to satisfy her own vanity. And such lies, spoken by a spirited girl, could carry the weight of real sincerity.

On that same sheet of paper The Shadow inscribed another name, using the indelible ink that would not fade:

MORDAUNT THARN

The ink was black, like the nature of the man it represented. For all the good in Mordaunt Tharn could not wipe out the evil of Judge Lawless.

The bluish light clicked off, and within the solid darkness of the sanctum a grim laugh sounded. That mirth betokened the departure of The Shadow to the final goal where he would meet Judge Lawless.

## CHAPTER XX. CRIME'S RETRIBUTION

UNDER the shelter of darkness, Dave knocked at the little door that looked so inconspicuous in the side of Tharn's great mansion. There was the sound of a grating bolt, but to Dave it meant more. It told him whose face he was about to see.

When the door came open, Dave was confronted by the leering visage of Judge Lawless.

Once in the neutral room, Dave understood. It had required effort on Tharn's part for the man to throw himself into his uglier personality. In fact, Dave felt that his rap at the door had been the necessary signal. And now Judge Lawless, in his nastiest snarl, was detailing important facts.

There had been a meeting the night before at a new courtroom, where Lawless hadn't summoned Dave. Everything had been settled in full for the final crime that would flood the coffers of Judge Lawless to a point where – with the former loot – the wants of Mordaunt Tharn would be satisfied.

Into Dave's hand Judge Lawless pressed the same revolver of the other night and gave him further instructions, for the crux of the great crime depended all on Dave. And watching Dave, Judge Lawless gloated, confident that his henchman would not fail.

Doubling his hand into a gnarled fist, Judge Lawless started Dave out through the little door. When Dave was gone, Lawless pressed the bolt; then, with a curious shake, transformed himself back to Mordaunt Tharn.

It was Tharn who came out through the music room to join Moyland, who was going through a sheaf of papers. Strolling over by the windows, Tharn studied the lighted courtyard. His voice blended harmoniously with the scene, when he said:

"The garden is delightful tonight. Look, Moyland!"

Moyland didn't care for flowers, but he thought it best to humor Tharn. So, for the first time, Moyland looked from the window and saw, not Tharn's flowers but his own daughter. For Elaine had stolen the limelight, as she had told Margo she would. It was simply impossible for Tharn not to notice her.

The pool was just a blob of lovely light that formed a background for Elaine. She was seated on the brink, her feet extended toward the water, while she leaned back, resting on her hands, which she kept far apart so that her slender arms would not be hidden.

She'd chosen her costume well, had Elaine. Her red bathing suit resembled Tharn's scarlet gladiolas, and Elaine herself, for sheer grace and whiteness, could outmatch any bed of hollyhocks. Seeing the faces at the conservatory window, Elaine tossed her blond head and smiled quite prettily.

For once, her father frowned; but Elaine had expected that. She was watching Tharn, and saw that at last she'd dented him. Grace and beauty were the things that charmed him; though he hadn't noted them in Elaine to date, he was capitulating now.

The admiration that showed in Tharn's gaze thrilled Elaine completely. To her, it meant that Tharn had suddenly acknowledged her as something more important than all his marvelous treasures.

When Tharn turned and said something to Moyland, Elaine saw her father's frown pass. Moyland was worried solely because he thought his daughter had overplayed her charm in the case of a conservative like Tharn. But Tharn, repeating how lovely the garden was, suggested that they stroll there, and that, to Moyland, meant that Elaine had enraptured Tharn completely.

How little those Moylands knew about Tharn; and how much less he even intended to tell them!

As the pair reached the garden, Elaine swung from the pool and doubled her knees while she leaned on one arm, her face peering discreetly across her shoulder to meet Tharn's gaze.

More than ever, Moyland's talk seemed to bother Tharn, as Moyland kept reminding him that they must start over to the other house to meet Cranston, Geldon, and the other members of the corporation.

Deciding that it was policy to observe her father's wishes, Elaine came to her feet as soon as she saw Tharn nod to Moyland. The girl turned toward the cloistered walk to reclaim the slippers and the beach robe from the bench where she had left them.

Elaine's lithe figure riveted as she saw the man who stalked directly from the pillars. A man from the past – Elaine's past! Dave Channey, his face as stiffened as Elaine's pose, determination written on every feature,



and backed with a revolver that glistened from his tight right hand!

FORGETTING her wrap, Elaine turned frantically toward Tharn, but her lips couldn't voice her appeal for aid. For Dave had overtaken her with a quick stride, and between the sections of her bathing suit the girl felt the frigid pressure of the gun muzzle, chilling her spine in both directions!

It was Dave's voice that brought Tharn and Moyland about. For effect, Dave nudged Elaine toward the pool edge, turning her toward the water into which the blonde would have slumped, had Dave pushed her a few feet more. Dave wanted Moyland to see the gun, and Moyland did, as Dave turned his head sideward to growl:

"One move, Moyland, and I'll blast your daughter right in among the goldfish!"

Moyland's own knees were buckling. He looked at Tharn, who in turn looked helpless. Moyland began to gasp in the fashion of the fish that Dave had mentioned.

"But... listen... Channey –"

"I've listened long enough," gruffed Dave. "You framed me Moyland, and you know it! How do I know? I've talked to Delker!"

Dave hadn't talked to Delker; in fact, he no longer cared what might happen to the fellow. Delker was just one of the small-fry who had once served Judge Lawless. Dave was using Delker's name to make Moyland wilt, a thing which Lawless had assured Dave would happen. And Moyland did wilt – and blubber.

He wasn't a criminal, Moyland. By Tharn's definition, he was worse – a man who shielded his lack of ethics by staying within the bounds of the law. As such, he could be scared by legal threats, he was now!

Since Dave knew the truth, he might bring charges of blackmail against Moyland. That fear gripped Moyland at Dave's mention of Delker. Moreover, Moyland had another fear: he was in the presence of Tharn, the man he had once attempted to swindle in illegal fashion.

Odd, that Moyland couldn't recognize that he'd done worse things under the head of legitimate business! His few steps off the beaten path were the things that really scared him!

"You wanted every cent I could raise," Dave told Moyland. "So my terms to you are the same. In your case, it's to be half a million dollars! You can get it from Moyland, Inc. The sooner you pay the whole sum, Moyland, the sooner you'll get back your daughter. I'm taking her as security!"

In blunter terms, Dave was kidnapping Elaine, while Moyland was pleading that he couldn't supply funds that weren't his own. Dave simply laughed and drew Elaine from the edge of the pool, telling her to come along.

The girl obeyed numbly, for she was just beginning to grasp the fact that Dave was innocent of theft, yet willing to go through with greater crime.

Dave faced Elaine toward the rear of the garden. Plucking slippers and robe from the bench, he laid them across his arm and used his other hand to prod Elaine with the gun.

Moyland gasped helplessly, for the gun threatened instant death to his daughter, should he try to interfere. Dumbly, he watched Dave march Elaine off through the hollyhocks. It was from there that Dave called back:

"I'll drop in at your house later, Moyland! I'll be alone, so have the funds ready if you hope to see Elaine again!"

HELPLESSLY, Moyland turned to Tharn, whose lips showed their permanent smile. Moyland didn't realize that the drama was still being played; that Tharn, as Judge Lawless, had correctly found Moyland's weak point – his daughter. Much though Moyland loved cash, he valued Elaine's welfare more.

In both selves, Lawless and Tharn had the habit of analyzing men who played the middle course that Tharn himself disdained; that of letting greed stifle decency, only to become soft and maudlin when they should have remained hard and vicious. Moyland was mixing the two natures, as all victims did when Tharn let Lawless handle them.

"Call the police," began Moyland. "No, don't, Tharn! Do nothing" – Moyland sagged to a bench – "or tell me what to do."

It was Tharn, the man of integrity, who answered.

"Decide for yourself, Moyland," he said, "whether you value wealth more than you do your daughter."

"If I pay that half million," queried Moyland, "you'd say nothing, Tharn? Nothing to the others? You'd wait until I could pay back your share, like the rest?"

Tharn nodded. He could well afford it. There were ten men in the corporation; therefore he was risking only fifty thousand dollars to gain the full half million. And behind Tharn's benign smile lay the confident opinion that Moyland, once he liquidated all his assets, could make the whole thing good.

Moyland's face tightened as he exclaimed:

"I'll do it!"

Tharn's friendly hand settled on Moyland's shoulder as they turned toward the house. He'd see that Moyland didn't let this thing switch to a kidnap charge. If Moyland talked that way, Tharn would remind him of more than Elaine's plight; namely, that Dave Channey could counter with a blackmail charge against Homer Moyland.

Crime's retribution had arrived in the shape of a greater crime than the one that had induced it. Again Judge Lawless had played his hand ahead of The Shadow's. How far ahead, was still a question, but with what result one personage alone could have foretold.

That being was The Shadow. Having learned the truth about Judge Lawless, The Shadow, too, was planning for his version of crime's retribution!

## **CHAPTER XXI. THE HUMAN FACTOR**

WHEN Moyland's car pulled out of Tharn's imposing front gate, it paused to let any traffic pass. None passed because the only car on the highway was one that had suddenly pulled close beside the gate, extinguishing its lights. There were lights on the gate, too, and they showed the interior of Moyland's car.

Thus did The Shadow, seated in Harry's coupe, learn that Tharn and Moyland were riding together, without Elaine. And in his glimpse of those two faces, The Shadow discovered more. Something which Elaine's absence indicated; namely, that Moyland was troubled, so badly that he didn't realize that Tharn was pleased.

As Moyland's car started, The Shadow laid a restraining grip on Harry's arm. The departing car swung from the gate, its motor, producing a curious echo, which Harry suddenly realized was not an echo but the starting of another car from somewhere in the back of Tharn's extensive grounds.

The Shadow's grip relaxed, and Harry started the coupe like a whippet, wheeling into Tharn's driveway on a wild-goose chase for a mystery car that he could hardly hope to find. But The Shadow's whisper promised success.

"I made the right provisions," he declared. "Both at Moyland's and here at Tharn's, where I may return later. It was guess-work, Vincent, but it fits the crime. We are trailing a kidnaper; his name is Dave Channey and his victim is Elaine Moyland!"

Harry couldn't seem to grasp it, so The Shadow explained as they drove along.

"All that Dave told you was true," declared The Shadow. "Delker stole the ten thousand dollars from Moyland, who blamed Dave for it. Seeking Delker, Dave linked him with the Lawless band, and bragged falsely that he had robbed Moyland of a much larger sum. But Lawless was not deceived – for long."

The Shadow had already told Harry that Tharn and Lawless were the same. Now The Shadow was piecing the possibilities that such a situation could produce in reference to Dave Channey.

"Moyland must have learned that Delker took the cash," stated The Shadow. "Being a grasper, Moyland would still have blamed Dave, thinking he would make good the funds to save his reputation. Dave learned that fact through Tharn.

"From then on, he became Tharn's man. Dave's urge for justice was dominated by his personal motives, as with most people. When Tharn proposed a way to settle completely scores with Moyland, the temptation was too great to resist."

Granted that Dave had capitulated to the wizard of two minds, Harry could understand Tharn's guile in involving Elaine. The real difficulty now was to pick up Dave's trail. Doubtless he had picked up a car that Lawless assigned to him, and it would be hard to find in the maze of roads behind this large estate.

Then came The Shadow's steady, encouraging tone.

"Keep driving, Vincent," it ordered. "There is one thing that Lawless has long forgotten: the human element. He lives two lives: one totally good; the other completely bad. He has therefore lost all understanding of mingled emotions and what they can produce when two normal persons are concerned."

Far ahead, so far that Harry's worry about the trail was justified, The Shadow's words were being proven.

AT the wheel of his car, Dave was picking the route that Judge Lawless had ordered. Beside Dave was Elaine, and as Dave made a turn that swung the wheel in her direction, the girl stretched a hand from the beach robe that loosely draped her shoulders. As her hand pressed Dave's arm, Elaine said simply:

"I'm sorry, Dave."

Savagely, Dave tugged away, thereby proving that he had not acquired the cold mold of Judge Lawless. This was the human element on which The Shadow counted. As they swung another turn, Dave gruffly demanded:

"Sorry for what?"

"That I believed dad when he said you stole ten thousand dollars," replied Elaine. "Who did take it, Dave?"

"A chap named Delker," replied Dave. "He would have stolen fifty thousand, if I hadn't banked the rest and saved it for your father, who still wouldn't believe me."

"Couldn't you find Delker?"

"I traced the crooks he worked with," returned Dave, "and made them think I'd taken the other forty thousand, so they would let me join up. That's how I learned your father had finally discovered that Delker was the thief, but was still trying to shake me down for ten thousand dollars!"

There was silence while Dave pivoted the car again. The human element was working to the utmost. It couldn't help but do so between two young persons actually in love, whose estrangement had been caused by others than themselves. The Shadow had foreseen what was to be.

"You knew that the night you came to the house, Dave?" asked Elaine. "If you did –"

"I hadn't learned it then," Dave interrupted. His tone hardened suddenly. "What difference would it have made? You wouldn't have listened to me! You'd still have believed your father!"

There came the unpredictable phase of the human element, wherein Elaine, convinced that she was wrong, decided to argue just the opposite.

"I had a right to believe my own father!" snapped Elaine defiantly. "And maybe he was right, considering the way you've acted since. Yes, I was right!" With that, Elaine's voice choked, and she added, almost humbly: "Or, maybe I was wrong – about Tharn, I mean."

Dave's foot slid from the accelerator. He thought that Elaine had guessed the truth. He wanted to study her face; when he did, he realized she wasn't thinking of Tharn in terms of crime.

"I thought Tharn liked me," Elaine admitted. "But that wouldn't have mattered, Dave. I wouldn't even have looked at him, or let him look at me, if I hadn't lost you first. Or maybe... you lost me."

Dave stopped the car entirely.

"Yes, I lost you," he snapped. "Lost you long before tonight, when I saw you posing on the edge of Tharn's pool like something out of his art gallery! It was all over the time I came to your father's house, only to have you give me the cold stare. That's when I should have slapped you down!"

Fixing her eyes on Dave's, Elaine asked simply:

"Why didn't you, Dave!"

She worded the question in the past tense, but she meant it in the present. And Dave knew then and there that however completely he had lost Elaine, he had won her again for keeps.

Money wasn't Dave's motive; The Shadow had known that when he predicted the power of the human element. To Dave, Elaine was worth far more than the half-million-dollar price that Tharn had set upon her.

The kidnap job was off. Dave was taking Elaine home, where she belonged, but only to tell her father that she was going away again, of her own volition and with no threat of ransom. But it wouldn't hurt to spend a while

in this secluded lane before starting homeward!

TEN minutes later, Harry Vincent swung his car around a bend and glimpsed parked lights ahead. As Harry braked the car, The Shadow turned off the lights.

Easing from the car, The Shadow drew Harry along, under-toning for him to draw his gun. The Shadow added:

"Be ready at the window by the driver."

They approached silently along the dirt road, and the sound of low voices in the car helped Harry sneak to the window that The Shadow had mentioned. That window was open and Harry could hear the voices better.

This car was a sedan and its occupants weren't the ones he expected. Dave and Elaine weren't in it. The sedan was loaded with thugs, four of them! And then the whirlwind came!

Harry heard the rear door rip open on the right. A low laugh, fierce and sinister in its whisper, brought startled crooks about. By the dashlight, Harry saw a gloved hand make a side swing and clout a heavy automatic against the head of a man who sat beside the driver.

But that side issue didn't deter The Shadow from dealing with the pair in back.

From the clash of metal, Harry knew that his chief was beating down revolvers with slashes from his other automatic. Slashes that ended in a sweep from left to right and back again, bounding from one head to the other. Solid chunks told of those head swipes, and Harry heard them, though he was busy at his own window.

There, the driver swung about to the right, shoving a revolver to the back seat, hoping to stop the slugging with the blaze of gunfire that would wither The Shadow at close range.

But the slugging wasn't over. In swinging to aim, the driver poked his head straight toward the open window and Harry met it with a downward blow. The revolver dropped unfired and the head bobbed back and forth, finally settling on the edge of the window, with its face turned up. To his pleasure, Harry saw that the driver was Menz.

Silence was sudden, but it was broken by the starting of a car far up the lane. Then Harry knew that the car must be Dave. He'd parked to talk to Elaine, so the cover-up car had parked, too. Its occupants had just begun to get impatient, when The Shadow came along with Harry. Naturally, Dave didn't know about the cover-up car; it was a precaution that Judge Lawless hadn't mentioned.

A precaution that failed, thanks to The Shadow. As for the human element, it was still at work. When Harry and The Shadow hurried back to their own car and sped to pick up Dave's trail, they saw that the route had changed.

Two heads showed through the back window, and the one with blond hair was resting on the shoulder of the other. Dave's car was moving very slowly, and it was going back to Moyland's.

Dave was due there, yes, but not with Elaine. He'd been supposed to take her far away and leave her, as arranged by Judge Lawless. But the men who were to see that such happened were no longer on the changed trail. They were cluttering up their own car, Menz and the rest, like so many logs. Three for The Shadow, one for Harry, but both fighters had hit hard.

At The Shadow's direction, Harry swung to another road. The idea was to take a short-cut and be ahead of Dave when he arrived at Moyland's, after an uninterrupted drive. As they rode along, Harry heard The Shadow's laugh, strangely prophetic, as before.

Harry couldn't have guessed the amazing thought behind that mirth. So well had the human element worked, that The Shadow expected it to prove itself again; this time, in a case that only The Shadow would have considered possible.

For The Shadow was thinking in terms of a person who had rendered himself inhuman: the monster of good and bad who called himself Mordaunt Tharn, alias Judge Lawless!

## CHAPTER XXII. THARN VERSUS LAWLESS

LAMONT CRANSTON arrived late at Moyland's, to find the way all paved for final crime.

Homer Moyland, aided and abetted by his esteemed friend Mordaunt, had convinced the investors that the funds belonging to Moyland, Inc., would bring big returns if properly placed. Moyland was talking in long-term propositions, such as rubber plantations in Brazil, on a five-to-ten-year plan.

So earnest was Moyland, that his purchases were approved. As president of the corporation he was to make out the checks and render accounting to Tharn, as secretary, while Geldon, the treasurer, would merely keep the bank books. For everyone trusted Moyland, the way he spoke; and of course, Tharn's presence helped.

Never in any of his business schemes had Moyland dared to go so far as this. He was actually perpetrating a fraud, for he intended to divert funds from the purposes claimed and deliver them to Dave, without knowing if he'd ever be able to make them good. Should his deed be exposed, he'd end up in the penitentiary. Yet Moyland's action was the most decent thing he had ever done.

He was foregoing wealth, forgetting avarice, heading himself to permanent ruin, all for Elaine's sake. In Tharn, Moyland saw a man who approved such sacrifice, because it had a human angle. For the first time, Moyland was finding that he had a heart, and in it, he felt that Tharn would help him through his future difficulties.

Little did Moyland realize that should the pinch come, it would be Judge Lawless – not Mordaunt Tharn – who would decide!

From a corner of the sunporch, Cranston approved the decision of the other investors, while he kept watching the door for Moyland's new footman. When the man arrived – sooner than either Moyland or Tharn expected – Cranston knew that he was announcing Dave Channey. The footman spoke to Moyland, who flashed a quick glance at Tharn.

"You will pardon me, gentlemen," said Moyland. "I think that I should put away these papers, now that our discussion is finished. Come with me, Tharn; there may be some that you need."

As the two left, Cranston followed, noticed only by Geldon, who wondered why he had gone along. Hesitating at first, Geldon thought that he might be needed also, to fulfill some duty as treasurer. But he stopped again within the doorway leading from the sunporch.

Geldon saw Moyland and Tharn out in the main hall talking to a visitor, but Cranston wasn't anywhere around.

The visitor was Dave, and while Moyland talked, Tharn eyed the young man very coldly. Moyland was indignant because Dave had arrived so soon, but Tharn, in a friendly voice that belied his expression, was prompt to take Dave's part.

"Channey made his terms," stated Tharn. "You have arranged to cover the funds. Why not take him into your office and make out the checks? You can make them payable to various names of individuals or imaginary companies. All payments can be suited to the records."

Dave looked anxious to receive the checks, and he actually was, but not because he intended to cash them. His loyalty had switched from Judge Lawless back to The Shadow, and Dave was going to turn over the checks to Harry as evidence for The Shadow's use in cracking down on Lawless.

But Tharn could tell what Dave intended; he proved it as they neared the office door.

"You will give those checks to me," spoke Tharn, quietly, in Dave's ear. "I shall turn them over to the person who should receive them."

Dave's fists went tight. He started an angry retort, only to catch himself. Elaine wasn't safe yet, even though Harry had met Dave outside and had taken the girl into his car. Because for all Dave knew, Moyland's houseful of new servants might all be men planted by Judge Lawless!

All that Dave's outburst did was to bring Geldon and a few of the other stockholders from the sunporch. Very politely, Tharn introduced Dave as a man from the importing business, and invited the others to step into Moyland's office. It would be so easy for Tharn to dismiss the others after a brief while, and then get back to the business of the checks!

So easy, that Tharn wasn't noticing the office as he entered. He was full across the threshold, closing the door behind him, when he turned to view the scene that had made the rest halt amazed.

Moyland's office had been totally transformed. It was no longer an office. It was a replica of a court room. Not an actual court of justice, but the travesty that Judge Lawless had created. It included everything: the tumble-down bench, the rough seats, the jury chairs, even the horrible pictures on the walls!

Seated at the bench was The Shadow, fully cloaked in black. His gaze was straight toward Tharn as the handsome man turned about. And Dave, staring first at The Shadow, then at Tharn, suddenly called the turn that was to come. A thing that The Shadow already had foreseen would happen, which was why he had arranged this setting.

In such a setting, Mordaunt Tharn could not exist!

IN a trice it occurred, the thing that Dave had seen happen before. Tharn's face went livid; a snarl issued from a mouth that spread so wide that it seemed to have no lips. Eyelids narrowing Tharn's pupils dilated into little orbs of black.

As he thrust his jaw forward, Tharn swept his hand from the back of his head to the front, producing hair of shocky gray. And that hand went tight, into a gnarled fist, like the other that shoved to its pockets for a gun. Tharn had become his other self.

He was Judge Lawless!

Never could a man of crime have given himself away so completely. Yet, with all his savagery, Lawless was helpless, for already The Shadow loomed a gun straight for him. Under the threat of that big automatic, the stooped pose of Lawless became a retreating cringe, accompanied by further snarls from his throat.

Judge Lawless, exposed by The Shadow!

There was only one course the fiend could take. That was to shoot it out, despite the impossible odds. Madly, Lawless sped, his knotted hand to his pocket, and its swiftness startled Dave, who didn't realize that The Shadow's cool deliberation could be discounted later by split-second speed.

The Shadow wanted Lawless to have his gun in hand, that this might be a true duel between justice and crime. But it didn't occur to Dave that the black cloaked avenger would give a fiend like Lawless anything that resembled a sporting chance. So Dave yanked his own gun and flung himself for Lawless, hoping to prevent the latter's draw.

Instantly, Judge Lawless copied the tactics that The Shadow had used that first night they met. He grabbed Dave as a living shield, and with a display of terrific strength dragged his human bulwark out from the room.

They were reeling across the hall together, when The Shadow, down from the bench, sped forward in pursuit.

All the while, the voice of Judge Lawless was shrieking hideously, calling for last-minute help that came as Lawless reached the front door. There, Dave was breaking free to give The Shadow a shot at Lawless, when the front door hurled inward to admit arriving members of the Lawless band. Simultaneously, others sprang in from the sunporch and more appeared from a door at the rear of the hall.

They saw the sweeping, fisted gesture that Judge Lawless made as he dived away from Dave and reached the front door, where his insurging followers gave him a protecting cordon. Lawless was indicating The Shadow, and the cloaked fighter's doom seemed certain, on the basis that he had only Dave to help his stand against a dozen attackers who were coming, armed, from three directions.

But Dave wasn't The Shadow's only ally.

Moyland's new servants rallied to the aid of their chief, for they were The Shadow's secret agents! A hard-faced chauffeur slung in from the sunporch, followed by a wizened gardener: Cliff Marsland and Hawkeye, both slugging crooks from behind before that tribe could fire!

Down from the front stairway sprang Moyland's new secretary, none other than Clyde Burke; while the footman turned out to be Miles Crofton, another agent of The Shadow. Together they drove for the group at the front door, picking up Dave to aid in the surprise attack.

As for the bunch from the back of the hall, they were handled in quick succession by Moyland's famous chef, who appeared at that timely moment. He was a giant African named Jericho, a great man in a pinch like this. He'd brought along his waffle iron, and he used it very handily.

With one hand plucking crooks by the neck as if he were preparing chickens Southern style, Jericho bonged their heads with the waffle iron, so rapidly that each succeeding thug was sagging before his predecessor reached the floor.

Into this threefold fray The Shadow jabbed telling shots, that dropped the few opponents who managed to elude his agents. Then out through the front door, The Shadow was hot on the trail of Judge Lawless, leaving his aides to complete the mopping up.



### JUDGE LAWLESS3

Capable men, those agents; they'd proven it earlier when they secretly rigged Moyland's office to look like the courtroom of Judge Lawless, a detail which The Shadow had told Burbank to arrange by telephone.

OUTSIDE, Judge Lawless was getting away in Dave's car. Harry wasn't around because at his first sight of the Lawless horde, he'd wheeled away in his coupe, taking Elaine away from danger, since he knew that The Shadow and the ready agents had arranged to handle any strife indoors.

But Moyland's car was handy and Cliff had obligingly left the keys in it, in case The Shadow needed it. So the cloaked fighter used it for pursuit.

The route led back to Tharn's. There, Lawless and The Shadow sprang from their respective cars, with the evil Judge just far enough ahead to reach the house before The Shadow could get a shot at him. By rights, Lawless should have flung himself into a trap, but it wasn't that way when The Shadow found the Judge inside the mansion.

Two men were awaiting Tharn's return, for The Shadow had summoned them here: Commissioner Weston and Inspector Cardona.

Judge Lawless had caught them off guard by his precipitate entry, and to his aid had come Blanniger, the pasty secretary. Blanniger didn't recognize Lawless as Tharn, but that didn't matter, since Lawless was his actual master.

The pair had trapped Weston and Cardona instantly and were forcing them, hands upraised, into the conservatory. Over his shoulder, Lawless sneered back at The Shadow, at the same time nudging his gun against Weston, a move that Blanniger copied with Cardona.

"One move from you, Shadow," snarled Lawless, "and we shoot to kill! So come along and hear my terms!"

The Shadow followed, juggling his lowered gun. In the conservatory, Lawless swung behind Weston and made a neat shift by which he gained Blanniger's gun, to keep Cardona covered, too. Shielded by both helpless men, Lawless ordered the empty-handed secretary to go to the neutral room and gather everything that was in the safe.

"We're leaving, Blanniger and I," gloated Lawless. "You aren't going to stop us, Shadow! So lay your gun aside and have a chair. Follow my orders without argument and nothing will happen to these stupid friends of yours!"

By the "stupid friends," Lawless meant Weston and Cardona. He couldn't afford to shoot them, because if he did, he'd be laying himself open to The Shadow. Conversely, if The Shadow took sudden action, Lawless might shoot for spite when he made a break for escape. On the surface, the situation was a deadlock.

Probing deeper, The Shadow smelled something quite different than the perfume from the flower garden. Judge Lawless was stalling for something, and The Shadow, thanks to his keen hearing, learned exactly what it was.

Behind the house, a car motor was cutting off. It meant that Menz and his car-load of recuperated thugs were returning to Tharn's instead of going to Moyland's!

"Lay your gun aside, Shadow –"

That Lawless snarl meant business. His trick was subtle. Once laid aside, The Shadow's gun would be handy enough for him to reclaim in case Lawless played false; hence the terms seemed fair. But the delay in regaining that automatic would be far too great, once Menz and three other gunners appeared on the scene!

Only for a moment did The Shadow hesitate. Fortunately, his hat brim obscured his eyes so that Lawless didn't see the gleam that came to them.

Turning calmly, The Shadow took three steps to a table and deliberately placed his gun there. Then with a lift of his empty hand he flicked the catch of the little music box that rested upon the same table.

The music box broke forth with its tinkly tune, a melody so sweet that it was actually jarring. Its rippling lilt alone was needed to emphasize the atmosphere of this conservatory with its artistic ornaments, the perfume from the garden, and all the harmony that bolstered the finer life of Mordaunt Tharn!

Back at Moyland's, it had been Lawless versus Tharn, an evil monster betraying his better self. Here it was Tharn versus Lawless, a complete reversal inspired by The Shadow!

TWO guns thudded the floor. Turning in amazement, Weston and Cardona saw the ugly countenance of Judge Lawless vanish, dropping its contortions to become the handsome face of Mordaunt Tharn.

His eyes wide and blue as they drank in the scene that the delightful melody brought home, Tharn was using a long, unknotted hand to stroke back his hair into the form that showed only its polished blackness.

Then came the really jarring note – a laugh, low, sinister, fearful, creeping from the hidden lips of The Shadow. Tharn didn't lose his own facial expression, but his eyes went startled when they saw The Shadow reaching for the gun beside the tinkling music box.

With a gaze that for once showed fright, Mordaunt Tharn flung himself about, broke frantically from the clutches of Weston and Cardona and dashed from the conservatory, kicking a gun ahead of him.

Blocking The Shadow's aim, the commissioner and his ace inspector were pouncing on Tharn anew, when the terrified man broke free again, gathering his gun from the floor. He gained a head start as he dashed away, and The Shadow heard Weston and Cardona blundering out through the front door. They'd made a wrong guess, for Tharn, thinking The Shadow would be after him too, would most certainly have taken a quicker exit.

The Shadow turned to view the flower garden. He saw four men come bounding from the hollyhocks as Tharn rushed from the house toward the cloistered walk beyond the swimming pool.

To Tharn, in his terrified state, these four weren't rescuers; they couldn't be, for all the world was against him, now that The Shadow had broken the spell of the perfect surroundings that to Tharn were symbols of life itself.

Tharn brandished his gun at Menz and the others. In their turn, they saw nothing of Judge Lawless in the features of Mordaunt Tharn. As Tharn began a frenzied fire, they answered it.

Riddled by bullets from the guns of his own marksmen, Judge Lawless – still to all appearances Mordaunt Tharn – went staggering to the pool brink and stumbled across it, wrenched by dying agony.

Like a knell came the strange laugh of The Shadow. It brought killers full about, to find themselves cornered by a brace of automatics thrust from the conservatory window by a cloaked master in black who had

witnessed their deed of slaughter.

Then two more guns appeared, held by Weston and Cardona, holding at bay four killers whose nerveless fingers had dropped their own revolvers.

The Shadow was gone from the conservatory. He stopped Blanniger as the secretary came from the music room, and thrust the pasty man out into the garden to become another prisoner. As Blanniger joined the helpless throng, The Shadow looked past them to the pool where a dead man lay.

Red blood dyed the water, just as gray roots showed in the soaked hair that topped a lifeless face. Its glassy eyes wide, that face bore the stare of Mordaunt Tharn, but its death grin, spread in final agony, had become the lipless leer of Judge Lawless.

Weird, chilling was the parting laugh that listeners heard as a black-clad figure faded. A laugh that was repeated, to dwindle with a distant shiver as a car rolled from the gates that marked the estate of Mordaunt Tharn.

Only one being could have voiced that mirth: The Shadow, master of justice, who had conquered the archfiend of crime who had once been called Judge Lawless!

THE END