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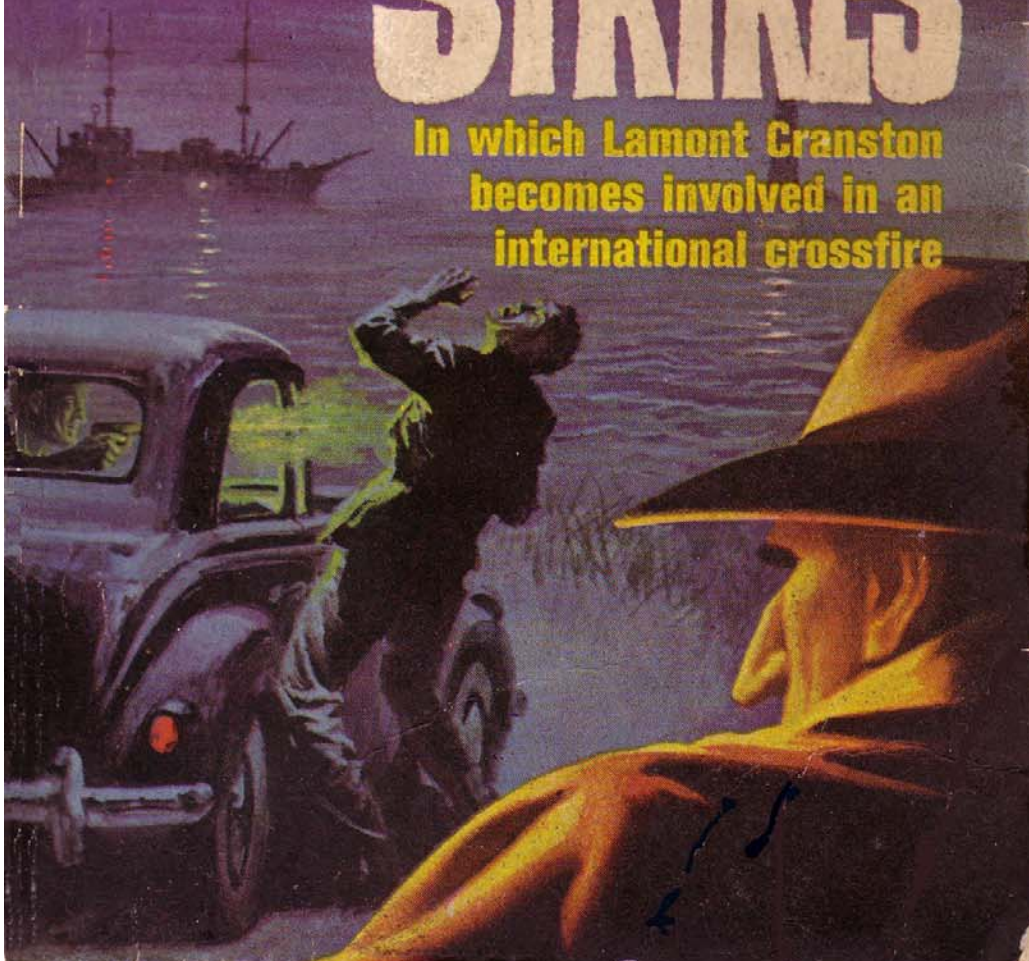
**MAXWELL
GRANT**



**A
NEW
SUSPENSE
THRILLER
OF THE FAMOUS
AVENGER
IN ACTION**

THE SHADOW STRIKES

**In which Lamont Cranston
becomes involved in an
international crossfire**



THE SHADOW STRIKES

by Maxwell Grant

A BELMONT BOOK— October 1964.

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THAT NIGHT, the beachwear salesman on his way from New York to Beach City passed two strange figures on the Cape Ambrose Highway. The salesman was driving a blue sedan and he passed the two lurking figures just this side of Sea Gate. But the salesman saw only *one* of them. Later, when he stopped for a whisky in Sea Gate to steady his shaking nerves, the people in the Sea Gate Tavern laughed at him.

"A giant bat? In New Jersey?"

"You better let someone else drive —."

They all laughed at the salesman. He, himself, did not laugh or listen to them. He knew what he had seen. He would not forget for a long time. On a sharp curve of the highway, for one long instant in the glare of his headlights, he had seen the looming shape of a giant bat.

"It was ten feet tall," the salesman said. "At least. It flew across the highway. Fast, but I saw it. It crossed the highway right in front of me. It went into the trees. I didn't see it again."

"That's powerful stuff you drink," someone said.

"Where'd you throw the bottle? I want the name of that brand," someone else said.

The salesman did not answer. He ordered a third drink and went to sit in a corner booth but not too far from the light or the other people. He drank and waited for his hands to stop shaking. The skeptics returned to their own drinks. Some of them still laughed about the salesman's story, but not all of them.

There was a storm brewing in the hot August night, and when the wind blew against the tavern windows some of the patrons at the bar looked uneasily over their shoulders.

The salesman, alone in his corner, was unaware that he had passed a second lurking figure that night. Sea Gate is a rich resort suburb of Beach City on the New Jersey shore, and the Cape Ambrose highway is dark, curving, and lined with trees as it approaches Sea Gate. The highway is some half a mile in from the sea. On the beach there is mile after mile of small summer cottage colonies. But along the highway the houses are larger, more elegant, and widely spaced on well-tended grounds.

Less than a mile from Sea Gate, and just three miles closer to the resort town than where the salesman had seen the apparition of the giant bat, a stone gateway stands as the entrance to the Sea Gate Golf Club. The gateway is isolated and hidden by trees and high bushes. The closest house is four hundred yards away on the other side of the highway. The Golf Club itself is dark at night. The golf course spreads darkly beyond the gate, and the houses on the beach are a half a mile away.

That night, the sky darkening with the approaching storm, a man stood hidden just inside the stone gateway to the Golf Club. The salesman, his hands already shaking from what he had seen, did not see this man. The salesman passed on to have his drinks at the Sea Gate Tavern, to calm his nerves, and to continue to Beach City and points south where he would sell his beachwear and soon forget that night.

The man hidden inside the gateway looked up when the blue sedan of the salesman passed, and then looked away. It was not the car he was waiting for, and it did not interest him. He lighted a long, foreign cigarette, and continued to wait. Each time the man lighted a fresh cigarette the flame of his lighter revealed his face in the night.

It was a heavy, pale, Slavic face of early middle age. The man was handsome, in a dissipated way, with dark hair and small grey eyes and a straight nose. The grey eyes were hooded, sensual, and with more than a hint of cruelty in them. The man had lighted his sixth cigarette when he suddenly raised his head again to listen.

Above the rising wind of the storm there was the sound of another automobile approaching. The engine of the car was loud and unmuffled in the night. As it came around the curve of the highway, its headlights probing the night, the loud car slowed. It was a small, stripped-down roadster with an open hood and chromium-plated twin carburetor. The car stopped near the waiting man. He dropped his long cigarette to the ground and stepped toward the car and its single occupant.

"You are late again," the man said in a voice that had a definite accent. "I must teach you better manners. I do not have much time tonight."

"You want to get out?" the occupant of the car said.

"I did not say that," the man said.

"You can't get out," the driver of the car said.

"Don't threaten me, my friend," the man said.

The man bent, then, to lean into the car through its open window. In that position, half bent with his face not yet inside the car window, the man's eyes suddenly widened in horror. He threw up his hands to cover his face, staggered backwards, and collapsed at the edge of the highway. He crawled weakly in the grass for a few seconds. Then he lay still. The man was dead.

At the instant that the dead man had first staggered backward, the driver of the car had leaped out on the other side. The driver carried a peculiar length of pipe. When the man lay still on the grass, the driver ran to bend over him. The driver searched the pockets of the dead man-searched quickly, taking a large roll of money and a ring of keys. Then the driver ran back to the car.

From the rear of the car the driver brought out a light beach chair and carried it into the center of the highway. In the center of the highway the driver stopped to listen. The night was silent except for the sound of the wind and the distant rumble of thunder as the storm grew. Swiftly, then, the driver returned to the dead man and dragged the body to the chair in the highway. The driver propped the body up in the chair and ran back to the car.

The car backed away around the bend. There was a roaring sound that filled the night as the car motor was gunned. The car came racing around the curve and smashed into the body seated in the chair. The car screeched to a halt. The killer leaped out of the car and ran back to the sprawled body of the dead man.

Above the noise of thunder there was the sound of another car coming closer. It was a deep, powerful motor of a car driving fast. The killer picked up the ruined beach chair, raced back to the stripped-down hotrod, and vanished into the night around the curve in the highway. The roar

of the unmuffled motor faded. At almost the same instant, the powerful sound of the car approaching from the opposite direction also ceased.

For a long moment the night was silent and still except for the wind and thunder of the coming storm.

On the highway a pool of blood spread slowly around the body of the dead man.

The next instant the long-departed beachwear salesman would have been vindicated had he been there. From the bushes that shrouded the gate to the Golf Club a figure glided silently out into the highway. It was the shape of a giant bat. The batlike figure moved with amazing speed to stand over the body in the highway. The burning, hypnotic eyes that looked down at the dead man were not the eyes of a bat. They were the angry eyes of The Shadow.

Above the high collar of his black cloak, and below the wide brim of his black slouch hat, The Shadow's eyes searched the highway. His ring, the rare fire opal girasol, flashed ever-changing fire even in the dark of the deserted highway. Finding nothing on the highway, The Shadow bent down to the body. His long fingers darted out and picked up a small, gold, heart-shaped watch charm.

The Shadow's glowing eyes studied the small trinket. It was engraved with the initials *S.A.*, and was heavily scratched. The Shadow replaced the charm where he had found it on the road near the body. His long fingers began to search the pockets of the dead man. Then he straightened up and listened. Voices were approaching from the direction of the nearest house.

Two people, an older man and woman, were running across the lawn of the nearest house toward the highway. The man was ten yards ahead of the woman, shouting back to her to hurry. As the older man emerged onto the highway near the body he stopped. His eyes widened as he saw the shrouded black figure of The Shadow bending over the dead man. The man opened his mouth to speak, and stopped.

The burning eyes of the mysterious crime fighter stared at the older man from under the slouch hat. The older man blinked, brushed his hand across his eyes, and shook his head. His brain seemed suddenly foggy, clouded as if by a thick mist. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

There was nothing on the highway but the dead body and the pool of drying blood.

The older woman stood beside the man. The man seemed puzzled as he looked across the highway to where the thick bushes were still moving as if someone had passed through them. The woman touched the man's arm.

"Ezra? Why did you stop?" the woman said.

"I thought.." the man began, and stopped again. "How did you catch up to me, Mary?"

"You were just standing here waiting," the woman said. The man tried to think. He could not. His mind, clouded by the power of The Shadow, remembered nothing but a vague sensation that was already fading. His wife's words entered his brain, and he turned to her.

"Of course, I was waiting for you," the man said. "He's obviously dead. You call the police, Mary. I'll stay here."

Less than an hour later the efficient Sea Gate police had come and gone and nothing remained on the highway to show that a man had died except a small spot of dried blood. The Highway Department would remove even that by morning. Sea Gate was an expensive resort, and blood on the highway was not attractive to tourists.

At Sea Gate Police Headquarters Sergeant Fred Morgan assigned his men to make out their routine reports on a hit-and-run accident, and to sort and record the effects of the victim. Morgan took the statements of the only two witnesses personally. The sergeant was a small, dark, efficient man.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Bolger of Sea Gate, is that correct?" Morgan said.

"If you don't know by now, Fred Morgan, you never will," the older man said testily.

"It was one of those 'hotrods' the teenagers drive," Mrs. Mary Bolger said. "I can tell by the sound. Those cars are a positive menace!"

The sergeant sighed with annoyance, and read from the typed statement of the Bolgers.

"You heard the motor very loud, then you heard the car come around the curve and you heard the impact. Then the car stopped for a few seconds before you heard it roar away. You're sure it stopped even for a second?"

"Of course we're sure!" Ezra Bolger snapped.

"And you don't recognize this watch charm?" Morgan said.

The sergeant held up the small, gold, heart-shaped charm engraved with the initials, *S.A.*

"No" Ezra Bolger said.

"Then presumably it belonged to the victim or the driver of the car," Morgan said.

"Or just about anyone else who drove along the highway in the last week!" Ezra Bolger said.

The sergeant disregarded that and continued to read the statement.

"You think you may have heard the car stop at the same spot perhaps three or four minutes earlier," Morgan read. He looked at the Bolgers. "Are you sure about that?"

"I'm sure I heard some car stop there a few minutes earlier," Bolger said. "Mary doesn't agree with me, so I could be wrong."

"And you can't really say if it was the same car?" Morgan pointed out.

"No, I suppose not," Bolger admitted. "But it had a motor that sounded a lot the same."

"Almost every teenager in town has a hotrod," Morgan said dryly. He read farther in the statement of the Bolgers. "You recognize the victim as a Mr. Jonson who rents a cottage on the far side of the golf course. As far as you know he's lived here off and on for about a year, and he played loud music at night."

"Never fished, sailed, or went swimming," Ezra Bolger said. "A very peculiar man. Unfriendly I'd call him. Just that damned loud music and driving around at night. Can't imagine what he was doing at that place on foot. Never saw Jonson walk anywhere if he could drive—"

"All right," Sergeant Morgan said. "Sign the statement and you can both go."

When the Bolgers had gone, Sergeant Morgan strolled over to the officer sorting the effects of the dead man. Morgan looked idly down at the small pile that included a wallet, a handkerchief, a few dollars and some loose change. What he saw made him stiffen. In the pile was a blue plastic square with the numeral "100" in the center and, smaller, at each corner.

The officer recording the possessions was inspecting the dead man's wallet.

"Hey, Sarge," this officer said, "didn't old Bolger say the dead guy's name was Jonson?"

"That's right, it is Jonson," Morgan said. "I know him."

"Well his wallet says he's Anton Pavlic, and he lived at 146 West Seventy-fourth Street in New York. Looks like a phony name."

Sergeant Fred Morgan seemed to consider this information. The officer holding the wallet looked away while Morgan thought. The sergeant deftly picked up the blue plastic square and slipped it into his pocket.

"Give it to the paper as Jonson," Morgan said as he walked away. "That's how he's known around here."

"Okay, Sarge," the officer said, and returned to his work. As he recorded the effects of the dead Jonson, he never noticed the missing plastic square.

Across the room Sergeant Fred Morgan grinned to himself. He was sure no one had seen him pocket the blue plaque. But Morgan never saw the two piercing eyes that watched him through the window from under a black slouch hat. He never saw the black-cloaked figure glide away from the window and across the lawn of the resort police station to a long, black car that waited hidden on a side street of Sea Gate.

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"ALL RIGHT, Stanley, back to New York. And quickly." The long, black car pulled smoothly away from the curb of the side street and was soon out of Sea Gate and driving along the Cape Ambrose highway. In the dark back seat The Shadow removed his ring, the long black cloak, and the soft slouch hat. Quickly and deftly the special garments were folded into amazingly small size and hidden in their secret places within the clothes of the man who now sat in the back seat. The man transformed was, wealthy socialite businessman Lamont Cranston, the well-known and successful friend of Police Commissioner Weston of New York.

Cranston, his immobile face and half-closed eyes a marked contrast to The Shadow's piercing gaze, turned to the woman sitting beside him in the back seat. His hawklike features were impassive, and his eyes steady and quiet as he looked at the beautiful, dark-haired woman.

"You can give me the details now, Margo," Cranston said quietly.

Margo Lane, private secretary to Lamont Cranston and close friend and operative of The Shadow, crossed her slim legs and frowned.

"I watched him all week, Lamont, just as you told me to," Margo said. "The waitress disguise fooled him, I'm sure he did not suspect me. But he knew that the others were watching him. Do you know who the others are yet, Lamont?"

"No, Margo," Cranston said. "The commissioner meets with the FBI man Altman in the morning. I will be there. Perhaps one of them will know why the others were watching Pavlic."

"Early this morning," Margo continued, "I saw him sneak into the back room. I followed and saw him use a secret door in the storeroom. The door led to an exit on Seventy-fifth street. He obviously used it often to leave the club. I'm sure even his wife, Helga, doesn't know it is there."

"The others didn't see him leave?" Cranston asked.

"Not as far as I know, Lamont," Margo said. "As you know, I followed him to Penn Station where he caught a train for Beach City. Then I called you. I lost his trail in Sea Gate just before you arrived this evening. I'm sorry, Lamont."

Cranston nodded and brushed his long fingers through his greying blond hair. A man in the prime of life, Cranston's every move showed the remarkable muscular control and great physical strength and agility of The Shadow. He lacked only one power of The Shadow. As Cranston, the fire was not in the deep, half-closed eyes.

The power of The Shadow's eyes, learned so long ago from the great Chen T'a Tze in the Orient, required the secret black cloak, the black slouch hat, and the fire opal girasol ring, to effect men's minds. The secret of the Master was of the mind, but could not be brought into play without the special garb and the amazing gem handed down to Lamont Cranston by the Master himself. With Chen T'a Tze dead, The Shadow was the last human to have the power. The

Master himself had charged Cranston to use the power wisely, and The Shadow had never betrayed that trust.

Now, the secret crime fighter, as Lamont Cranston, reached out his hand to comfort Margo.

"It was partly my fault, Margo," Cranston said softly. "When Stanley found where he was living as Jonson, we could have found him in time if that car had not revealed me in the highway. I waited too long after it passed. He was dead when I found him."

"Do you think it was an accident?" Margo said.

"Perhaps," Cranston said. "I found no evidence of murder. But it would be quite a coincidence."

"Possibly someone else-did follow him here," Margo said.

"Yes, or they could have been here waiting. It seems Stanley discovered that Pavlic had been coming down here for a year under the name of Jonson. And, Margo, that sergeant in the police station took something from Pavlic's effects and pocketed it. I couldn't see what it was."

"You think Pavlic and the sergeant were involved?"

"It's possible," Cranston said. "Perhaps I will find out more tomorrow. Somebody ran Pavlic down and killed him. It could have been an accident, but I doubt it."

Cranston sat back then, his hooded eyes deep in thought as the long car drove swiftly through the night toward New York where The Shadow hoped to learn more about the new evil he was fighting.

In the private room of New York's exclusive Cobalt Club, Lamont Cranston locked the door and turned to face his friend Police Commissioner Weston and the FBI agent Paul Altman. The FBI man was not pleased with Cranston's presence.

"Just what is Mr. Cranston doing in this case, Commissioner?" Altman said bluntly. "You know I'm working strictly under cover."

"Lamont often works for me on cases like this, not strictly police matters," Weston said. "After all, it was Lamont who uncovered the whole matter."

"How was that, Mr. Cranston?" Altman said. "You realize there is nothing personal in my objection. It's just that amateurs can be dangerous."

Lamont Cranston smiled to himself. His guise of an amateur crime fighter was one he had carefully built up over the years to hide his true identity as The Shadow. He had many other legitimate personalities that would have surprised Altman a great deal. But he said nothing of that, and only explained his present involvement.

"Years ago in Budapest I knew Bela Kodaly well," Cranston explained, without adding that it was as Kent Allard the famous explorer, another alter-ego of his, that he had known Kodaly. "He was a great surgeon. When I saw in the newspaper that a man named Dr. Pauli had committed suicide, I recognized the picture printed with the story. It was Bela Kodaly. He had changed his face, grown a mustache, but I recognized him."

"Then we discovered two other recent suicides of men who turned out to be in disguise," Commissioner Weston added.

Altman nodded and looked at a file he had open before him now on the long table in the private room. Altman picked up two photographs.

"Josef Brodski, under the alias of John Finch; and Nestor Mando, disguised as Nathan Meyer," Altman said as he looked at the photographs. "Brodski was a Russian aircraft designer before he vanished four years ago, and Mando was a double murderer. A Hungarian and two Russians, two of them important men and one a wanted criminal."

"All three in the country illegally and in hiding under false names and identities," Weston said. "Which is why we called the FBI in. Actually, of course, no crime has been committed except suicide and illegal entry."

Altman sighed, closed his file, and sat back in his chair to look out the high window of the Cobalt Club. The private room in the club had been chosen by Altman so that he would not be seen with Weston. His work, to this point, was all secret. It had also been fruitless.

"So far, that's all I have found in total," Altman said. "The fact that the three men were all brought into the country by Liberation Front, and that they all frequented the Club Zagreb and knew the owner of the Zagreb, Anton Pavlic, is all that connects them. If they knew each other, it was only under their false identities at the Club Zagreb."

"Three suicides within a few weeks, by three men from behind the Iron Curtain and in this country illegally and in disguise is too much coincidence," Weston said. "Especially when each of them frequented the same bar, the Club Zagreb, and only one of them even drank I"

"Much too much coincidence," Altman said.

The FBI man stood up and began to pace the rich carpet of the private room.

"We all realize the implications," Altman said as he paced. "Here are two men with skills and minds of great importance to the whole world, but they were lost to us because they were in hiding. Now they are lost for good. Why? The third man was so dangerous we should have been able to stop him before he harmed anyone else, but we couldn't because we did not know he was even in the country. Why? How did they get in, and why were two of them hiding?"

"And why did they kill themselves?" Cranston said. "How many more are there who may kill themselves before we can find them and save them from whatever is causing their desperation?"

"If only I hadn't let Pavlic give us the slip," Altman said. "He's our only real lead. I watched that Club Zagreb inside and out for two weeks, but he eluded me yesterday. Pavlic is our only connection to the three men. We have to find him."

"I'm afraid that won't be possible," Commissioner Weston said. "I got the report just before I came here. Anton Pavlic was killed by a hit-and-run driver last night at Sea Gate, New Jersey."

Altman stopped pacing. The FBI man seemed stunned. Lamont Cranston also appeared shocked. Cranston had no intention of revealing how much more he knew of the death of Anton Pavlic, or that Pavlic had not completely succeeded in eluding The Shadow. His foresight in placing Margo in the Club Zagreb as a waitress had at least brought him to the scene of the "accident," even if a little late.

"Hit-and-run?" Altman said.

"According to the report," Weston said. "They seem satisfied in Sea Gate."

"Well I'm not!" Altman snapped. "Our only real link! It's too convenient for someone. I lost Pavlic, but perhaps the others I saw watching him didn't. That scarfaced man, for example. Have you traced him?"

"Not yet," Weston said.

"What do we know about Liberation Front?" Cranston said. "They did bring all three men to this country."

"Under their false identities though, Cranston," Altman said. "Their papers were in perfect order. Short of going behind the Iron Curtain, their records check back to long before Liberation Front found them, even their fingerprints. All three had birth records, army records, everything. All in their false identities. Someone did a thorough job."

"Just what is Liberation Front?" Cranston asked.

"I can tell you that, Lamont," Weston said. "I've met their director, Count Istvan Papescu, many times. He works for many refugee causes. Actually, Liberation Front functions as a sort of clearing house to help refugees get out of Iron Curtain countries and into this country, or anywhere else they want to go. The Front gives them financial aid, helps them find work and homes, and generally smooths their start in a new life."

"They've been operating since just after World War II," Altman said. "As far as we know, they're legitimate."

"And yet they brought in three men we know of who were hiding under false identities," Cranston said.

"We are checking them," Altman said. "But this looks to me more like the work of a big international ring. I'm afraid the answer is somewhere overseas, before the men ever got into the hands of Liberation Front."

Cranston ran his long fingers through his light hair, his heavy eyes deep in thought. The muscles moved fluidly beneath his expansive suit, and for an instant there was a flash of The Shadow's gaze in his eyes.

"Perhaps you are right about Liberation Front," Cranston said, "but I think the answer is closer to home. It may be down at Sea Gate. Remember, other people have been watching Pavlic closely. Someone is worried. Enough, possibly, to have murdered Pavlic."

Altman nodded. "At least two other groups of watchers, I'd say. And all since those suicides. But wait a minute Commissioner, when did you say Pavlic was killed?"

"Last night about ten o'clock."

"But I was still watching the Club Zagreb this morning," Altman said, "and so were the other men! The scarfaced man was still there, and so were the two in the raincoats. With Pavlic dead, why are they still watching the Zagreb?"

"Could it be that they lost Pavlic too?" Weston said. "That they have no connection with his death? Perhaps it was a hit-and-run accident."

"Perhaps, Commissioner," Cranston said, "but I think not. As Altman observed, it is far too convenient for someone. Too many people were interested in Pavlic."

"They're probably trying to throw us off by continuing to watch," Altman said. "Hoping we'll think it means they don't know Pavlic is dead."

Lamont Cranston seemed to be studying something on the ceiling of the private room. His hawklike features were somber as he leaned back in his chair and looked up. His half-hidden eyes were heavy with concentration.

"It's very strange, but it almost seems that the killer did not know that Pavlic was under observation," Cranston said. "The hit-and-run cover-up would make more sense if the killer did not know that Pavlic was suspected of anything."

"They probably want us to think that, too," Altman said grimly. "We're up against a clever organization, probably more than one organization, with tentacles that reach even behind the Iron Curtain--"

"And Pavlic was our only lead," Commissioner Weston said.

"I think he still is," Lamont Cranston said. "Pavlic was important enough, or dangerous enough, to someone to be killed. Murder creates a weakness in any organization, it reveals a chink in their armor they are desperate to hide. If we know who killed Pavlic, and why, we will know what is behind the three suicides and the false identities."

Altman was pacing the floor again. Now he stopped as Cranston spoke. The FBI man nodded.

"Cranston is right," Altman said. "The murder of Pavlic is the key. I'll go down to Sea Gate immediately. For the moment I prefer to stay under cover. Commissioner, can you put some pressure on the police at Sea Gate to look a little deeper into the accident— it might make our killer nervous."

Weston agreed. "I'll send Detective Joe Cardona down. Sea Gate is officially part of Beach City even though they have their local police. For major felonies the Beach City detectives have jurisdiction."

"Cardona can be my contact man," Altman said.

"Isn't that dangerous, Altman?" Cranston said. "A real detective for a contact? Perhaps I would be a better contact. I would be glad to go down to Sea Gate and help."

Altman considered this, and then nodded approval.

"All right, Cranston," Altman said, "but be careful, we're dealing with killers."

Lamont Cranston smiled to himself at Altman's warning. The Shadow has ways of dealing with killers. With this logical explanation for Cranston's presence in Sea Gate provided, he excused himself and left Altman and the Commissioner to work out their police details. At the moment he was more interested in the Club Zagreb and the men who were still on watch despite the death of Pavlic.

Outside the private room, Cranston strode to the nearest telephone. He chose a pay telephone to avoid going through the Cobalt Club switchboard. When he spoke into the telephone his voice had the grim timbre of The Shadow.

In the blue light of The Shadow's secret headquarters room, Burbank, The Shadow's contact man, listened to the instructions of his chief.

3

WEST SEVENTY-FOURTH STREET between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues in New York is a block of mixed pedigree. Newly renovated buildings of small but comfortable apartments stand next to shabby rooming houses where lone men live a bare existence waiting patiently for death.

Air-conditioners jut from the windows of the better buildings, and there are double locks on the doors of the good apartments. In the rooming houses the lone men, and the poor and exploited Puerto Ricans, sit at open windows on an August day to find the air that never enters their grey rooms. No doors are locked in the rooming houses, there is nothing to steal.

The area is one of many languages and many taverns and clubs. There are dim cocktail lounges where well-dressed men sit with their highly paid career women. There are grimy taverns where the lone men stare at their own faces in dirty mirrors. There are expensive bars where faded women wait alone and smile when a man approaches. And there are the continental "cafes" and clubs filled with the babble of strange words. One of these is the Club Zagreb, owned by the dead Anton Pavlic.

The Club Zagreb is on the ground floor of a renovated building. There are apartments above it, one of which was the home of Anton Pavlic and his wife Helga. The Zagreb backs on an open areaway, but there is no apparent exit from the Zagreb into the areaway. From the areaway itself there is an exit to the street through the cellar of a building on Seventy-fifth Street.

The Club Zagreb stands between a rooming house where shadowy people hide their faces and come and go all night, and a building that once housed the headquarters of the *26th Julio* Organization of Fidel Castro. The same set of rooms now houses the opponents of the Cuban leader who are waiting for their turn. The Cubans do not go into the Club Zagreb where the patrons are mostly Europeans, refugees from many wars over many years.

This is an area where the people mind their own business. It is simpler that way, and safer. Each person, each group, is separate and isolated. When a taxicab drove up to the Club Zagreb and parked a half a block away, no one who passed noticed or glanced at it. The driver of the taxi sat with his cap down over his eyes as if asleep. The meter of the taxi was running, the top light out, until a tall, blonde woman came out of the Club Zagreb.

The taxi driver sat alert, flipped off his meter so that the top light went on to show that the taxi was avail. able, and drove up to the blonde woman. As if distracted, I the blonde woman had not noticed the taxi had been waiting. All she saw was an available cab. She got in and told the driver to take her to Pennsylvania Station. The driver nodded, flipped his meter down, and drove off.

No one who lived in the neighborhood really saw the chain of events set into motion when the blonde woman entered the taxi.

A tall man, with a long scar on the left side of his face from his mouth to his ear, left the shadows of a doorway across the street from the Club Zagreb. The scar-faced man ran to the curb and waved. A long, black car pulled up the curb before the scarfaced man. The man jumped into the car and drove off after the taxi that carried the blonde woman.

At the same moment, two men who wore raincoats with high collars and hats pulled low over their faces, despite the heat of the morning, emerged from a building next to the Club Zagreb. These two men hailed another passing taxi. They spoke rapidly to the driver of the taxi. This second taxi drove off after the black car and the first taxi.

Before either the second taxi or the large black car had gone a block, a smaller car pulled away from the curb on Amsterdam Avenue and joined the pursuit. There were two men in this car. Both men wore hats despite the heat. One of these men spoke into a telephone in the car. This smaller black car was unmarked, but almost anyone in this neighborhood could have guessed it was a New York City police car.

Finally, a pretty waitress came out of the Club Zagreb and stood on the hot sidewalk looking after all the departed vehicles. Then she walked back into the Club Zagreb and quickly to a telephone.

In the first taxi, the one that carried the blonde woman and that had set the whole chain in motion, the driver talked as he drove down Columbus Avenue toward Pennsylvania Station. The driver was a small, peppery man with dark hair beneath his cabby's cap. He chattered amiably and volubly. The blonde woman, dressed all in black, did not seem to hear. She stared out the window, but did not appear to see where she was. She had seen nothing of all the interest displayed in her ride in the taxi.

The driver had missed nothing. Despite his constant chatter, he had seen the cars and other taxi behind him from the instant they had begun their pursuit. Now, as he talked on, his eyes were on his rearview mirror. He began to drive faster. Suddenly, he began to make sharp turns, to double back down streets he had passed. Slowly, the blonde woman became aware of what the driver was doing. She leaned forward.

"What are you doing, driver!" She said excitedly.

The taxi driver said nothing. He watched his rearview mirror and continued his fast, evasive tactics. The woman stared out the window of the taxi.

"I told you Pennsylvania Station. This is not the way!" Still the driver said nothing, until, after a series of particularly sharp turns and then a long, straight run down Third Avenue, he sat back and smiled. The taxi now drove steadily down Third Avenue.

"Stop this taxi!" the woman said. "I will have you arrested I"

The driver ignored her. He made a turn into a side street off Third Avenue, and stopped. He turned to face the woman in black. There was a small, ugly automatic in his hand.

"All right, Mrs. Pavlic, you can get out now," the driver said. "Quick! In the building there." The woman, her eyes wide as she looked at the automatic in the driver's hand, began to protest.

"Quietly," the driver said.

The woman, Helga Pavlic, got out. The driver prodded her ahead of him into the building. Inside the door she found that she was in a deserted apartment. She began to turn to look at the driver when a hand was clamped over her nose. The hand held a thick gauze pad soaked with some pungent liquid. Helga Pavlic struggled for only a second before she slumped back into the arms of the taxi driver.

The driver pocketed his automatic, and half dragged, half carried the woman out into the street and back into his taxi. He drove across the city, and turned up Park Avenue. He drove until he reached a tall office building on Park Avenue in the fifties. It was an older office building. The driver walked the woman into the building through the service entrance.

If anyone saw the driver and the woman, they only smiled to see a cab driver helping a drunken woman.

Helga Pavlic opened her eyes. She was seated in a deep, soft chair. She blinked and touched her head as if she expected to feel pain. She felt nothing at all. She was fully conscious in an instant, clear-headed, without any apparent ill effects from the drug at all. The room in which she sat was lighted with a dim blue light that seemed to come from nowhere. Helga blinked again. Then she began to stand up, her mouth open to scream.

"Do not be afraid, Helga!"

The voice was in the room but Helga Pavlic could see no one. Her eyes searched the blue gloom but there were only deep black shadows in the dim blue room. But the strange voice was somehow soothing. Helga sat back in the soft chair. The unseen voice chuckled lightly.

"That is much better. How do you feel?"

"You drugged me!" Helga remembered. "That cab driver!"

"One of my helpers, Helga. I have many helpers," the eerie voice said. "The drug will have no ill effects. It is a special substance I found in Africa, completely harmless."

"Who are you! What do you want?" Helga Pavlic said, her face turned in the dim blue room toward where she thought the voice came from. "Why did you stop me? I have to catch a train, my husband. ."

The mysterious voice stopped her. There was movement in the room, a stirring of the shadows. A giant figure seemed to loom up before Helga Pavlic.

"I am The Shadow, Helga," the powerful voice said. "I am a friend or an enemy depending on you."

"What do you . . want?" the woman faltered.

"Justice, Helga, and perhaps vengeance."

"Justice?" Helga Pavlic said.

Suddenly Helga saw, directly before her, a face and two burning eyes that seemed to float above her in the dark room. From somewhere unseen a thin beam of light illuminated the head and shoulders of the man before her. The face was hidden below a strong, eagle-like nose. The piercing eyes seemed to transfix Helga from beneath the wide brim of a black slouch hat. A sweeping black cloak shrouded the shoulders of the man before her, and blended away into the dim blue light.

"Justice for your husband, Helga," The Shadow said.

"My husband?" Helga said. She seemed to be trying to think. "My husband is dead. They called me. I have to go to identify him, bring him back, he was in an accident, he. . ."

"It was no accident, Helga," the voice of The Shadow said.

The woman blinked. "No," she said, "it was not an accident. They say it was an accident, but I know better. Not Anton. He would not die by accident. I know."

"Tell me about Anton," The Shadow said. "All you know and can remember. Tell me everything, Helga. I have to know everything."

The voice of The Shadow was low and strong in the dim blue light of the hidden room. Helga Pavlic began to nod, the low voice soothing her. The blonde woman nodded and began to talk in a quiet, steady voice as if speaking to some old friend in a warm living room.

"I loved him," Helga Pavlic said. "He was not a good man, but I loved him. We are Yugoslavs, Anton and I. We were married many years ago in Zagreb. We were happy when we lived in Zagreb, but the Nazis came and we moved to Belgrade. Anton did dangerous work. First for the Cbetnik and then for the Partisans of Marshal Tito. Many of our friends were caught, but we were not.

"After the war Anton worked for a time for the government of Marshal Tito. One day he came home and said that we must leave. I do not know why, but he was in great danger. He said he had been helping refugees to escape from the Russians. We went to Greece. Anton worked for a refugee organization, Liberation Front. Always he changed his name. He worked under many names.

"From Greece we went to Turkey, then to France, then to England. One day, in England, Anton told me we must move again. He was not working for Liberation Front any more. We came to America. That was two years ago. We opened the Club Zagreb. I picked the name because it was, I think, the last place where I was happy. We made a living, but we do not become rich. For a time I was happy again, almost as I was a long time ago in the real Zagreb."

Helga Pavlic stopped. The blonde woman stared into the dim blue room. She seemed to be seeing something, perhaps Zagreb and the happy days of her youth, or the time she had had only a year ago when she had been almost happy again. The piercing eyes of The Shadow watched Helga from beneath the wide brim of his slouch hat. The burning eyes were hard and grim as The Shadow listened to the life of Anton Pavlic. Helga Pavlic sighed.

"A year ago the frightened men began to come to the Zagreb. They talked to Anton, but they were not his friends. I do not know who they were. I think they gave Anton money. A year ago Anton began to disappear. For days he would be gone. I do not know where he went. Anton was not a man to tell what he did with women. But I know he had money that was not from the Club. Then, two weeks ago, the men began to watch.

"I saw them, the men who watched. They would stand across the street and watch our door all day and all night. There were many of them. Four sometimes, perhaps five. I could see that Anton was worried. He spoke to me of South America. I knew the way he spoke. He was

thinking we would have to move again. I am sure he planned to go away soon, but then he disappeared and last night he died."

In the silence of the dim blue room Helga Pavlic held her face in her hands. The woman's shoulders moved as if she were crying, but she did not cry. The Shadow watched her. She raised her head.

"I do not think it was an accident," Helga Pavlic said.

"Anton worked for Liberation Front?" The Shadow asked.

"Yes, for many years, perhaps four or five years. Until England."

"What did he do for them?"

"Anton never told me. He was an accountant by trade. He worked in their offices, but I think he also did other things."

"Why did he leave them?"

"I do not know."

"You don't know who the men were who came to the Club Zagreb?"

"No."

"Or the men who were watching Anton?"

"No," Helga said, and hesitated. "Perhaps one of them, the man with the scar. I think such a man was a friend of Anton many years ago in Istanbul."

"And you don't know where Anton went the times he vanished this past year, or why?" The Shadow asked.

"No," Helga said, and hesitated again. "I loved Anton, and he always came back to me, but there were women. I knew there were women. All our life he was away much, and there were women. But each time he came back to me. I waited. Now he will not come back."

"Do you think there was a woman this time?"

"How can I tell?" Helga said. "He was a strong man, women liked him. I watched them come into the Zagreb. Old women who tried to look young. Young women who tried to look older. Married women whose husbands could not dazzle like Anton. So many, how can I tell? Perhaps he had a woman somewhere. But I think it was more the money. He was afraid, I know he was. He was not a man to fear women."

Helga Pavlic sat in the soft chair, her shoulders limp, her body slumped as if the effort of talking had made her weak. She stared into space in the dim blue room. The Shadow watched her and thought about Anton Pavlic. A man of many countries, many women, and many names. A man who died with a false name. A man who had many other men watching him, who had unexplained money, who had known three men who killed themselves in hiding. A man whose friends had a way of dying even as long ago as Belgrade and the war. A man who had run from country to country many times.

"All right, Helga," The Shadow said softly, "now you will go to Sea Gate to identify Anton. You will not remember this room or what has happened here."

"Will you help me? Will you avenge Anton?"

"I avenge all wrong," The Shadow said. "And I punish all evil."

Helga Pavlic nodded. She smiled at the hooded figure of The Shadow. Then she rubbed her eyes as she stared at the burning gaze of The Shadow. Slowly she sat back and her head fell forward onto her chest. The Shadow glided to her, looked down at her sleeping form, and then turned and crossed in swift silence to a blank wall of the hidden room. The Shadow touched the wall, and vanished through the wall itself as if swallowed up.

4

LAMONT CRANSTON let the section of bookcase close behind him. He stood in his private office high up in the Park Avenue office building. The bookcase behind him showed no trace of a door, nor of the passageway that led to the secret room behind it. Cranston strode to his desk and sat down facing Margo Lane and the small, peppery taxi driver.

"All right, Shrevvy," Cranston said to the driver, "you can take her to Penn Station now. She's asleep, so take her out the secret elevator the way you brought her in."

"Will she remember?" Moe Shrevnitz, the taxi driver, asked.

"Very little," Cranston said. "She will have a vague idea, but she will say nothing. She's too afraid to talk. The more they are afraid, Shrevvy, the greater power The Shadow has over them."

"What about those men who tailed me?" Moe Shrevnitz said. "I think I lost them okay, but maybe you want me to find them?"

"We'll find them soon enough," Cranston said.

Shrevnitz nodded. The driver, "Shrevvy" to his close friend and boss Lamont Cranston, or The Shadow, vanished through the secret door in the bookcase. When Shrevvy had gone to take Helga Pavlic to Pennsylvania Station, Lamont Cranston turned grimly to his confidential secretary and helper, Margo Lane.

"Pavlic begins to sound like a very evil man, Margo."

Cranston repeated all that Helga Pavlic had told him. Margo listened intently, her slim legs crossed, her dark hair framing her intelligent face. Margo was not tall, but the poise of her lithe frame made her seem taller than she was. She had come far from her home in Denver, Colorado, to become all but Cranston's right hand. Her brief background in the theater after leaving college had given her the maturity and poise to go with her beauty, in addition to training her to assume the many disguises she used to help The Shadow. Now she leaned forward in her chair to listen closely.

"It's my guess," Cranston said, "that Pavlic worked for the Nazis when he was with the Yugoslav Partisans, probably for the Communists, too. He used many names, and he was always running. He sounds very much like a spy, or at least an agent, and probably for more than one side at the same time."

"A double agent," Margo said. "It's not uncommon these days, Lamont."

"Possibly a triple agent," Cranston said. "From Helga's story he was in contact with more than one group as well as with our refugees with the false identities. The question is, what groups was he working for in this country, and why were so many people watching him?"

"What about Liberation Front?" Margo said.

"Possibly he was a spy hidden in their midst," Cranston said. "The Communists like to infiltrate organizations that help refugees. Remember, Margo, all three of our suicides were men from Iron Curtain countries."

"You think Pavlic was working for the Communists against those refugees who were in hiding?"

"Very possibly, Margo," Cranston replied. "Those men were in hiding for some reason—probably because they feared the Reds in their own countries. Two of the suicides were valuable

men whom they almost certainly would have wanted back. The other, the convicted killer, they would undoubtedly have wanted in their own hands."

"They always hate to lose valuable people even if those people hate them," Margo said.

Cranston agreed. "But just now I'd like to know more about why Pavlic left Liberation Front, and what he did there. The people at Liberation Front may be able to give me a clue to what Pavlic was doing. And in the meantime, Margo, I want you to go back to the Club Zagreb and watch. The FBI man, Altman, will probably start back at the Club Zagreb, watch him too."

"I've seen him in there," Margo said. "Does he know about me?"

"No, Margo, and I don't want him to yet. Just report to me if anything happens to him."

"All right, Lamont," Margo said. "What excuse will you use at Liberation Front?"

"I don't think the wealthy Lamont Cranston will need an excuse to visit an organization that raises funds for good works," Cranston said with a smile.

Cranston did *not* need an excuse to be welcome at Liberation Front. Heads turned in the ground floor windows of the office when he drove up in his limousine. Stanley leaped out, in full chauffeur regalia, to open the car door for Cranston. Stanley looked every inch the well-trained servant with not a single bulge or mark on his uniform to show the automatic, blackjack, and complete set of picklocks he carried in case The Shadow required assistance.

Cranston strode through the glass-and-chrome doors of Liberation Front. The organization, which occupied two floors of the midtown building, was obviously doing well, and appeared to have little to hide. A large map with colored pins in nations all across the world showed the far-flung nature of its activities. A very blonde receptionist smiled her best smile at Cranston.

"Can I help you, sir?" thy blonde purred.

"Lamont Cranston to see Mr. Papescu," Cranston said, and added with an appreciative smile, "I had no idea Liberation Front was quite so large an operation."

"Oh we work *everywhere*," the blonde beamed. "I'll tell the count you're here."

The blonde manipulated her intercom. After a brief conversation, she nodded toward a distant elevator.

"Count Papescu will be glad to see you, Mr. Cranston. The private elevator is to your right."

Cranston nodded his thanks and walked to the elevator. In the elevator, Cranston noted that the silent operator was not quite as friendly as the pretty blonde receptionist. But the man gave no evidence of being more than what he seemed. Cranston managed to bump the operator in the chest as he left. He detected no gun hidden under the operator's uniform. As he stepped from the elevator, he faced the smiling face of a small, dapper man who wore an expensive suit of a continental cut.

"Mr. Cranston, an honor sir!" the small man said.

The small man's face was pink. A pink and shiny face as if the dapper man had just stepped out from under hot towels in a barber shop. The faint trace of talcum powder near the man's ears confirmed Cranston's guess. The small man had indeed just been barbered, and now he extended his manicured hand. The grip that held Cranston's hand was unexpectedly strong. There was muscle under the dapper exterior and continental suit of the small man.

"Istvan Papescu?" Cranston guessed.

"Of course! Do I send a secretary to greet Lamont Cranston? Only last week I spoke to Commissioner Weston and he mentioned you. A friend of the Commissioner is always a most welcome visitor."

The small man was ushering Cranston into his office as he was talking. The office was large and furnished with taste, but it was neither opulent nor ostentatious. It was the office of the chief of an organization that dealt with important people but which depended on financial help for its existence. Cranston's hooded eyes saw nothing unusual or suspicious as he sat in a deep armchair and faced the small man behind his desk.

"You have a nice office, Count Papescu," Cranston remarked.

"Thank you," Count Istvan Papescu said. "I try in my small way to make pleasant surroundings, yes? There is so little beauty in this grim world of ours."

Papescu's voice was smooth and cultured. A voice with the texture of soft, rich silk. There was only the faintest trace of an accent. The small accent, plus the occasional inversion of words, were all that betrayed Papescu's European origin. The name, Cranston knew, was Rumanian, but even Cranston's keen ear and knowledge of languages found it hard to exactly place Papescu's accent.

"So little beauty or truth," Cranston said, "or do you believe with the poet Keats that those are the same things?"

Papescu smiled. "The English are such romantics, and so serious. The truth is so rarely beautiful these days."

"If we know the truth, Count Papescu," Cranston said.

The count threw up his manicured hands. "Ah, there, you have talked with my most beautiful receptionist, yes? The title is my small conceit. A habit I am afraid, a whim I find hard to change. A trifling vanity, yes, but perhaps it is time for me to discard such things. Alas, I have not been a real count for many years."

"It's probably impressive in your work," Cranston said drily. Papescu did not seem to notice the tone of Cranston's statement.

"How can I be a count when my country is not free?" Papescu said. "Rumania was my home, Mr. Cranston but there is no more Rumania, not to me. A Communist country is not my country."

"So you help the victims of the Communists?" Cranston asked.

"A count must be the 'count' of something," Papescu said. "A count must have land, an estate, a position to uphold, his people to help. Before the war I was a real count. Now it is all gone. The Reds came to Rumania and now I am a count in name only. Now I fight the Red swine. A Rumanian count was trained to serve his people, Mr. Cranston."

"Was Pavlic a Communist, Count Papescu?" Cranston asked. "Is that why you had to let him go?"

Papescu seemed, for a moment, to be seeing his lost lands and powers in prewar Rumania. The small man glared angrily into the rich air of his office. Then he blinked, and turned to look at Cranston. His small eyes seemed puzzled as if he were trying to understand what Cranston had said. "Pavlic?" Papescu said. "Who would Pavlic be, Mr. Cranston?"

"A man Commissioner Weston is interested in. I'm not sure why, but when I told the Commissioner I was coming to see you he asked me to inquire about Pavlic. Anton Pavlic, it seems he was killed last night, a nasty accident."

"I am sorry, of course," Papescu said. "But I do not quite understand why you ask me about this Pavlic?"

"Apparently he worked for you," Cranston said.

"Worked? For me?" Papescu knitted his brows in thought. "No, I recall no Pavlic. But, then, we are a large organization as you saw from the map downstairs. It is possible he worked for us, and I did not know. Allow me to consult our records."

Papescu pressed a button on his desk. Immediately the office door opened and a tall, very efficient looking man came into the office. The man had broad shoulders under his suit, and moved lightly with the ease of a prizefighter. A good light-heavyweight, Cranston estimated, just a bit too tall to have been a first-rate light-heavyweight. The man's arms hung alert the way a boxer's arms do, and Cranston noted the well-hidden evidence of a broken nose. The surgeon who had worked on the nose had done a good job, but Cranston was sure that the man's nose had been broken at some time.

"Yes, Count Papescu," the man said.

"Arnold, I want you to have our files checked for a possible former employee. One Anton . . ." The count looked at Cranston.

"Pavlic," Cranston said. "Anton Pavlic, a Yugoslav. He supposedly worked for you first in Greece, later in Turkey, Paris, and London."

"Immediately, sir," the tall man said.

As the tall man turned to go, Cranston nodded to Count Papescu, and indicated the tall man with a gesture of his hand.

"Your assistant was a boxer once, am I right?" Cranston said.

"Arnold?" Papescu said. "Ah, yes, the broken nose. No, Mr. Cranston, like many of us at Liberation Front, Arnold had his differences with the Communists. The broken nose was a result. Arnold, this is Mr. Lamont Cranston, he is interested in our work. Mr. Cranston, I would like you to meet my secretary, Arnold Beckmann."

The explanation was logical, and the tall man, Arnold Beckmann, appeared to have the proper efficiency for a secretary. Cranston knew that male secretaries were not at all uncommon in Europe, in fact many European businessmen preferred male secretaries, especially the highest officials of large companies. It was a practice that was growing even in America. But Papescu had mentioned the broken nose as if the nose had been noted, and commented on, before. And it was not the nose alone that made Arnold seem like an ex-prizefighter. On the other hand, Cranston had to admit that there was no real reason why Papescu's secretary should not be an ex-boxer. Many men boxed in their youth.

"My honor, sir," Arnold said, bowing.

The secretary left, closing the door silently behind him. Behind his desk, Count Papescu smiled as he appeared to study Lamont Cranston. He cracked his knuckles and leaned back in his desk chair. The count's eyes were shrewd and penetrating.

"You have a quick eye for detail, Mr. Cranston. The surgery on Arnold's nose is excellent, and yet you noted that it had been broken," Papescu said. "Perhaps you are more than you seem, yes?"

"I was a boxer myself," Cranston said. "I have an eye for broken noses."

"Ah, of course, then that explains it," Papescu said, "And you are here simply to ask a minor question for Commissioner Weston?"

"No, not at all," Cranston said. "As I said, I told the Commissioner that I was coming to see you. He asked me to inquire about Pavlic. Actually, your organization interests me, and I would like to know more about it. That's why I came."

"You wish to know how Liberation Front functions?" Papescu said. "Are you considering a contribution?"

"Money carries a responsibility, Count Papescu," Cranston said. "Don't you agree?"

"Of course," Papescu said. "Well, while we wait for Arnold, perhaps I can help you. Briefly, we are organized to aid refugees who escape from behind the Iron Curtain. We have been organized for this work since before the name 'Iron Curtain' was created by Mr. Churchill. I personally started our operation immediately after the war. The Reds had already begun their postwar purges, and many people needed help.

"We were small then, but it was easier to escape the Reds in those days, and I had my personal fortune which I used then. Now, of course, we have many willing contributors. We help ease the first days in the West for the refugees, provide transportation, help them settle where they would like to live, and generally get them started again with financial aid. We keep in contact so that we can continue to help. The adjustment is not always easy, Mr. Cranston."

"I can well imagine," Cranston said. "A strange country, a new language, the problems of displacement."

"There are many problems," Papescu agreed. "But we are a large organization now, we have offices or contacts everywhere. We are even in operation behind the Iron Curtain. Today we do not always wait for a man to escape, we go in and help him. That, of course, is not for publication, you understand, yes? Our people work in great danger in Red countries."

Before Cranston could comment, Arnold returned. The male secretary glided so quietly he seemed almost to appear in the room without having opened the door. Arnold carried a thin file folder which he placed on the desk in front of Papescu. Arnold spoke only to Papescu without once looking at Cranston.

"Anton Pavlic worked for us in Athens, Istanbul, Paris and London," Arnold reported. "He was employed as an accountant in all the offices. He had knowledge of refugee problems, he was a refugee himself, and on occasion worked on contacting people behind the Curtain. The dossier shows that he was discharged for being drunk and too frequently late to work. That was two years ago in London. There is no further record."

"Thank you, Arnold," Papescu said, nodding dismissal.

When Arnold had once more left the office, Papescu sat with the folder on Pavlic in his hand. The small count studied the dossier briefly, his face set in a frown. His manicured fingers began to drum on his desk top. As he read the dossier, Papescu nodded slowly. His frowning face turned toward Cranston.

"I must apologize for not knowing Pavlic by name. I do not usually handle staff details, you understand? However, I *do* remember this particular case. An annoying matter."

The count continued to frown and drum on his desk with his fingers.

"The dossier says that we discharged him from our employ for being drunk and late. It also says he was an accountant. In a way both statements are true. He was an accountant, and he was often drunk and late. However, there was more to it. I remember the incident clearly.

"We had reason to suspect that Pavlic had been a Red spy for many years. By sheer accident I discovered that he used false names, and was often seen with suspicious people, yes? I instituted an investigation. We turned up very little, but it became clear that Pavlic, if that was his real name, had been using false names for a long time. There were some peculiar coincidences of refugees vanishing in the places where Pavlic worked.

"We had no actual proof, or even definite suspicions, but we cannot afford to take chances with the lives of the people we help, you understand? It is the simple truth that the Communists make a practice of infiltrating free organizations such as ours. As a result I instructed that he be discharged. The excuse was simple to find."

Cranston had been listening carefully. Papescu's story checked with Helga Pavlic's story in almost every detail. The only one who could have added any details was Pavlic himself. But the man was now dead, and he did not seem to have been a man who confided in his wife. Behind his hooded eyes, Cranston considered the small count. It was clear that Papescu would not tell more, if there were anything more that the count *could* tell about Pavlic.

"You had no further contact with Pavlic?" Cranston asked.

"None that I know," Papescu said. The small man consulted the dossier in front of him on the desk. "He appears to have been a man afraid of something, yes? Our records show that his continual transfer from office to office was at his own request. Apparently someone finally caught up with him, eh?"

"Apparently," Cranston said. "Except that from what the Commissioner told me I gather that Pavlic's death seems to be a simple accident."

"Ah yes, an accident," Papescu said. "So you said. Does it not seem odd to you that the Police Commissioner is so interested in a simple accident?"

"It hadn't occurred to me," Cranston said innocently.

"Really, Mr. Cranston?" Papescu said, his small eyes studying Cranston now. "Perhaps not, but let me say one thing: If Anton Pavlic died violently, I would look for his friends. I am still of the opinion that he worked for the Communists, and it is my experience that the Communists have a way of arranging accidents."

Cranston stood up. "I'll tell the Commissioner what you said, Count Papescu, and thank you for your time."

"My pleasure, Mr. Cranston," Papescu said. The small count smiled. "And you will let me know when your interest in our organization turns into a more tangible contribution, yes?"

"Of course," Cranston said.

As Cranston walked from Papescu's office, and down the carpeted hall toward the private elevator, he noted that Arnold had immediately gone back into Papescu's office. Cranston's hawklike features frowned as he rode down in the elevator. He had the definite impression that he had not fooled Papescu about his interest in Liberation Front. The small count was not so easily fooled, it seemed.

In his limousine, Cranston nodded to Stanley. "Club Zagreb next, Stanley."

Cranston sat back to think. Papescu was an intelligent man, and it was possible that the count was right-the place to look for Pavlic's killer, if there were a killer, was among the dead man's friends.

5

STANLEY spoke without turning his head.

"I think we're being followed, Boss."

"Can you see details?" Cranston said.

Stanley watched in his rearview mirror without moving his head an inch.

"Not much," Stanley said. "A big, black car. Foreign, I'd say. Could be a Mercedes. Can't make out the driver."

"License number?" Cranston said.

"No, must have the plate on the back. I'm not sure it is following, but it's got that feeling, you know?"

"All right, Stanley, let him follow for a time," Cranston said.

Deftly, Cranston produced a small mirror from a pocket in the seat of the limousine. He held it so that he could see behind him without moving. The black car was moving at the same speed as his limousine, about three cars back. It held its place, exactly three cars back, all the way uptown. As his limousine neared Amsterdam Avenue and Seventy-second Street, Cranston was about to instruct Stanley to lose the car before stopping at the Club Zagreb when the Suspicious car suddenly turned off toward Riverside Drive and vanished down a side street.

"Maybe I was wrong, Boss," Stanley said. "He's gone."

"Perhaps," Cranston said.

In the back seat Cranston's hawklike face was impassive. Possibly it was simple coincidence that the black car had followed all the way uptown. On the other hand, now that they were so close to the Club Zagreb, it would have been a simple deduction for the driver to decide that Cranston was going to the Zagreb. By turning off, the driver of the black car risked being wrong and losing Cranston, but if the driver had any reason to think he might have been noticed it would have been worth the risk to convince Cranston that he was not being followed.

"Circle the block and park on Seventy-fifth Street, Stanley," Cranston said.

Cranston left Stanley in the limousine and walked to the Club Zagreb. His deceptively placid eyes searched the street around the Zagreb. He noticed a tall man with a long scar on his face apparently loitering casually on the steps of a house across the street from the Zagreb. He noticed no one else of any interest.

Cranston walked into the Club Zagreb and sat casually at a table. He noticed Altman, the FBI man, the moment he entered. Altman was alone at a table and looking very much the denizen of coffee houses and cafes. The FBI man gave no sign of recognition. Cranston ordered an espresso coffee from the pretty, dark-haired waitress. The waitress brought the coffee and went away. No one watching could have guessed that the waitress and Cranston were known to each other. Cranston sipped his coffee for a time, and then strolled casually back to the men's room. His passive eyes took in the entire room at a glance. No one was watching him, not even Altman. He slipped into the kitchen through the door next to the men's room.

Margo Lane, the waitress, was waiting for him.

"Anything to report, Margo?" Cranston asked.

"The man with the scar is still across the street watching," Margo said,

"I saw him."

"The FBI man, Altman, has been outside drinking coffee all morning," Margo said. "No one notices him, he's been in the club regularly in the mornings for weeks."

"He's a clever agent," Cranston said. "If anyone comes here who knows Pavlic is dead, he would have been noticed if he didn't show up this morning after establishing himself as a regular customer."

"I'm not sure I would have thought of that," Margo said. "You have to think of everything in his work," Cranston said. "Anything else?"

"The other two, the men in raincoats, don't seem to be still around," Margo said. "They haven't appeared all morning for the first time in weeks."

Cranston thought of the black car that could have been following him. Possibly the two raincoat men had changed their watching from a dead Pavlic to a live Cranston. Which would mean that they knew both that Pavlic was dead, and that Cranston was involved in the affair.

Another possible explanation was that the two men in the raincoats had no need to watch the Club Zagreb any more. Perhaps they had killed Pavlic and had whatever it was they had wanted!

"I've talked to the counter men and the other waitresses," Margo continued, "and they all confirm that Pavlic went away quite often for days at a time. He vanished more in the summer than in the winter, and he went away more frequently this summer than he did last summer."

"They're sure?"

"Yes, Lamont," Margo said, "and they all think he had some other source of income than this club. I managed to see one of his bankbooks with about ten thousand in it, and I think there are other bank accounts. The people here think Pavlic was working for someone, and they all say he seemed nervous lately."

"That would tie in with Helga's story about Pavlic talking about a trip, perhaps South America," Cranston said.

"Some of the employees here think that Helga was in on whatever Pavlic was doing," Margo added.

Cranston nodded. "She could have been lying, she's been with him through a lot of countries for a long time. It would have been hard for him to hide all his activities from her."

"Perhaps she plans to pick up where Pavlic left off, Lamont," Margo said.

"That's possible," Cranston said. "And she's on her way to Sea Gate right now. I think, Margo, the answers are down there somewhere. It's fairly obvious that Pavlic was not just taking a stroll on that highway. I think my next step is to go down there. I want you to stay here until I contact you through Burbank. People are still watching this place, something important could happen."

"All right, Lamont," Margo said.

"Good. Now show me the secret exit Pavlic used."

Margo led Cranston through the kitchen into a small back room. From the back room a door led into a storeroom filled with the restaurant's supplies. Margo pushed aside a stack of cardboard boxes that all but reached the ceiling. The wall behind the boxes appeared to be a normal wall until Cranston looked closely. The tell-tale outline of a secret door was clearly visible. There was no door knob, but a small hole was drilled in the door.

"Are you sure no one else in the Zagreb knows about this door?" Cranston said.

"Not that I can find out," Margo said. "I don't think Helga knew, but it's hard to be certain."

"The door is not too well fitted into the wall."

"No, but these boxes are always in front of it," Margo explained. "They tell me that Pavlic usually kept the storeroom locked, and brought the supplies out himself. They know because they all resented what looked like distrust of them."

"All right, Margo, you better get back before you're missed," Cranston said.

"There's a small wedge-type lock down at the bottom, and you open the door by fitting this cargo hook into the hole," Margo said.

Cranston nodded and smiled at his confidential secretary as she left. When Margo had gone, Cranston made a quick but thorough search of the storeroom. He found nothing but the supplies for the restaurant. He took up the hook, released the wedge lock, and fitted the hook into the hole. The door opened easily.

Cranston found himself in another room. A very small room. The exit from this room was in the left wall. Obviously the door in the left wall led into another building. Cranston went through the door and found a set of stairs leading down. In the cellar of the building next to the Club Zagreb there was an exit up into the areaway. Cranston crossed the areaway and went down into the cellar of the building on Seventy-fifth street behind the Club Zagreb.

When Cranston emerged from the building into Seventy-fifth Street he found himself directly across the street from where Stanley sat in the limousine. He also saw the man with the scarface.

The scarfaced man stood across the street, some twenty yards away from the limousine. The man was watching Lamont Cranston, and the limousine. The man made no move—he just stood there and watched.

Cranston crossed the street toward his limousine. He imperceptibly lowered his left shoulder a fraction of an inch to give himself the necessary room and angle for a quick draw of his .45 automatic from its shoulder holster beneath his well-cut suit. His face betrayed nothing, but beneath his hawklike features his mind was working rapidly. How had the scarface known about the secret exit? Or that Cranston would use it?

He reached the limousine without anything happening, the scarfaced man had not flickered an eyelash. In the seat, Cranston leaned forward.

"Drive ahead, Stanley, but watch that man there with the scarface," Cranston said softly. "How long has he been there?"

"Only a couple of minutes, boss," Stanley said. "I had my eyes on him."

Cranston smiled. Behind the wheel Stanley held a short ugly-looking .38 pistol. It was the pistol Stanley kept clipped beneath the dashboard at all times. Stanley had been a policeman once, and he knew the value of precautions, in addition to the .38 under the dashboard, and the automatic he carried, Stanley also kept another automatic in the glove compartment. That was primarily for anyone who surprised him to find. Once an enemy has found the one gun, he rarely thought of looking for another gun beneath the dashboard.

"All right, Stanley," Cranston said. "Drive slowly, and turn uptown on Amsterdam. Keep going slowly for a few blocks, then make a sharp left and speed up."

Stanley nodded. The ex-policeman turned chauffeur and secret crime-fighter for The Shadow, deftly operated the giant car with one hand. Cranston watched the scarfaced man as they passed. The man made no move or sign of recognition. Cranston held his special mirror to look back without turning. Just as Stanley made his slow turn at the corner of Amsterdam Avenue, Cranston saw the scarface man step to the curb and hold a small object before his face. Then the man was gone from sight as Stanley drove the limousine slowly up Amsterdam Avenue.

The black car appeared from nowhere. One second there was nothing behind Cranston's limousine, and the next instant the black car was following. The same black car. Closer now, Cranston recognized it as a Mercedes sedan. And Cranston had the answer to how the scarfaced man had been waiting for him. The scarface had not known about the secret exit, he had been watching the limousine, tipped off by the people in the black car. And the scarface had tipped off the black car, probably with a small two-way radio.

"Never mind the turn now, Stanley, drive straight up Amsterdam and fast," Cranston said.

The chase continued up Amsterdam Avenue; The Mercedes now abandoned all pretense at not following Cranston's limousine. The black car raced in pursuit of Cranston. He doubted that the black car could catch the limousine, which had a special motor, in an open chase, but this chase was on a city street. Cranston leaned forward again.

"Go three more blocks, Stanley, and then make the sharp left. I'll drop out. If they catch you play innocent. I want a better look at whoever is in that car, but I don't want them to catch me."

"Right, Boss," Stanley said.

The limousine raced up Amsterdam Avenue. With a sharp screech of tires against the asphalt, Stanley wrenched the big car into the turn. Lamont Cranston slid out and down to the street. The limousine was moving at high speed, but Cranston had learned his amazing balance and muscle

control in the Orient, and neither fell nor broke stride as he left the speeding car and moved into the shelter of a doorway. His limousine sped on down the side street.

The Mercedes came squealing around the turn in hot pursuit. The driver of the Mercedes did not see Cranston make his jump, nor was he aware of Cranston now watching the Mercedes pass. Cranston did not recognize the driver of the Mercedes. He did not recognize the occupant in the back who was leaning forward and urging the driver to greater speed. The person in the back seat was unknown to Cranston, but the person was a woman! A very beautiful woman.

The Mercedes vanished down the street and around the turn on West End Avenue in pursuit of Stanley. Cranston smiled, he did not think the Mercedes would catch Stanley. He stepped from his doorway to find a taxi. It was a mistake. Cranston had forgotten the scarfaced man for an instant. A taxi stopped twenty feet from Cranston. The man got out. He had obviously been following both the Mercedes and Cranston's limousine, and had recognized Cranston when Cranston left his doorway.

As Lamont Cranston he did not want to meet or to the scarfaced man. But the Shadow was more than interested in the man who now came toward Cranston with his hand in his pocket and no expression at all on his L. Cranston turned and ran into the nearest building, feigned great panic to draw the scarfaced man on. the building he ran down into the darkness of the cellar. He could hear the hurrying footsteps of the scarfaced above him.

The scarfaced man came down the cellar stairs cautiously. Now the man held a long, ugly Luger in his hand. At each step down the man with the scar stopped to and listen. The man knew his work. When he reached last step and stood in the dark of the cellar itself, the man froze. Across the dimness of the cellar a large shadow had moved. The man pointed his Luger.

The Shadow's laugh was low and mocking.

"What good is a gun against shadows, my friend," The Shadow mocked, unseen in the darkness of the cellar.

The scarfaced man said nothing. He stood there, Luger pointed and ready. He did not move or speak show any fear. He began to move toward the sound The Shadow's voice.

"Who are you?" The Shadow asked. "Why do you want Lamont Cranston?"

The man stopped. His eyes had narrowed, and suddenly he turned toward the stairs and the door at the top. With what appeared to be no more than a movement of the light and shadow of the cellar, The Shadow seemed to float and stood barring the man's way. Now, in a stray ray of light from above, The Shadow's piercing eyes bored into the scar-faced man. But the man still neither spoke nor showed any sign of fear. The Luger fired,

A bullet slammed into the wall an inch from The Shadow, Chips of concrete flew. Before The Shadow could make another move, the scarfaced man turned and raced for a small, high window at the rear of the cellar. With powerful muscles the man leaped, caught the window sill, hauled himself up and through, and was gone. Beneath the window The Shadow stood looking up. The scarfaced man was more than professional, he was an expert. Never once had man spoken, or shown fear of The Shadow, and all the time the man had known how he would escape from the cellar if necessary.

Two minutes later, Lamont Cranston slid cautiously from the building and walked quickly away up the street toward Broadway. He watched carefully for the scarfaced man. A man as expert as that might easily still be waiting for his original quarry, Lamont Cranston. But Cranston saw no sign of his recent pursuer, and hailed a taxi after carefully allowing four empty taxis to pass by. In the taxi Cranston sat back to think about the man with the scar.

The silence of the man puzzled him. It was rare that someone confronted by The Shadow did not ask, "Who is there?" It was rare for anyone not to question the voice that seemed to come from nowhere. This man had neither spoken nor been frightened in any way. He had not even asked what had happened to Cranston. The window probably answered that. The man had seen the window and probably assumed that Cranston had left the cellar through it.

Cranston left the taxi a block from his town house. When he was certain that he was not being followed, he entered his house. He quickly packed a bag, and went down to the private garage beneath the house and strode to his small, black, custom-built Jaguar. The heavy throb of the supercharged engine soon filled the garage. Cranston picked up his special car telephone.

"Burbank? I will be staying at The Beach City House hotel for the next few days. If I am not there, I will be in touch."

"Very good, sir," the voice of Burbank said from the secret room in the Park Avenue office building. "Margo Lane reports that there is now no one watching the Club Zagreb."

"I'm not surprised," Cranston said drily.

After he hung up, Cranston pressed a button on the dashboard of the Jaguar. The garage doors slid smoothly open and the small Jaguar eased into the street. The garage doors closed behind Cranston, and soon he was across the city, through the Lincoln Tunnel, and moving rapidly across the desolate wastes of the Jersey Flats on his way to Beach City. As he drove, Cranston's face became the face of The Shadow. The Shadow had much to think about.

The Shadow had made a mistake. He realized that now. He had underestimated the man with the scarface. The man had acted too fast, too unexpectedly, and now whoever had sent the scarfaced man knew that The Shadow was in the case. They knew that The Shadow was after them, and The Shadow did not know who they were. All he knew was that there was a woman, a man with a scar, and a black Mercedes interested in Lamont Cranston. And that the answer almost certainly was to be found in Sea Gate.

His hawklike features set grimly, Lamont Cranston drove the small Jaguar down the wide turnpike toward City arid Sea Gate where Anton Pavlic had died.

6

LAMONT CRANSTON ate a good breakfast in the dining of The Beach City House before he went to Beach City Police Headquarters to meet Detective Joe Cardona. There had been no message at his hotel from FBI man Paul Altman. Detective Cardona was in the office of Beach City Detective Lieutenant James LaPine. Neither detective was happy to see Cranston.

"The Commissioner feels I know more people in the case," Cranston explained. "I knew one of the dead men. He thinks I can be of help, and I'm glad to help."

Cranston smiled benignly, the picture of a wealthy amateur delighted to be of help to the police. Detective Cardona, a stocky, swarthy man, seemed unimpressed. Lieutenant LaPine was more than unimpressed, he was annoyed.

"The Commissioner is throwing a hell of a lot of weight," LaPine said. "First he wants us to investigate a murder that as far as we know isn't even a murder, then we get you."

"I won't get in your way, Lieutenant," Cranston said, "and both the Commissioner and I think that an accident too convenient."

"Well, the chief says I have to at least look into it," he said. "The police down at Sea Gate are going to be angry."

"You do have the jurisdiction?" Cranston said.

"We do, but they're awfully touchy down there," LaPine said. "It's a rich community, and they don't like Beach City. Still, I'll give it a good look."

Detective Cardona nodded. "And Cranston's helped us before, he might be useful," Cardona said grudgingly.

"Then let's get started," LaPine said, standing up.

LaPine and Cardona drove the few miles to Sea Gate in LaPine's police car. Cranston followed in his Jaguar. The powerful little car had to be held down to keep behind the police car. The trip was beautiful. All along Cape Ambrose Highway the houses were large and well tended. The smaller beach houses and new developments were all down nearer the sea on a back road. Trees lined the highway, and the lawns of the houses glistened green in the August morning sun. The day was hot, but there was a pleasant breeze from the sea.

The tree-shaded streets of Sea Gate were crowded with vacationers. There was the usual seaside activity at the Sea Gate Marina. Far out on the placid sheltered bay that was protected from the open sea here by a long, low series of sand islands, there was a large, sea-going yacht. When LaPine and Cranston had parked, and walked together with Cardona into the Police Station of Sea Gate, Sergeant Morgan of the Sea Gate Police was waiting for them. He ushered them into his office and closed the door.

Morgan wasted no time. The small, red-faced sergeant did not even sit down as he glared at LaPine.

"It was a hit-and-run, plain and as simple as the nose on your face, LaPine," Morgan said. "If you've got anything that proves different, trot it out now!"

"Commissioner Weston in New York says a lot of people were after this Pavlic or Jonson down here," Lieutenant LaPine said.

"Every guy who gets hit and killed had enemies, LaPine," Morgan said. "I could probably make murder out of all of them if I started looking for people who wanted a guy dead."

"How are you doing on the hit-and-run?" Cardona asked.

Morgan reddened even more. "New York cops and amateurs, too! This is my territory, damn it!"

"How are you doing, Morgan?" LaPine insisted.

"We're working on it! You know how many cars travel the Cape Ambrose Highway? It was probably some lousy New York car."

"Your report said it was a hotrod according to witnesses," LaPine said. "That sounds local to me, Morgan."

"Okay, so we're looking!"

"Have you found out anything about what Pavlic, Jonson, was doing at that spot?" LaPine said.

"He's dead! Can I ask him?" Morgan snapped.

"New York thinks he was meeting someone."

"Maybe he was playing golf! His place is only on the other side of the golf course, LaPine. Maybe he was out for a walk. He used to rent a car in Beach City every time he came down. The car was still parked at his house."

"Have you checked to see if anyone saw him that night?"

The change, the hesitation, was so slight Cranston sure that no one noticed but himself. But Morgan hesitated, changed his manner, ever so slightly when LaPine asked the last question. It

was the change and hesitation of a man who is prepared for a question, but who, when it comes, cannot quite hide a slight uneasiness. Morgan was uneasy. Cranston sat in the office and watched from under his half-closed eyelids. Morgan was hiding something and whatever it was it had some connection to where Pavlic had been that night, or who he had talked to.

"Sure I have," Morgan said, completely recovered. "Look, Jonson, or Pavlic, was a loner, you know? He never did anything down here, he never got into any trouble, As far as I can tell he never had visitors, he hardly left his house once he got there, he was just about unknown."

"Like a man who was hiding?" Detective Cardona said

"Like a man who minded his own business," Morgan said.

"Under an alias?" LaPine said.

"A lot of people give phony names in summer resorts, they want privacy," Morgan said. "Maybe he was holding on his wife, how do I know?"

"All right, Morgan," LaPine said. "Now why don't you tell us what you *do* know?"

Morgan shrugged. "Okay, Lieutenant. Well, Jonson, or Pavlic if that was his right name, came down here about a year ago. He rented a place the other side of the golf course. I've checked it. It was furnished, as far as I can tell he brought practically nothing of his own down. He came out summer and winter, he stayed. . ."

"Isn't it unusual for people to come to a resort in winter, Sergeant?" Cranston asked.

"A little," Morgan admitted, "but a lot of people do. He came out more in summer, but he was out once a month regular. He stayed by himself. He never went out, he was with no one. All I ever heard about him was that sometimes he played loud music, the rock-and-roll kind, at night. The neighbors complained."

"I wonder why he came down at all?" Cranston said.

"Maybe he hated people," Morgan said.

"Possibly," Cranston said, "but possibly he only went out night."

Again it seemed as if Morgan hesitated. The small sergeant began to pace the office. His annoyance was again very obvious to everyone in the room.

"I check the taverns on my rounds," Morgan said. "I don't remember seeing Jonson."

Cranston studied the small sergeant and thought about the picture Morgan was painting of Anton Pavlic, alias Jonson. A man who came to a summer resort regularly summer and winter. A man who never went anywhere, knew no one, had no visitors, was not seen in the bars at night. A man who rented a car, but who had died on a way at a lonely spot without having driven to the spot. And Sergeant Morgan knew something about Pavlic that the sergeant had some reason for keeping secret.

While LaPine continued his routine checking of Morgan's investigation, Cranston sat in silence, his hawklike face expressionless, and thought about what Morgan could be hiding. He remembered what The Shadow had seen through the window of the Police Station on the night of Pavlic's death. Morgan had taken something from the effects of the dead man and had put whatever it was into his pocket. Morgan had been careful not to be seen. Whatever that had been, it seemed to have been some object that related to what Pavlic *had* done down here, or *who* he had known. Cranston remembered the heart-shaped watch charm The Shadow had found at the death scene. But the charm had been duly listed among the evidence and effects in the report Morgan had made to Beach City.

"Did you ever notice anyone watching his place?" Detective Cardona was asking Morgan as Cranston listened again.

"No," Morgan said, "at least not until today."

"Today?" Cranston said.

"Yeh," Morgan said. "I figured it was only some more out-of-town snoopers, we've got enough of those."

"Can you describe them?" Cranston said.

"Yeh. One was a tall guy with a scar on his face, and the other was a smallish guy, good-looking like a kid."

The last man described was FBI agent Altman, Cram guessed. The description more-or-less fitted, and Altman would be in some degree of disguise. The scarface was only too familiar to Cranston. In all probability, Altman was watching not Pavlic's house but the scarfaced man. Cranston suspected that Altman had followed the scarfaced man, the FBI man had few other leads. From the readiness with which Morgan described the scarfaced man, Cranston sure that whatever Morgan was hiding had nothing to do with the people who had been watching Pavlic in New York. Was it possible that the watching, and the death, were not connected? Cranston had a peculiar feeling— perhaps it had been an accident?

No, that was still too much coincidence. It was murder made to look like an accident, Cranston was sure of that, and he had a shrewd suspicion that Morgan was not actually convinced that the death was an accident, either. But was it possible that the murder, and the obvious interest in Pavlic, were not connected. Pavlic was dead, but the pieces who had been watching him were still watching. Somehow the pieces did not quite fit. If the scarfaced man had involved in the death, would he still be so openly watching? Or was it that the killer or killers, were sure no one suspected it was not an accident?

What about that watch charm you found at the scene?" LaPine said to Morgan.

"What about it? In the first place it may not have any connection to the accident at all, it could have been dropped any passing car. Second, was it Pavlic's or maybe the killer's? All I could do was list it in my story to the local paper. maybe someone will recognize it and tell us."

"Pavlic wasn't wearing a pocket watch, was he?" Cardona said.

No," Morgan said. "Look, I'm doing all I can. I'm looking for the car, it should have blood on it if it hasn't been cleaned. If it was cleaned, there ought to be visible damage. I'm checking all the local garages, okay? The watch charm is described in the paper, and my men are asking around out it. Why the devil don't you all go home and let me do my job? It's a simple hit-and-run, and I'm tired of so many people asking so many stupid questions!"

"Take it easy, Morgan," LaPine said.

"Look, Lieutenant, we even ran an autopsy because you asked us to. You know what it showed? Jonson, or Pavlic, died of injuries and a heart attack probably brought on by the injuries."

"Heart attack?" Cranston said quickly.

"That's right. The Doc couldn't say what killed him first. The injuries would have been enough. The coronary would have been enough. Probably the injuries brought on the coronary, okay?"

"Is that usual?"

"I wouldn't know," Morgan said. "So he had a bad heart. All I know is that I'm sick of everyone asking questions. You all are the last straw!"

Cranston was thinking about the heart attack. Helga Pavlic had made no mention of a bad heart. But, then, a heart attack would come on without prior history. And Morgan was right, fear could have . . . Cranston stopped in mid thought. He seemed to hear Morgan's last words again. Cranston opened his hooded eyes and looked at Morgan.

"Everyone asking questions?" Cranston said. "Who else has been asking questions?"

"Well, first there was this report from New York," Morgan said. "His card said his name was Chalmers, and he wanted to know all about Pavlic's habits. I threw him out."

"Who else?" Cranston said.

"Two guys who claimed they were old friends and wanted to claim his effects, keys, all that. The funny part was he didn't have any keys, and I told them. They seemed mighty annoyed about that."

"Can you describe them?"

"The last two? Sure, they were medium height, dark, sort of foreign accents so I guess they were Pavlic's friends. Funny thing, they both wore raincoats and it was sunny and almost ninety degrees."

Morgan's description explained why the two men in raincoats had not been watching the Club Zagreb. They had been down here and they were looking for something. They had accents. It began to look very much like some of Pavlic's old friends had caught up with him. Cranston had a good idea what kind of "friends" they would have been.

"What about the reporter?" Cranston said.

Morgan's description of the supposed reporter made Cranston sit up very straight in his chair. The description fitted a man Cranston had met only yesterday—the muscular male secretary of Count Istavan Papescu! Cranston could not be absolutely sure, but Morgan's description of the man was very much like Arnold. It was the first hint that Papescu and Liberation Front might be more involved than they wanted to admit. Cranston was digesting this piece of very important news, when Morgan unknowingly gave him even more vital news.

"Those last two must have been foreigners, or damned stupid," Morgan said. "They should have known a victim's effects go to the next of kin."

"That would be the wife?" LaPine said.

"Sure, name of Helga Pavlic according to his papers. We contacted her, and she gets it all, if she ever shows take the body. We've still got it on ice. She was supposed to be here yesterday, damn it."

Cranston could not show his surprise. He, of course, was not supposed to have contacted Helga Pavlic. But he was surprised. Helga Pavlic had never arrived in Sea Gate. Somewhere between Pennsylvania Station and Sea Gate the woman had been stopped. Detective Joe Cardona did not have hide his surprise.

"She never showed up?" Cardona said. "When we talked her yesterday, she said she was taking a morning train down."

"If she started yesterday, she must be walking," Morgan said.

"Perhaps Commissioner Weston knows something about the woman," Cranston said. "I better call him."

Cranston left the room. It was not the Commissioner he wanted to call, but that was a good enough excuse. They would not be surprised that he wanted to talk to the Commissioner in private. He went to the booth of a pay phone that stood in the public corridor. The number he dialed was that of the Club Zagreb. There was no time to go through Burbank. When Margo came to the telephone he asked about Helga Pavlic.

"Lamont," Margo said at the other end, "she hasn't come back. We haven't heard from her. Is something wrong?"

"I'm afraid so," Cranston said. "It looks very much like someone is holding her, Margo."

"Or perhaps she's just run away," Margo pointed out.

Cranston nodded to himself in the booth. Margo was a very bright woman. It was indeed possible that Helga Pavlic was more involved than she had pretended, and had taken her chance to run away, scared by her experience with The Shadow.

"That could be, Margo. You contact Burbank if anything happens."

Cranston hung up and dialed a new number. It was the phone number of his close friend, and associate of the Shadow, Clyde Burke the reporter. His conversation with Burke was brief. Burke knew of no New York reporter named Chalmers, although the description could have fitted a few men Burke knew. Cranston thanked Burke, and strode into Morgan's office. As Cranston came in, Morgan was talking on his interoffice telephone. The small sergeant's face was one large smile of triumph. Morgan put down the telephone and leaned back in his chair. His grin widened until it was almost a laugh.

"Well, well, all you masterminds," Morgan said, and then he did laugh. "Murder and international intrigue, eh? Well, gentlemen, I can now tell you that the case is solved. And it's a simple hit-and-run!"

Sergeant Morgan laughed again, leaned back, and when there was a knock on his office door, he jumped to his feet.

"Bring her in!" Morgan called.

The office girl opened and a patrolman came in with a young girl. The girl was small and very pretty. Her hair was long, and loose, and pure gold in the sunlight through Morgan's window. Her features were small and regular. She did not seem more than seventeen, but she had the body of a woman. She stood beside the policeman. Morgan grinned at Cranston, Cardona and LaPine.

"Gentlemen, meet Shirley Anders," Morgan said. "She has a story. Shirley Anders, you know? S.A. The watch charm?"

Morgan laughed again as they all turned to look at the girl.

7

SHIRLEY ANDERS had been crying. Tears stained her cheeks, and lingered in the corners of her eyes. They were widest blue eyes Lamont Cranston had ever seen. They were now frightened eyes. The girl's eyes were dark where her mascara had run with her tears. She looked as if she would cry again any second.

"Shirley," Morgan said, "I'd like you to meet three very smart men from the big cities."

The girl nodded shyly. "I'm pleased to meet you."

The girl's voice was soft and low. It was a shy voice, frightened now, but it seemed a voice that was always shy. The girl seemed to almost shake where she stood beside the policeman. She was obviously nervous, even distraught as she stood there in Morgan's office.

"Sit down, Shirley," Morgan said, "and don't be nervous, you had to come and tell us. It'll be all right."

The girl sat down, and Cranston watched her from behind his impassive eyes. He realized that she was taller than he had thought. She was not a big girl, but it was more her shy naivete that made her appear to be a "little" girl. Her dress was pale blue and reserved, unlike many young girls Cranston saw these days. She sat with her legs chastely together, the wide skirt of the blue dress covering her knees.

"If you have information about the accident, Miss Anders," Cranston said gently, "you have to tell the police."

The girl nodded. "I know," she said.

"Tell them, Shirley," Morgan said. "From the start." The girl hesitated. She turned to look at Sergeant Morgan as if she wanted him to tell the story. Her blue eyes were pleading. She did not want to repeat her story. For a moment it appeared that she might start to cry again. Then she took a deep breath.

"I saw it in the paper," Shirley Anders said. "The charm, I mean. It was mine, you know? I gave it to Buddy over a year ago. When you go steady you have to give a boy thing, so I gave him my charm. He always carried it with him. Sometimes he hung it on the windshield. I mean above the windshield, in his 'rod,' I mean his car, you know? I mean when I read in the paper, and . . ."

LaPine leaned toward the girl. "You're saying that you recognized the heart-shaped charm with your initials. You gave it to some boy over a year ago. He has a 'hotrod'?"

The girl nodded.

"Buddy Masters," Morgan said. "He's a kid about eighteen, lives down on the beach in a development just about half a mile from where Pavlic was run down."

Shirley Anders began to cry. She burst into tears, suddenly and without warning. Her blue eyes streamed tears in an instant.

"Buddy's a nice boy! He never did anything wrong, never. We broke up, he hates me, but he's a nice boy!"

"Easy, Miss Anders," LaPine soothed. "We have to know the facts, a man is dead."

The girl dried her eyes with a tiny handkerchief. "I'm sorry."

"What about it, Morgan?" LaPine said. "This Masters boy ever in any trouble?"

"No, he's a pretty steady kid," Morgan said. "Only they all drive those damned hotrods too fast."

Cranston was perplexed. His hawklike face watched the girl intently. He was as sure as he could be that the death of Anton Pavlic was not an accident, and yet Pavlic been hit by a car, a "hotrod" from the description of the Bolgers who had heard the car. How did an eighteen-year old boy fit into a case that appeared to involve international organizations and perhaps even the secret police of some nations? Where did Buddy Masters fit into the long and sordid career of Anton Pavlic?

"Go on, Miss Anders. You read about your watch-charm in the newspaper," Cranston said. "You're sure it was yours?"

The girl nodded, her eyes dry again, the crying stop as quickly as it had started.

"We showed it to her outside," Morgan said.

"It's mine," Shirley Anders said. "I never gave it to one except Buddy. He always had it with him before we broke up. I read about it, and I knew you'd find out, and I didn't know what to do. I mean, I know Buddy wouldn't do anything bad, but I . . ."

"You say you broke up?" Cranston said. "Why was that?"

The girl shrugged. "He got jealous, he said I had another steady, but I hadn't. I don't know, I just didn't want to go steady, I guess. I mean I dated some boys, you know? I guess we were just too young."

"Tell them the rest, Shirley," Morgan said.

"Well, like I said, I saw it in the paper, about my charm," Shirley Anders went on. "I was awful scared. I mean, it's bad to hit someone and then run away, isn't it? And I remembered I

hadn't seen Buddy driving the car all yesterday, you know? He's got a beautiful little roadster, all stripped down and chromed, even the carburetors. It makes a lot of noise, but it's a beautiful little . . ."

"Tell them what you found, Shirley," Morgan prompted, bringing the girl back to the point.

"Oh, well, like I said, I hadn't seen Buddy driving car, and when I read about the accident and my charm, I got scared," the girl said, and stopped. Her wide eyes looked from face to face in the silent office. "So I went to look at the car. It was in Mr. Master's garage, which was because Buddy keeps it out behind the house under canvas most of the time. You see, he likes to work on it, and it's easier to work when he just has to take off the canvas and it doesn't matter how much mess he . . ."

"You looked at the car," LaPine said.

"What? Oh, yes," the girl said. "I . . . I . . . it had dents in front, a big scratch on the bumper. The bumper's chrome, too, and it had this big scratch. There were dents and scratches all over. And there were . . . stains, you know? Kind of dark stains."

Morgan all but grinned with triumph. Detective Cardona was studying his fingernails with great interest as if he did not want to look at Morgan. Lieutenant LaPine was swearing very low and soft to himself, and glaring at Cardona and Cranston. Lamont Cranston was wondering about a puzzling point—the way the girl told that the car was hidden, but only in a garage. The car, obviously battered, had been placed out of sight, but not actually abandoned or really hidden! If the boy, Buddy Masters, had killed Pavlic, it would have been more normal to really dispose of the car. If the boy hadn't hit Pavlic, why hide the car at all? the boy was innocent, why hadn't the car been turned over to the police?

"Do you think Buddy was in the accident?" Cranston said to Shirley Anders.

The girl was near tears again. "I don't know. I mean, I saw the dents and all, and it was the charm I gave Buddy, well . . . I mean it's better if I tell you than if you find out isn't it? Better for Buddy, I mean? Maybe it wasn't Buddy, and you'd find out about my charm, and then he'd in real bad trouble, and . . ."

The girl trailed off, her confusion evident in her voice manner. Her eyes pleaded with them all to tell her that she had done right. Sergeant Morgan went to her. The small policeman put his hand on her thin shoulder. He smiled down at her. His hand on her shoulder patted her reassuringly.

You did right, Shirley," Morgan said.

The girl looked up. "I mean, he didn't mean to kill Mr. Jonsin, I know that. You believe that, now that I told?"

"Of course, Shirley," Morgan soothed. "Tell us the rest. Where was Buddy that night?"

"We all went on a beach party," Shirley Anders said. "It was on the beach near the golf course. We were all the boys and Buddy and all the hotrods. We had a fire, and we went swimming, and some of the boys raced their rods. There was this storm coming, you know, so a lot of the girls went under the houses with the boys. Buddy wanted me to go with him, but I wouldn't. I mean, we'd broken up, you know?"

The girl looked at all of them to see if they understood why she couldn't go under a house with Buddy. They nodded. Morgan waved her to go on.

"It made me feel bad, Buddy asking me and all, so I just took a walk and went swimming and sat around the fire. I didn't see Buddy until later. He was with another girl then. I wish I'd gone with him, maybe this would never have happened! He was probably so mad he just went racing down the highway!"

"For how long didn't you see him?" Morgan asked.

"I don't know, maybe an hour or so."

"At what time was this?"

"Just before the storm. Maybe about nine-thirty to ten-thirty. I got home about eleven that night. I felt bad about Buddy so I went home."

Morgan's triumph was now complete. The time fitted the death of Pavlic exactly. The small sergeant beamed at LaPine and Cardona. Lieutenant LaPine seemed reluctant admit it, but he seemed convinced. Even Cardona nodded to show that he thought that it looked bad for Buddy Masters. Cranston was thinking about the car in the Masters' garage. Some car had hit Pavlic, and it sounded as if this were the car, but he still did not believe that the death of Pavlic had been an accident. This left him with an eighteen year old boy as the murderer of a man as experienced in danger and intrigue as Pavlic. It was hard to accept. Perhaps LaPine was having similar doubts. It was the Beach City detective who said what Cranston was thinking.

"We better go out and talk to the boy."

The way to Buddy Masters' house led past the golf course and the fatal gateway. Sergeant Morgan took Shirley Anders in his car. Cardona and LaPine followed in the lieutenant's police car. Cranston brought up the rear in his Jaguar. Cape Ambrose Highway curved and twisted between the tall rows of trees and the elegant houses and front lawns. The golf club was open, its rolling greens and fairways bright in the sun. The stone gateway seemed an innocent spot in the sunlight. Cranston studied the countryside as he drove behind LaPine's car.

Cape Ambrose Highway itself curved directly past the golf club. On either side of the open area of the golf course, roads led from the highway down to the beachfront areas. There was a back road in the distance on the far of the golf course. This back road ran along the beach the sea. There were houses on both roads that led from highway to the beach road. The houses tended to be large near the highway, and became smaller and closer together as the side roads neared the beach road. On the beach road itself there were many clusters of small cottage communities.

The house Anton Pavlic had rented was on the side road nearest to Sea Gate, the side road that was passed before reaching the golf club and the fatal gateway. Across the course it would have been a relatively short walk. In fact, by crossing the golf course, the gateway could have been reached from either side road, or the beach road, in a short time. The trip around by road would have been considerably longer. Cranston noted all this as he drove past the golf course, and he noted the only house near the death scene—Ezra Bolger's large, tree-shaded home.

Once past the gateway into the golf club, Morgan's car turned off down the side road that led past the golf course on the other side of the gateway from Sea Gate. LaPine and Cranston followed. On this side road the houses were also large and set back from the road on the section of road nearest the highway. Cranston noted that there was no fence between this side road and the golf course. There was only a thick hedge easily passed through by anyone wanting to walk out on, or across, the golf course. As he drove on after LaPine and Morgan, Cranston saw the houses on the side road change to the smaller, cottage-like communities. Morgan turned onto the beach road and stopped before a cluster of cottages only a few yards from the sea. The names on the two mailboxes nearest to Morgan's car were *Masters* and *Anders*.

There were eight small cottages set in a row between the beach and the beach road. Each cottage had a garage behind it. The cottages were neat and well-kept, gardens of flowers around them. There was an open yard behind each house. In the driveway of the Masters there was a ten-

year-old Ford sedan. Morgan and Anders got out of the sergeant's car. LaPine and Cardona followed. They all walked up the driveway to the door of the Masters house. Before he followed, Cranston saw a face staring out of the window of the Anders house. Almost immediately the door of the Anders house opened and a short, stocky man came out. The stocky man walked rapidly to the Masters house and went in after Morgan and the girl. LaPine was opening the garage door. Cranston left his Jaguar and went into the Masters house.

The scene in the living room of the small cottage was not what Cranston had expected. A tall, slender man stood with his arm around the shoulder of a thin boy. A dark-haired woman sat sobbing in a chair. Shirley Anders stood crying. Morgan and Cardona were looking at the stocky man who had come from the Anders house next door. It was the stocky man who was talking. He was angry. He was not angry at the police.

"You! You must tell them?" the stocky man said. He was shouting at the girl, Shirley Anders. "How could you do this? My own daughter! We have not suffered enough?"

The girl sobbed. "They would have found out, I didn't know what to do! I was so afraid! I thought . . . I mean . . . it was better if I . . . told . . . and . . ."

The tall, slender man spoke. "The girl is right. We could not hide it. We should have told them ourselves. The girl is right, Peter."

LaPine came into the room. "The car's there. It's been in an accident."

Cranston watched as the anger slowly drained from the face of the stocky man. The stocky man, Peter Anders, sat down heavily.

"Perhaps you are right, Michael. We could not hide it much longer," Peter Anders said.

Cranston estimated that the two men were in their early fifties. They were both dark. Peter Anders, the stocky man, had lost two fingers on his left hand. The tall man, Michael Masters, had deep scars on his face. The boy, Buddy Masters, was a younger copy of his father—a thin, dark boy. The sobbing woman was the mother of boy. Cranston did not know, but he guessed, that there no Mrs. Anders, that the girl had no mother. It was clear that Shirley was the most important person in Anders' life. It was there in the way the stocky man looked at the girl, in the anger he had shown at what seemed like her betrayal.

"My son did not kill Pavlic, Sergeant Morgan," Michael Masters said, "but we should have reported the car."

"Now you're in real trouble," Morgan said. "Suppressing evidence is a felony."

"We wanted time to think," Peter Anders said. "We have not touched the car. It is as the boy brought it home."

Unobtrusive in a corner, Cranston listened to the way the men always said, we. As if they thought of themselves together. Or as if they were both members of some larger group. But it was not that alone that Cranston heard. It was their voices. Both Masters and Anders had foreign accents. The same accent. Their accents did not fit their names. Cranston's keen ear and knowledge of languages told him that the two men had accents from Eastern Europe, probably Poland or Russia. The accents of Masters and Anders would have been much more fitting for a man named Pavlic!

"We were wrong to hide the car, yes," Michael Masters said, "but my son has killed no one. The car was stolen that night. Someone took my son's car to kill this Pavlic."

"That's a very interesting story," Morgan said. "How'd car get back here? Maybe it walked? Or drove itself?"

Buddy Masters had been silent all this time. Cranston had been watching the boy, he had simply stood silent beside his father as if accustomed to letting the older men talk. From time to time the boy had glanced at Shirley Anders. It was obvious that not only did the boy not hold a grudge against the girl for telling, but that he still loved her. Now the boy spoke out suddenly.

"They brought it back, Sergeant," Buddy Masters said. "We were on this beach party. You know, swimming, play around, some of the guys racing the 'rods.' Well, a storm was coming, and the guys and girls were pairing off to go under houses and that. I asked Shirl, but she wouldn't come with me. So I went for a swim and a walk. I must have walked past Sea Gate, you know?"

"When was this?" LaPine asked.

"I don't know, maybe nine-thirty, ten o'clock," Masters said. "Anyway, I was gone a while, and when I got back I saw Shirl sitting by the fire and I was so mad because she turned me down again, I made up to Peggy Bruce. I made sure Shirl saw me with Peggy. Only Shirl just went on home so I decided to drive home myself. When I went to my car it was all banged up and the motor was hot!"

"You mean you don't even know it was actually stolen?" Morgan snapped. "You didn't even notice it was gone?"

"I ain't sure," Buddy Masters said. "Sometimes the guys just borrow each other's cars, you know? I don't think I saw it was gone ever, But someone drove it."

"How did they get the keys?" Cardona said.

"They was in the switch, they always are. I mean, who carries keys in a bathing suit anyway?"

Morgan almost laughed, "So all you have as an alibi is that you think someone borrowed your car while you were taking a swim and a long walk? I don't suppose anyone saw you?"

"If don't know, Sergeant, I didn't see anyone," Masters said. "I was so down, you know? I mean, Shirl turning me down again and all."

Michael Masters broke in. "My son came home and me what he has told you. I did not know what to do. In the morning we heard about the accident. I was afraid. I hid the car. I am not sure what we will do, and also I could not have the car repaired or someone might notice. I admit that."

"Was the heart charm in the car, Buddy?" Morgan asked.

The boy shrugged. "I don't know, maybe. I used to carry it before Shirl started acting too big for me. Maybe it was in the car,"

"You're not sure?" LaPine said, surprised.

"Of course it was in the car," Peter Anders said quickly. "I remember I see it, it hangs over the windshield, yes, Buddy?"

"Yes," Michael Masters said, "I saw it, too. It was in the car, Buddy."

"I guess so," Buddy Masters said now. "Sure, it had to be, didn't it?"

Morgan was grim. "It had to be if someone else used the car and it turned up with Jonson's body. Only I'm not so sure it was in the car. I think you all better come down to the station right now. I want statements from each of you, separately. Shirley and Mrs. Masters can stay here. I've got the girl's statement."

They left Mrs. Masters comforting Shirley Anders who had begun to cry again. Cranston again followed the other two cars into Sea Gate. Detective Cardona had volunteered to drive in the suspected hotrod, and brought up the rear behind Cranston's powerful Jaguar. Cranston was not concerned for the moment with the hotrod. He was thinking of Michael Masters and Peter Anders riding ahead with Sergeant Morgan. The two men had accents that did not match their

names. And there was something else that seemed to nag in Cranston's mind. Something that the two men had said or done. Something that had struck Cranston as, somehow, wrong.

Cranston could not place the thing that was wrong, and at Sea Gate Police Station Morgan set the machinery in motion for a complete laboratory check of the hotrod. Then the small sergeant took the boy and the two men into his office one at a time to take their statements. Cardona prepared his report for Commissioner Weston. LaPine started back for Beach City to make his own report and to carry samples from the car for detailed analysis. Lamont Cranston left them to their work. He called his hotel in Beach City, but there were no messages for him from either Burbank or the FBI man Altman.

He strode to his Jaguar and started the powerful motor. That the hotrod of Buddy Masters was the car that had struck Pavlic that night, Cranston had little doubt. But he had more than a little doubt that it had been an accident. There was still much more that he had to know about that night. Even as the deep roar of his Jaguar faded from the streets of Sea Gate, Lamont Cranston had once again become The Shadow.

8

EZRA BOLGER sat alone in the parlor of his big house on the Cape Ambrose Highway. The distant sound of traffic barely disturbed his dozing. The big house was silent, Bolger's wife gone upstairs an hour ago to take her afternoon rest. Stillness rested over the house. The only sound was the buzzing of insects beyond the shaded windows and the low drone of the television set.

Ezra Bolger was watching television. On the blue-white screen small men ran around a field of bare earth and grass. It was a baseball game, and Bolger had settled down with a glass of cool wine to watch. But the old man now dozed in his chair. The parlor was dim and shadowed, the shades drawn, the shutters closed outside the windows to keep out the heat. Only the winking eye of the television lighted the semidarkness, and Bolger been lulled into a half sleep.

The old man had been dozing for some time, perhaps more than two innings of the ball game, when he heard the sudden, eerie laughter. It was a mocking laugh that came from nowhere, without direction, but seemed to float in the air of the room and be everywhere at once.

"Ezra Bolger?" a voice said from the deep shadows of the dim and silent room.

Bolger sat up in his chair. The old man blinked. He looked toward the television set as if he thought the voice and the laugh could have come from there. On the set the small men still raced around in pursuit of the almost invisible ball. The weird laugh came again, cold and yet strong in the dim room. Bolger searched the shadows of the room with puzzled, apprehensive eyes.

"Who is it? What do you want?"

"Help, Ezra Bolger," the strange voice said. "I need your help."

"How do you know my name? Where are you hiding?" Bolger asked.

"I know all, Bolger," the voice said, "and we have met before."

As Ezra Bolger searched the dim room he became aware of a looming shadow. From a corner of the room beyond the television set a figure seemed to materialize. At first the old man, Bolger, thought he was seeing nothing more than the air itself moving, an illusion of dark and light. It appeared to be no more than a dark area of the room moving. Then Bolger watched it become a

tall, cloaked figure. A figure dressed all in black, enveloped in a black cloak, with nothing to be seen but two piercing eyes that stared at Bolger from beneath a black slouch hat.

"I am called The Shadow, Bolger," The Shadow said to the old man in the chair as he towered above him.

Ezra Bolger rubbed his eyes. Perhaps it was the motion itself, or the actual appearance of The Shadow, but a vague memory stirred in the old man's mind. A memory of a great batlike figure hovering over a body in the highway. It was all vague, unfocused in Bolger's mind. He seemed to remember, and yet he did not remember—it was more a feeling than a memory. A memory that had been erased leaving only an impression of a memory. Like a man with amnesia who does not remember, and yet feels a sense of memory.

"Yes, Ezra," The Shadow said, aware of the struggle to remember going on in the old man's mind, "it was I on the highway that night, but your mind has been clouded. It is my power."

"You?" the old man faltered. "Then I did see you! You *were* there, bending over Jonson, you . . ."

Ezra Bolger felt weak, suddenly afraid of this dark apparition looming before him in the dim room. The old man began to cower. But Bolger came of the courageous old Yankee stock that had built the country, and the weakness passed. He sat up in the chair, his old eyes flashing. The same strength that had sent his ancestors out to fight the sea, had sent them surging across the country through the wilderness, steadied like steel in Bolger's eyes.

"You killed Jonson!" Bolger said. "I knew it was no accident! You killed him, and then you did something to me and ran like a coward!"

"No, Ezra," The Shadow said softly, "I did not kill the man you call Jonson. I am here to find his killer."

"Why you're even afraid to show your face!" Bolger cried. "Well, you may have killed Jonson, but if you think you can kill me you're damned mistaken!"

"Listen to me, Ezra!" The Shadow said, his voice deep and urgent now.

"Listen to you? I'll show you what I'll do to you!" Bolger was out of his chair and across the dim room in an instant. He moved with amazing speed for a man of his age. He ran to the far corner of the room. When he turned again to face The Shadow there was a rifle his strong old hands. The barrel of the small .22 rifle pointed directly at The Shadow. Already Bolger's finger was tightening on the trigger,

"Stop!" The Shadow commanded.

Bolger held the rifle steady. It was aimed at The Shadow's heart. Bolger's finger tightened. But the rifle never fired. The eyes of The Shadow burned into the eyes of old man. Bolger was a brave man, and he did not flinch. He stared into the flashing gaze of The Shadow. The fiery girasol glowed on The Shadow's finger. But the girasol was pale in comparison to the eyes that stabbed through Bolger from beneath the slouch hat.

Slowly, the rifle began to lower.

Bolger stood frozen, the rifle pointed at the floor. The voice of The Shadow was strong and clear dim room.

"Bolger, do you think now that I am evil?"

"No," the old man said.

"Do you feel my power?" The Shadow asked.

"Yes. I feel it."

"What do you feel, Ezra?" The Shadow went on.

"I feel . . . I feel . . . justice," Ezra Bolger said. "Yes, I feel . . . justice and good. I . . . I want to help . . ."

"Yes," The Shadow said. "You feel the power of Justice and of retribution for those who do evil!"

The Shadow's eyes became soft, quiet. The girasol vanished inside the great black cloak. The Shadow stepped forward and took the lowered rifle and placed it again in the corner of the room. Bolger shook his head where stood. The old man turned to look at The Shadow, blinked for a moment, and then he walked slowly to his chair and sat down. On the television the figures were still playing their game in the blue light. Bolger appeared surprise to see the game still in progress.

"How do you feel, Ezra?" The Shadow said.

Bolger turned toward The Shadow. "I want to help."

"The Shadow said. "You said that you knew Jonson's death was not an accident?"

"Yes," Bolger said. "I'm sure of it, but that fool Morgan won't listen. Have you seen my statement?"

"No, Morgan only summarized it in his report."

"I thought as much. Morgan is up to something."

"How do you know that?" The Shadow said.

"All in good time, young man," Bolger said. "First things first. You asked about why I think it was no accident."

Behind his cloak The Shadow smiled. The old man's natural spunk and cantankerousness was returning rapidly. Neither fear nor awe held a man like Bolger in their grip long. The Shadow liked the gingery old man, who had quickly forgotten both his fright and his experience with the power of The Shadow.

"Tell me what you know, then," The Shadow said.

"Well, I'd say I have three good reasons to think it was no real accident. First, as I told Morgan, I'm pretty sure I heard the same car stop near the gate to the golf club a few minutes earlier."

"Earlier?" The Shadow said.

"*Before* I heard it come so fast and heard the impact when it hit Jonson," Bolger said. "Now, as I told Morgan, I can't *swear* to it, motors sound a lot alike and it's at least a few hundred yards from here, but I *know* I heard *some* car stop near the gate."

Behind his cloak The Shadow considered carefully what was Bolger was saying. He did not recall seeing another car that night on the Cape Ambrose Highway. So if there had been a second car, it must have come from one of the roads just as he was sure the hotrod had. Neither car had passed him where he had been waiting in his limousine after the passing car had seen him crossing the road—the precautionary wait that had prevented The Shadow from catching the killer red-handed. If there been another car, it would have come from a side road the same as the hotrod. But Bolger was sure there been only the one car.

"Then the sequence of events as you heard them," The Shadow said from where he stood still half-hidden in dim light, "were a car coming up and stopping at the gate. Then, a few minutes later you heard another or the same car, roar around the curve and strike Jonson. Then the car stopped for only a moment, and finally went off again away from Sea Gate."

"That's it," Bolger agreed.

The Shadow pondered. "If it were the same car both times, we have someone coming up and stopping. He probably spoke to Jonson, or Pavlic which was his real name. Then he must have

backed around the curve so that his motor was low, before he came back at full speed and hit Jonson."

"What the devil was Jonson doing all this time?" Bolger said.

"I wonder, Ezra," The Shadow said. "Could it be that Pavlic, or Jonson, was not killed the *second time* the car came, but the *first time*? When the car first stopped?"

Bolger seemed puzzled. "But how? He wasn't hit the second time."

"Perhaps he was killed some other way," The Shadow said with a grim tone to his muffled voice. "He was then propped up in the highway and run down."

Bolger shook his grizzled old head. "No, Morgan told me the autopsy showed nothing like any other way he was killed."

"Perhaps," The Shadow said. The secret crime-fighter was thinking of the autopsy and the report of a heart attack. But he did not mention that to Bolger. "Tell me your other reasons."

"One of them fits in with your theory right enough," Bolger said. "I can't figure at all what Jonson was doing at such an isolated spot at that hour. There was a storm brewing, but he had no car, you see? He had walked there, and Jonson never walked. I know. He walked, and there was a storm coming, so it looks to me he not only expected to meet someone there, but also expected to be picked and driven away by the person."

"Can you think who?" The Shadow said.

"No. Jonson certainly didn't know anyone around here that I know of," Bolger said. "There was a man my wife thinks she saw watching his place about two weeks ago, but that man wasn't from here. A kind of tall man, with a long scar on his face."

"Before Pavlic died?" The Shadow said.

"At least two weeks," Bolger said.

"No one else?"

"Well, no, not that I really know," Bolger said, "but I've got an idea. That's my third reason, and it involves the devil out of Sergeant Morgan!"

"You think it might have been Morgan he met that night?"

"No, not Morgan himself," Bolger said, "he was back at Sea Gate. He could never have made it back to the Station that fast if he had been at the scene."

The Shadow moved across the room like a giant black ghost. He seemed to glide, a soundless shape in the dimness of the room. He was pacing, thinking, his soft Oriental slippers, designed for the needs of judo and karate, making no sound on the carpeted floor. The Shadow was thinking about Sergeant Morgan.

"Are you sure Morgan was at the Police Station when your wife called? Did she speak to him?" The Shadow said.

"Now that you mention it, no!" Bolger said. "She talked to one of the other policemen. Morgan arrived here in about five minutes, but he drives his own car."

"Then he could have been anywhere in the area," The Shadow said as he moved about the dim afternoon room like a great, restless, impatient bat. "He could have been only a few seconds from here, and have taken the call on his radio. I think we must find out just where Morgan was at ten o'clock that night. But now tell me why you Morgan is involved at all."

"Gambling," Bolger said.

The Shadow stopped his silent pacing. The batlike figure of the secret avenger seemed for an instant frozen to the floor. His piercing eyes burned into Bolger's face,

"Gambling?"

Bolger nodded. "I'm sure there's illegal gambling going on somewhere in Sea Gate. The older residents like myself have tried to locate it, but we haven't been able to prove anything. There's a whole new element down here, a lot of city people and foreigners. We older residents are sure the police are involved, or are at least pretending not to know— for a price!"

"What has that to do with Pavlic?" The Shadow demanded.

"That night Jonson," Bolger began, and stopped. "I can't get used to calling him anything but Mr. Jonson, that's the way we knew him down here."

"That night Pavlic, or Jonson, did what?" The Shadow urged.

"Not did," Bolger said, "*had!* Jonson had a roulette chip, or marker, or whatever you call it."

"He had a roulette chip? With him?" The Shadow.

"He sure did. I saw it with his things at the police station. I noticed that it wasn't mentioned in the newspaper story. Morgan must have suppressed it! I saw it as plain as the nose on my face: a flat plaque with numbers on it in the center and at each corner. I knew what it was at once."

In the silence of the dim living room, The Shadow remembered what he had seen on the death night through the window of the police station. Now he knew what he had seen Sergeant Morgan slip into his pocket. A roulette plaque! Pavlic had been at a gambling house, perhaps that very night! That was what had made Sergeant Morgan so uneasy when he was asked if he knew anything about what Pavlic *did* in Sea Gate, or *who* Pavlic might have talked to or met that night. Pavlic had the roulette plaque on his person when he died.

"Normally, they don't allow people to carry plaques from a gambling house, Bolger," The Shadow said.

"I know," Bolger said, "but they wouldn't stop a man who was involved in the operation of such a place, now would they!"

"You think Pavlic was involved in the illegal gambling?"

Bolger nodded. "It would make sense, he never seemed to do anything else down here. Why did he even come here? In the day he hardly ever went anywhere. That loud music he played all night could have been intended to make us think he was at home when he wasn't."

Shadow considered all this. The unknown group who had sent the men in raincoats to watch could be a gambling syndicate. Gambling was not in Pavlic's record, but The Shadow knew that the dead man was a man who would have done anything for money. It could explain much— but it did not explain the three suicides in New York. Or did it? Gambling debts? As far as The Shadow knew the three refugees who had died in New York had never left the city. He made a mental note to have Burbank check that, but now he had a more pressing concern on his mind.

"I am leaving now, Ezra," The Shadow said. "You will say nothing about this visit or our talk."

"Of course not," Ezra Bolger said. The old man seemed taller as he looked now at The Shadow. "I want to help all I can."

"Thank you, Ezra," The Shadow said softly. "I need all the help I can find to fight evil. We must all fight together."

"What can I do?" the courageous old man said.

"For now you have done enough," The Shadow said. "You may have gone a long way toward solving the case."

The Shadow's weird laugh was not mocking this time, there was, instead, a note of triumph in it. Bolger had given The Shadow the vital information he needed— that perhaps Pavlic had been *already dead*, or at least unconscious, when the hotrod struck him on Cape Ambrose Highway.

And The Shadow's laugh seemed to hang in the still air of the dim living room long after The Shadow was gone.

Ezra Bolger blinked and looked around the room. The Shadow had vanished. One instant Bolger had been looking at the great batlike figure, and the next instant there was nothing but the echo of a laugh. On the television the small men were running madly. Bolger looked at the screen, where he stood alone in the silence of the dim and shaded afternoon room. He felt a shiver of power—he had met The Shadow.

9

LAMONT CRANSTON appeared from the bushes along Cape Ambrose Highway. He stood beside his small, black Jaguar in the heat of the afternoon. He had parked a few yards from the gateway to the golf club, the Jaguar hidden beneath the trees in the shade. With The Shadow garb securely returned to its hiding place inside his clothes, Cranston stood beside the Jaguar lost in thought.

Bolger's information made considerable sense. Cranston had been certain from the beginning that Pavlic was the gateway to meet someone. And it had probably been more than a simple meeting to talk. Pavlic had expected to be picked up and driven somewhere. Morgan's report made no mention of any search of the area for possible clues to some other method of murder, or, at least, clues to the identity of anyone Pavlic had planned to meet. Cranston was sure that Pavlic had not been struck down by accident, nor had he been conveniently waiting in middle of the road. Morgan had reported the many cigarette stubs in the gateway which showed that Pavlic been waiting inside the gateway. No, Pavlic had been put on the highway to be run down. And yet the autopsy showed no other cause of death beyond injuries and heart failure.

But Bolger was sure that the car, or a second car, had stopped at the gateway a few minutes earlier. Cranston began to walk toward the gateway. It was time for him to search the area, and the gateway was the logical starting point. He checked the ground off the highway around the gateway. He was looking for tire tracks, although he did not expect to find any. He was right, he found no tire tracks anywhere near the gate. He found unrecognizable after the rain of that night, but which were certainly Pavlic's footprints, He found cigarette butts. They were Pavlic's brand, a long Russian type with the cardboard mouthpiece. There were other cigarette stubs, but the gateway was heavily traveled by the club members, the other cigarettes proved nothing.

Cranston left the gateway and proceeded slowly up the side of the highway. His keen eyes searched every inch of ground from the road to the high wall of the Golf Club that enclosed the grounds on the Cape Ambrose Highway side. He concentrated on the right side of the highway because that was the way the killer had driven off. The Shadow had been coming from the other direction that night, and no hotrod had passed The Shadow's limousine. If there were anything to find, it would be on this side of the highway. But there appeared to be nothing. The bushes were undisturbed, the ground yielded no clues. Cranston did not give up. He continued his careful search until at last, he found the clue.

Cranston did not know at first that he had found what he was looking for. It was pure luck that the clue was there on the ground at all, and Cranston looked at it and passed on without a second glance. A simple length of pipe that could be found beside any highway anywhere. It lay

quite close to the road only partly hidden by a thick bush. It was not lying flat, but was half-leaning against the lower branches of the bush, or Cranston would probably not have noticed it at all. Cranston's quick glance saw the pipe, and yet did not see it, the way you see a very familiar object but hardly really notice because it is *too* familiar. Cranston passed on up the highway and then stopped. He turned back and looked at the pipe. It was the *position* of the piece of pipe that had made him turn. It leaned half-upright against the *inside* edge of the branch of the bush.

Cranston studied the piece of pipe for a moment without picking it up. He let his sharp glance move up to the wall itself. At this point, some hundred yards from the gateways the wall was about twelve feet from the roadway. Almost in a direct line with the piece of pipe, and about five feet up the wall, Cranston saw that a part of the wall had been chipped— as if something had been thrown against the wall at that spot. Cranston nodded to himself. The way the pipe lay on the inside edge of the branch, it would have been almost impossible for it to have simply dropped off, or out of, a car. If pipe had fallen out of a car, it would almost certainly have come to rest against the *outside* edge of the branch. But if it had been thrown from a moving car, had hit the wall five feet up and bounced back, it would have come to rest just about where it was against the inside edge of the branch!

The piece of innocent-looking pipe had been thrown out of a moving car. Why? Cranston stepped to the bush and picked up the piece of pipe. It was just what it seemed; a piece of pipe about a foot long, its walls about a quarter of an inch thick, hollow, and closed in at one end. A simple piece of pipe, but not part of any known automobile. It was, in fact, Cranston knew, not part of anything. To almost anyone else who might have found the pipe here near Sea Gate, the pipe would have been a piece of pipe and no more, but not to Lamont Cranston or The Shadow. Not with an autopsy report of heart failure in an accident case less than a hundred yards away; Cranston turned the pipe in his hands and looked at the small slot of the underside. He brought the open end of the pipe carefully to his nose. Cranston nodded again. There was a faint, very faint, odor. Cranston realized he was holding a deadly murder weapon.

Suddenly, Cranston stiffened. The delicate sixth sense that had saved him so many times told him that someone was watching him. He *felt* eyes staring at him. Just as he whirled to look, he heard the sudden snapping of a twig, a rustling among the bushes. There was no one in sight. Cranston ran toward the sound in the bushes. Ahead he could hear someone crashing rapidly through the shrubbery a hundred yards ahead of him. Cranston passed his Jaguar and ran around the curve in the road on the other side of the gateway. He had only time to see a black Mercedes drive away from the side of the road in a cloud of dust that hung thick in the hot August air. Cranston whirled again and ran to his Jaguar. The power-throb of the Sportscar reverberated in the heat as Cranston drove in pursuit.

Cranston reached Sea Gate without having seen the Mercedes. Either the people in the Mercedes had a much faster car than it appeared to be, or they had expected pursuit and had turned off between the golf club and Sea Gate. However the Mercedes had escaped him this time, and Cranston pulled into a deserted side street near the waterfront and called Burbank on his special telephone. Burbank's voice from the distant hidden room was urgent.

"Margo Lane reports she has information concerning Helga Pavlic," Burbank said. "She is on her way to your room in The Beach City House."

"Good," Cranston said. "I want an immediate check on the bank accounts of Anton Pavlic, full details."

"Immediately," Burbank replied.

Cranston hung up and started the engine. Soon the black Jaguar was moving swiftly out of Sea Gate toward Beach City. He settled down for the drive. Beside him, on the seat of the Jaguar, lay the innocent piece of pipe he had found so near the murder scene. It was definitely murder. A very professional murder. There were only a few men in the world who would have known the piece of pipe for what it was. Lament Cranston, The Shadow, was an expert on all weapons, and he knew what he had found. A little-known, deadly, gas gun. The small slot was the trigger that loosed an instantaneous cloud of gas into the face of its victim. The gas was so deadly the victim could live only seconds. Once used, the gas gun was discarded, the killer walked away, and there was no evidence left. The fatal gas used could not be traced, left no clues, resulted in no symptoms but one— heart failure!

As he drove the small, powerful Jaguar down Cape Ambrose Highway toward Beach City, Cranston considered the implications of the gas gun. It was not a weapon that could be bought in a store. In all probability it had not even been made in the United States. The weapon was originally the highly secret invention of the Soviet Secret Police branch known as Smersh— a murder and watchdog unit said now to be defunct. The gun had only one purpose — silent, quick, untraceable assassination. It was the weapon of the professional assassin. Only a government, or a very large and powerful international organization, would have the personnel and knowledge to make such a weapon. And yet the gun had been used to kill Anton Pavlic on a country highway near the quiet resort town of Sea Gate, New Jersey.

Still considering the implications of the gas gun, Cranston reached Beach City. He parked the Jaguar in the garage of The Beach City House. At the desk he learned that Margo had not yet arrived. With the prospect, for the moment, of nothing he had to do until Margo arrived, Cranston suddenly felt hungry. He had not eaten since his early breakfast at the hotel that morning. He had been so busy he had not felt the hunger, but now it came over him like a wave. He went straight into the hotel dining room and ordered an extra large crab meat cocktail with Russian dressing, a small shrimp salad, a baked potato, and baked prawns *Florentine*, a specialty of the elegant Beach City House dining room. Cranston beckoned to the wine steward.

"A *Clos des Perrieres*, '59, I think," Cranston instructed the wine steward.

Cranston sat back in his chair in the fine dining room, world-famous for its sea food, and relaxed for the first time since he had arrived in Beach City. By the time the food and wine arrived, Cranston was ready to enjoy it. The crab meat proved to be just right, fresh and not too cold. The shrimps were excellent, the prawns *Florentine* baked to a turn. But it was the wine Cranston savored most. The cool, clean, incredibly delicious *Meursault* of Madame Grivault had the dryness without the flinty austerity of a great, say, *Vaudesir*. It had the nobility of the pinot grape, while just a bit more relaxed than *Les Montrachet*. It was the best of the *Meursaults*, and Cranston enjoyed each slow swallow for as long as he could. That was not for long. Half the bottle remained when he saw the woman.

She was seated far on the other side of the dining room. She was the beautiful woman Cranston had seen in the back seat of the Mercedes in New York. She was not alone. The man with her was familiar. Cranston watched until the man finally turned his head enough to be seen full face— Arnold, Count Papesu's secretary who was acting less and less like a secretary. He was sure that they had not seen him, and watched them closely. The woman could not be younger than thirty, but extremely well cared for. Her dark hair shined like ebony. Her skin was flawless and deeply tanned by long hours in the sun. It was then that Cranston seemed to hear the voice of Helga Pavlic, *All the women, young ones trying to look old, and old ones trying to look*

young. Anton Pavlic had been a ladies' man, and this woman had some interest in the late owner of the Club Zagreb.

Cranston came out of his reverie to find the woman's eyes staring straight at him. They were wide, dark eyes, and they did not flicker. She stared at him without so much as a single blink. Her head turned very slowly away. She spoke to Arnold. The actions seemed to be in slow motion. Then, before Cranston could move an inch, Arnold and the woman were on their feet and walking straight to the door from the dining room. They did not appear to move particularly fast, but Cranston saw he would have no chance to catch them. In any case, he could not leave the hotel until he had spoken to Margo. He had the definite conviction that he would see the woman, and Arnold, again. Never a man to waste excellent wine, Cranston finished his bottle of *Clos Perrieres* before he paid and left to go up to his room to wait for Margo.

In his room, which was on the second floor, Cranston drew his shades and stretched out on the bed to rest while he waited for Margo. Later he was sure that he had dozed for a time, but in actuality he had barely closed his eyes when he heard the noise. He sat up on the bed. Out in the hall someone was walking very softly toward his door. The sound stopped. The person was standing directly outside his door. Cranston waited. There was no time for The Shadow to appear. Cranston slid from the bed and crossed the room in complete silence to stand behind the door. Still no one tried to enter. Cranston realized that the person in the hall knew exactly what he was doing. The person out there expected that Cranston would have heard him, and would look out! If Cranston did not look out, the person would then try to enter the room.

It was the logic of a trained person, and it had probably worked in the past. Curiosity still killed more spies anything else. But Cranston was not to be lured by the trick, and behind the door he waited in total silence. He barely breathed, having learned the art of shallow breathing in his days in the Orient with the mysterious Master Che T'a Tze. The man outside was not as skilled. Cranston's keen hearing easily picked up the man's breathing. Then he realized that there was a second man. Of course! Professionals rarely operated on such a mission alone. The second man was some feet down the hall, and had not moved so as not to be heard. But Cranston could hear the faint sound of the second man's breathing. He was considering bringing The Shadow into play. It was almost his second big mistake. He had allowed his mind to be distracted for the briefest instant.

The short, stocky man in the raincoat was inside his room as if by magic. The man seemed to materialize just inside the opened door. There was a small key in the man's left hand. In the man's right hand there was a large Mauser automatic. Then it was the stranger's turn to make a mistake. The intruder looked at the bed where he obviously had expected to find Cranston. The mistake of making an assumption. Because the man had not heard a single sound, not even breathing, he had made the dangerous assumption that Lamont Cranston was asleep. Before the unwanted visitor had time to correct his error, Cranston stepped out one step from behind the door and dropped the man with a single sharp blow on the neck with the edge of his hand.

Cranston immediately whirled to face the astonished second man. The second man had come into the room behind Cranston without a sound. The man was sure that Cranston had no idea he was there. A small smile was on this second intruder's face as he stood there in the open doorway with a twin of the first man's Mauser raised like a club. As Cranston whirled, the second man seemed to freeze like a statue, the triumphant grin on his face, the pistol upraised ready to complete the mission he had come to perform. Then came the expression of complete astonishment. In the next instant the second man would have moved. He did not have time.

Cranston kicked him expertly in the diaphragm. The man gasped once and collapsed beside his partner.

Cranston looked down at the two men. They were both short, dark and stocky. They wore raincoats even in the heat. Now it was clear why they wore the raincoats— the twin Mausers were large, heavy pistols. The coats undoubtedly had special pockets to hide the Mausers. It was the first time Cranston had actually seen the remaining men who were watching the dead Pavlic. They were obviously the two "friends" who had attempted to get their hands on Pavlic's effects at the Sea Gate Police Station. Cranston bent to pick up the two Mausers before the men woke up. He studied the heavy pistols. It was Cranston's turn to be astonished. Both Mausers had their safeties *on*! Neither pistol had been ready to fire. Surprised, Cranston bent down again to search the two men for identification.

"Stop! Do not move!"

The voice was directly behind Cranston. Still bent over, Cranston saw from between his legs a pair of heavy shoes in the doorway. There was a pair of dark trousers and the bottom edge of another raincoat. The shoes moved closer behind him. Cranston braced for the blow that was about to come, and was annoyed with himself. Now *he* had been guilty of assuming too much. Because he had been intelligent enough to know that such men always worked in pairs, he had not remained alert for a possible third man! Behind him, the shoes and ankles moved closer. Cranston saw them tense as the man raised his arm, probably to hit Cranston with a third Mauser. He had the irrelevant thought that someone was making a lot of money selling Mausers. Actually, his mind was not thinking at all, he was preparing his muscles for an attack on the third man even in his bent-over position. It would require all the concentration Cranston had learned from his Oriental teachers. He was ready the instant the legs behind him showed that the blow was on its way toward his head.

The shot echoed as loud as a cannon in the silence of the hotel room.

The feet behind him skidded forward. The man's body smashed into Cranston and sent him sprawling. But Cranston was back on his feet instantly. The third man was not. He lay face down, blood spreading across the hotel carpet. The man moved weakly, obviously not dead but hit in the shoulder. Cranston turned to face the fourth stranger who now stood in the open doorway of the hotel room. It was the tall, silent man with the long scar on his gaunt face.

"Thank you, whoever you . . ." Cranston began.

The tall, scarfaced man held a Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum pistol with a shortened barrel. It was pointed at Cranston. Then the .44 Magnum moved to point at the bleeding man. There was no doubt what the scarf ace man had in mind. He was about to finish the job. But he appeared to be waiting for something. Whatever it was took too long. Voices babbled out in the corridor. The scarface man listened, then abruptly motioned with the Smith and Wesson. There was not a flicker of expression on the silent face of the man with the scar. But the motion was unmistakable. Cranston stepped out into the hall and walked toward the fire stairs. The door, which was normally closed, was open and ready. The man with the scar also knew his work. People were already filling the corridor as Cranston and the man with the scar vanished down the stairs.

In total silence the scarfaced man prodded Cranston down the stairs and into the basement of the hotel. They crossed the basement to a flight of stairs that led up into the alley behind the hotel. The black Mercedes was parked there. Someone sat in the front seat, Cranston could not see who it was because the man had his head turned away. Cranston hesitated at the open car door. A single jab from behind him with the Smith and Wesson convinced him to enter the car.

Still bent over, inside the car, something seemed to explode inside his head. There were flashes of red, and green, and a very dark black as Cranston collapsed on the seat of the car.

The scarfaced man got in beside Cranston, and the Mercedes drove quickly out of the alley and turned north toward Sea Gate.

10

VOICES floated in the darkness. Muffled, distant voices buried in blackness. Lamont Cranston opened his eyes. He saw nothing. He blinked. Everything was still black. His head, which had ached for an instant, was now clear and sharp. His remarkable recuperative powers were known only to him, and now he allowed himself to feign a deep groan as if just awakening. The voices ceased. Now he heard movement. He was tied, his hands behind him, and seated in a hard straight chair. But he moved his eyes and knew the reason for the darkness. He was blindfolded.

The voices began again, but closer now. Cranston groaned again to pretend that he was in pain and only half awake. As he did this, he moved his body within his clothes. The Shadow's cloak and hat, and the fire-opal girasol, were still safe in their secret pockets inside his clothes. He had not been searched, or had been searched only cursorily. He groaned more loudly and moved in his chair against his bonds. The voices came closer. They were speaking German. But Cranston's knowledge of languages told him that the voices were speaking German with a non-German accent. He could not place the accent, except that, again, it sounded Eastern European. He strained his keen hearing to understand what was being said, but the voices were too distant or muffled. Cranston was about to inch his chair closer to the voices, when he felt a hand on his face, and the blindfold was pulled away.

A blinding light struck Cranston full in his eyes. He closed his eyes and opened them again. The light was directly on his face, the rest of the room was in total darkness. He could see only vague motion when someone behind the light moved. While he had been blindfolded Cranston had estimated that there were four or five men in the room with him, probably five. Now he could see the vague shadows of three men behind the glaring light. One indistinct shadow seemed to move closer.

"Good evening, Mr. Cranston. We are pleased that you could join us."

The voice was oddly familiar. And yet it was a peculiar voice. Cranston's delicate hearing detected a tone, a phrasing that he was sure he had heard before. And yet the voice was not quite like any voice he had ever heard. It was an odd, strange voice, almost inhuman. That was it. The voice was not speaking directly, it was speaking through some electronic device, possibly a type of throat microphone. There was a resonance and a metallic timbre. The hollow steel-like effect gave the voice an evil tone.

"Do you feel talkative, Mr. Cranston?" the voice asked. "Who are you, and what the devil do you want!"

The voice laughed, a horrible rasping sound through the microphone.

"Bravado, Mr. Cranston? Surely you can do far better than that?" the voice mocked. "Or perhaps you feel strong because you are a friend of Commissioner Weston? Is that it?"

"Perhaps," Cranston said. Inside he smiled. He had found out that the metallic voice was aware of his friendship with Weston. It was a start toward identifying the unknown interrogator.

"I fear the commissioner cannot help you here, Mr. Cranston," the voice said. "I rather doubt that much can help you here but absolute honesty and a willingness to be helpful to me, yes?"

Cranston again smiled inside. It was amazing how hard it was for a human being to disguise himself from a trained observer. Here was the man hidden totally behind a glaring light so that even his height and general size could not be seen. His voice disguised with some elaborate electronic instrument. Speaking in only English and German, neither of which were his native tongue. But to Cranston's trained ear the man could not hide his Eastern European origin even behind almost perfect English and better German. And the man could not disguise the pattern of his speech behind the most devious of subterfuges. The hidden voice knew Cranston, knew Weston, and contained an unmistakable speech pattern that belonged to only one person Cranston knew to be involved in the case-Count Istvan Papescu!

"So," the metallic voice said, "shall we then get to business, yes?"

Cranston said nothing this time. He had no intention of revealing that he knew the identity of his captor. The voice, Count Papescu, took Cranston's silence for assent.

"Good, then perhaps you will tell us why you are so concerned with Anton Pavlic, Mr. Cranston?"

"Commissioner Weston asked me to represent him down here," Cranston said.

"Merely as a friend?" the voice of Papescu mocked.

"I often do, you know," Cranston said, aware that Papescu would have investigated that much and found that Cranston did indeed often represent Weston just as a friend. And he then added, truthfully since Papescu would know this too, "But in this case I happened to know one of the men who committed suicide in New York, and who knew Pavlic."

"Ah yes," Papescu said through his microphone, "poor old Kodaly, eh? You knew him in Europe it seems?"

"I did, many years ago," Cranston said, and realized his error before Papescu even spoke again.

"No, Mr. Cranston, you did not know Kodaly in Europe," the soft, metallic voice hissed. "You were not in Europe, not in Budapest, when Kodaly was there. He knew many Americans, but there is no record of a Lamont Cranston, and you are not a man who can escape notice, not with your wealth, yes?"

Of course, it was as Kent Allard, the famous explorer, that The Shadow had known Kodaly in Budapest years ago. Papescu had done a careful job, but, then, Liberation Front had many tentacles, it seemed. Cranston waited for the result of his slip. It was not long in coming, and it explained the real reason for his abduction and interrogation.

"What are you, Mr. Cranston?" Papescu said from behind the blaring light. "You are more than you seem, you do not fool me. What are you? An FBI man? The Central Intelligence Agency, perhaps, eh? A common spy? Perhaps you are not even American? I have known many strange MI-5 men in my time. Perhaps that is it, yes? British Intelligence? A very clever lot, not bungling amateurs, eh?"

"You flatter me," Cranston said, "but I'm afraid I am just that; a bungling amateur, and a friend of Commissioner Weston."

"Do not play with me, Cranston," the metallic voice rasped, its smoothness gone. "You work with the police, you found the weapon, you seem to have very mysterious friends. Tell me, who is that man in the ridiculous black cloak?"

"Perhaps you will learn soon enough," Cranston said evenly.

The voice laughed. "You think I fear some comic opera ghost? No, Cranston, you will tell me what you really are. I know you are more than you seem, I am not a fool. Your cars have special motors, you seem to appear everywhere, and you knew what that gas gun was when you saw it! No one but an expert would know that, yes? Come, please, what are you?"

Cranston remained silent. Behind the light there was a sharp movement.

"How did you know Bela Kodaly?" the voice said.

Cranston did not answer.

"You were in Budapest when you met Kodaly. Why? What name did you use?"

Cranston stared straight into the blinding light.

"Very well," the voice said. "George!"

From the darkness behind the light a tall figure emerged. It was the man with the scar on his face. In the glare of the light the long scar from jaw to ear seemed to glow red and alive. He stepped to Cranston without a word. His fist smashed into Cranston's face. Cranston felt blood in his mouth. He moaned to show the pain he did not feel. Long ago in the Orient the crimefighter had learned the secret of bearing pain to the point of actually not feeling any but the most intense and sudden pain. It had been the most difficult of the mysteries of Chen T'a Tze for The Shadow to master, a matter of mind and body and will and years of mystic contemplation and rigid mental and physical discipline, but it had been one of the major aids in the secret avenger's battle for justice. Now Cranston tasted the blood in his mouth, but his powerful mind and body resisted any feeling of pain. The moan when the scarfaced man struck was for his unseen audience.

"What are you, Mr. Cranston!"

Cranston did not move a muscle.

"George!"

The scarfaced man raised his fist and struck again. This time the scarface, George, struck once, twice. Cranston moaned.

"Cranston? Who are you!"

"I told you, I'm a friend of Commissioner Weston," Cranston said thickly as if in pain.

"George!"

The scarfaced man, George, stepped forward again. His fist raised. He struck— one, two, three times. George stepped back. The silent George had still not uttered a single sound.

"Now, Mr. Cranston?"

"I told you what I am," Cranston mumbled.

Behind the light there was a deep sigh like wind blowing through metal. The voice, Count Papescu, changed, became soft and smooth again through the microphone. Cranston recognized the trick about to come— remove the pain and let the victim think the ordeal is over, and then when the pain comes again it is twice as hard to stand.

"Very well, Cranston," Papescu's voice said, "let us try another line of inquiry. Who killed Pavlic?"

"Do I really have to tell you?" Cranston said.

"If you want to live to . . . Ah, I see, you mean that you think it was I who killed him?"

"Or your scarfaced gunman," Cranston said.

"George? Yes, George would have liked that," the metallic voice said. "Pavlic betrayed us badly, I fear, a greedy man. And a dangerous man. Greedy men are often dangerous, don't you agree, Mr. Cranston? Apparently, however, Pavlic perhaps betrayed others also. We would have eliminated him in due time, yes, but, alas, someone anticipated us. The gas gun would indicate

that the others belong to the opposing side. I fear Pavlic was working many sides of the street, as you say here. And I fear we must know who ended his miserable existence."

"Why?" Cranston said.

"I will ask the questions, yes?" Papescu's voice said.

"Two weeks," Cranston said slowly, "you were watching Pavlic. Just watching, and now you are still watching. Obviously he had something valuable to you. Now you think his killer has it, whatever it is. The person he was meeting that night."

"Who was he meeting, Cranston?"

"Perhaps you. . ."

"Alas, no, he did not want to meet us. It would have saved much trouble, but it was not with us he wanted to meet."

"Then it had to be those other men who tried to attack me," Cranston said. "They must have whatever it is you want."

There was a rasping laugh, the laugh distorting the sound through the microphone.

"Those fools? Never! A pack of milling curs of no importance!"

"If they are so unimportant, why was your killer going to kill them in cold blood?" Cranston said.

"George?" the voice of Papescu said, "Ah, George likes to kill, I fear. You might say that George lives to kill, a handy attribute at times. He is absolutely fearless and very skillful. You see, Cranston, you may have wondered about his silence. His tongue was torn out years ago by Soviet agents. Now he kills."

"Why did he stop?" Cranston said. "He was waiting for something."

"Or course," the voice purred through the microphone. "He was waiting for them all to regain consciousness. You see, it is necessary that they know they are being killed and by whom. Without that there is no pleasure for George."

Even Cranston felt a cold chill as he looked at the silent face of George, the long scar livid in the glaring light. Doomed to silence forever, his thin lips clamped forever shut to hide his mutilation, George stalked the world as a mindless weapon of death. A madman, but deadly, unafraid of even The Shadow. Cranston almost shivered. The reaction was not missed by the hidden Count Papescu.

"I see you have apprehended what George can do, Mr. Cranston," the metallic voice said. "I am tired of this fencing. I have worked too long to build my organization to allow a greedy fool like Pavlic to destroy it! You will now tell me what you know!"

"I know that Pavlic was killed, that someone tried to make it seem an accident, probably to gain time while they looked for whatever Pavlic had that he was killed for!" Cranston said.

"Tell me who you are, Mr. Cranston!"

"A friend of Commissioner Weston."

"There was another man, a small man and quite young," the voice said. "He sat often inside the Club Zagreb. Did he kill Pavlic?"

"I don't know the man," Cranston said. Apparently Papescu had spotted FBI man Paul Altman but had not as yet identified the Government man.

"George!"

When the silent scarfaced man appeared in the glare of the light this time he carried a small blowtorch in his hand. George lighted it without a flicker of expression on his scarred face. He stood and held the torch, its blue-white flame darting like the tongue of an angry snake. George waited, his eyes watching the hidden Count Papescu. Cranston's mind raced with rapid thoughts.

Obviously, whatever it was that Pavlic had had, the count wanted it very badly. It was of great importance to Papescu, and, from the way Papescu had spoken, whatever it was had the power to *harm* Papescu. It was something Papescu wanted to protect himself rather than for any gain it would bring. Cranston thought all this, and at the same time his mind prepared his body for what he knew he must do now.

"I will allow you one last chance, Mr. Cranston," the metallic voice rasped from behind the glare of the light. "Do not make me leave you in the hands of George. Who are you? Why are you so interested in Pavlic? What have you discovered? Quickly, Mr. Cranston, I have already wasted far too much time on you."

Cranston said nothing. The hawklike features of the wealthy socialite that masked the stern face of The Shadow were set in concentration. His mind exerted its full power. The muscles of his trained body gathered for the effort he was about to make. Cranston knew that unless he told Papescu what Papescu wanted to know, he would not leave this dark room alive. If he told he might not leave the room alive. Tied to the chair, faced with a sadistic killer, surrounded by a band of determined and ruthless men, there was no way out of this deadly room but death!

"Very well, Mr. Cranston," the evil and steely voice Count Papescu rasped from the darkness behind the glare the light. "George!"

The scarfaced killer raised the blowtorch and stepped toward Cranston. The crime fighter prepared for his only escape. Lamont Cranston would have to die.

11

THE SADISTIC George bent and removed Cranston's shoes. For the first time an expression appeared on the scarred face of George. As the blowtorch moved toward Cranston's bare feet, George smiled.

The flame licked at Cranston's foot. Cranston screamed as if in pain and terror.

"No! No!" Cranston cried.

"Tell me what you know, Cranston I" the metallic voice said.

George's mouth hung open. A thin trickle of saliva was on the chin of the scarfaced man. George was literally drooling as he brought the licking blue flame again to Cranston's foot. Cranston cried out again, moaned as if agonized.

"Tell me, you fool!"

"My heart!" Cranston moaned.

"Tell me!"

The flame of the torch burned once more into Cranston's foot. There was a sickening smell of burned flesh. The pain was now beginning to reach Cranston in reality. It was time. With a tremendous effort of mind and body and will, Cranston entered the trancelike state of suspension that no one on Earth could tell from death without the use of the most modern medical instruments. His breathing seemed to stop. His eyes widened and glazed immobile. His entire body went rigid and then completely limp as he appeared to collapse in the chair. His heart slowed, and the beat faded. so low no one could have told that his heart was still beating without instruments. He slumped in the chair with his eyes staring at nothing.

There was a silence in the room. George stood up and stepped back. Cranston lay in his deathlike trance. To Cranston all time had slowed. Everything appeared to happen in slow motion, in a slow and thick haze. But his senses were fully alert as he lay apparently dead. He saw George stare at him and then turn to look with consternation at the men behind the glare of the light. The metallic voice swore. There was movement behind the light. The secretary, Arnold, stepped out of the shadow and approached Cranston's inert form. The muscular secretary bent down and placed his ear against Cranston's chest. He listened for some time. Then he moved the light so that it glared close to Cranston's staring eyes. Arnold shook his head negatively. A hand appeared from behind the light. The hand held a small mirror. Arnold took the mirror and held it before Cranston's mouth. The mirror remained clear and bright. Arnold looked back toward the light and the shadows beyond.

"He's dead," Arnold said.

Count Istvan Papescu stepped out of the shadows. He removed the small throat microphone from his neck. George turned off the glaring light, and someone turned on an overhead light. Cranston could see them clearly now. Papescu, George, Arnold, and a man he did not know but recognized as the driver of the Mercedes in New York. They were all in a small room that appeared to be some cottage. There was no furniture except the chair Cranston lay in and the table for the glaring lamp. The fifth person Cranston had been sure was in the room was not there. The outside door was open. Papescu leaned over Cranston.

"The stupid fool!" Papescu said. "You're sure, Arnold? So quickly?"

"He must have had a weak heart," Arnold said.

George nodded. The scar-faced man seemed bitterly disappointed. He had barely begun to enjoy his work of torture.

"Do you think he really knew anything?" Arnold asked. "Probably not," Papescu said. "Probably he was just what he said, and no more. He would have told. You saw the way the pain frightened him. Well, there is no harm done, yes? If he had the papers we would have found that out. We must look elsewhere."

"What do we do with him?" Arnold said.

"Do? Bury him! Dig a grave out there and bury him, and be quick, we must continue our search."

"He'll be missed," Arnold said. "He's an important man, a friend of the commissioner."

"Dead men are of no importance, Arnold, yes?" Papescu said. "As for being missed, of course, but it will be long before they find his body, we will not care by then. They cannot trace his death to us. We were prepared that he should die, eh?"

"Of course, Count Papescu," Arnold said.

The muscular secretary motioned to the fourth man, the driver of the Mercedes. The two men bent over the limp form of Lamont Cranston. They untied him and picked up what they thought was his body. Arnold held his shoulders, the driver his feet and they carried him outside. A faint light still streaked the sky to the west above a series of tall trees. Cranston listened and could hear the sound of the surf. They were near the beach. The two men continued to carry Cranston until they reached a grove of small trees. They laid him down then, and Cranston felt the dirt. It was soft and it was dirt— not sand. Hours seemed to have passed as Cranston lay in his trance. More time appeared to drift slowly by before George appeared carrying a shovel and pickaxe. A sound of digging began. In the suspended state of his trance, Cranston listened to the sound of digging, and saw that George did not help dig. George did not soil his hands with menial work. The sadistic mute stood with his arms folded, watching.

"That's deep enough," Arnold said at last. "The count is in a hurry."

Hands again gripped Cranston's shoulders and feet. He felt himself half-carried, half-dragged. Then he was lifted a few inches, and dropped. He fell no more than three feet, but in that short fall he managed to twist unnoticed in the air to fall face down into the hole. If his movement had been noticed, it would have seemed like no more than a body twisting naturally as it fell. He lay in the hole with his face cupped beneath his armpit, his arm resting across his face so that there was a tiny air space beneath armpit. The men above him, in a hurry, did not notice the way he appeared to have fallen.

Cranston lay motionless in the hole. Then he felt dirt begin to fall on his back, and heard the sound of a shovel digging and scraping at the dirt. The dirt fell thick and heavy. The last rays of faint twilight were quickly blotted out. Soon Cranston could hear only the dirt still falling above him. Then there was silence. Far off, as if in the distance, his keen hearing heard voices even from beneath the dirt. Then there was the sound of a shovel and pickaxe striking together. Cranston lay buried in his shallow grave for some time after all sound had ceased from above.

With his face cupped beneath his arm in the small air space, Cranston breathed faintly with the shallow-breathing technique learned so long ago in the Orient from the great Master. Out of his trance now, he could have remained buried for a long time. But there was work to be done. Cranston began to count. He did not want them to see him emerge from the earth. He counted slowly to a hundred. Then it was time for The Shadow to rise up.

It was pitch dark in the night when Cranston dug his way up into the air again. He wasted no time after breaking out. In a few seconds The Shadow stood in the night listening to the sounds of the sea, the distant hum of motors that he surmised must be on Cape Ambrose Highway. From the direction of the sea and the highway The Shadow knew that he was somewhere near the first side road around the golf club, the road nearest to Sea Gate. It was the same road on which Pavlic's cottage stood. The Shadow realized that Papescu had probably rented this empty cottage to be close to Pavlic. Now The Shadow began to glide through the night toward the looming shape of the empty cottage. The small building was dark and silent. The Shadow had waited too long in the grave and the Mercedes was gone from the cottage. Papescu had escaped him.

"Who's there!"

The voice was close by at the corner of the empty cottage. The Shadow whirled. A man stood at the corner of the cottage, a gun vague in his hand. The man was peering into the night. It was the driver of the Mercedes.

Papescu had left a man behind. Papescu was a careful man, he had not wanted to leave the grave of Lamont Cranston unguarded at least for a time. The driver stared into the night, his pistol ready. The Shadow laughed.

"Who is it! Come out or I shoot!"

Again The Shadow laughed, and, suddenly, the moon emerged from behind a cloud and the driver saw the great, batlike shape of The Shadow. Outlined against the moon, The Shadow must have seemed to the driver like some monster from a dark past. The man staggered back, fear white on his face. He turned to run. The Shadow moved as if flying across the ground, the black cloak sweeping out behind him. He stood again in front of the frightened driver. The man whirled to run back the other way. The Shadow cut at an angle through the moonlight, his ominous black shape seeming to float on the dark air. He was in front of the driver once more. The man cried out in panic and ran another way. Wherever the driver ran, The Shadow was there waiting for him. The mocking laugh pursued the driver everywhere, sending him running back and forth through the darkness with no sense of direction.

The driver began to shoot. His wild shots came nowhere near The Shadow. The mocking laugh drove the man frantic. He fired and fired at The Shadow, and at the shadows in the night. He ran against trees. He stumbled, fell, and scrambled up to run again. The trees seemed to move in his path. The branches seemed to reach out to hold him. The bushes rose up to trip him. Gasping and hysterical the driver ran madly to escape the hovering shape and mocking laugh of The Shadow. At last his pistol clicked sickeningly on an empty chamber. The driver lay on the ground, shivering, his panic-stricken face weeping tears of hysteria. The Shadow stood high above the quivering man.

"You cannot escape me," The Shadow said. "Who are you?"

The panicked man seemed unable to speak. He lay there shivering.

"Do you want to live?" The Shadow asked grimly.

The man moved, nodded, but would not look up at the black shape before him.

"Why is Papescu so interested in Pavlic?" The Shadow asked.

The man spoke with his fearful face still pressed against dirt.

"Pavlic has something, some records, I ain't sure."

"What kind of records?"

"I don't know. Just some papers."

"Do you know who else wants those papers?"

"No, I swear it!"

"Did George kill Pavlic?" The Shadow demanded.

"I don't think so, maybe. I don't know," the frightened man said.

"When did Papescu start watching Pavlic?" The Shadow said.

"A couple of weeks ago. He was mad, real mad. When he read about those suicides. He was real mad."

"Did he know who those men were?"

"Know? Sure he knew. Why you think they paid him off?"

"Blackmail?" The Shadow said.

"Sure, that's the operation."

The Shadow nodded to himself. Blackmail. Papescu and Liberation Front helped refugees who were in serious danger, got them into the country illegally, and then blackmailed them to remain silent. The refugees would be caught in the middle, unable to inform on Liberation Front without exposing themselves to whatever danger they were hiding from. Pavlic had probably stolen some incriminating records that Papescu had to have back.

"You didn't know?" the man on the ground said.

The driver had recovered some of his nerve. He was sitting up now, his eyes looking at the black shape of The Shadow. The panic passing from him, the driver now was obviously not as awed by The Shadow. The mysterious black shape was asking questions like any normal man. The driver's hand began to steal toward his pistol. The Shadow's laugh mocked the driver in the night. The driver looked up into the burning eyes of The Shadow. He rubbed his eyes, shook his head, but he could not look away from the piercing gaze. Soon he began to close his eyes. He lay down on the ground. He was in a trancelike sleep.

For a few seconds The Shadow stood and looked at the driver. Then he bent and searched the man. He found nothing. He took the pistol and the extra cartridges from the man's pocket. A moment later there was nothing in front of the empty cottage but a man sleeping on ground in the moonlight.

In the hotel room at The Beach City House, Margo Lane looked up with obvious relief as Lamont Cranston strode in through the door. When the beautiful, dark-haired woman saw Cranston's face she paled.

"Lamont! Are you all right?"

"Hale and hearty, Margo. Nothing but a few bruises. I've already tended to them," Cranston said. There was a smile on his battered face. His recuperative powers, and The Shadow's skill at Oriental medicine were known to Margo, and she now smiled in return.

"The police were very worried," Margo said. "Those three men that were here escaped before the police arrived. One of them had been shot. Lieutenant LaPine couldn't imagine what had happened to you."

Cranston then explained all that had happened. Margo listened intently. When Cranston reached the part about the blowtorch, She insisted on looking at his feet. The feet were still burned and blistered, but The Shadow had tended them, and the special medication was already taking effect. The pain had gone almost at once. When Margo was satisfied that Cranston's feet would be all right, she let him finish his story.

"So Liberation Front thinks that Lamont Cranston is dead," Cranston said, "and I think we'll keep it that way for the time being. They're very deeply involved in all this."

"Blackmail, Lamont? Of people they are supposed to be helping? How ugly!"

"They smuggle in men who have reason to be afraid; wanted men, criminals, political refugees, and anyone else who is in some danger; and then they blackmail them! It is so simple, so diabolical. The victims are in the country illegally, Liberation Front arranges it that way, so Liberation Front has a simple hold on them. All Papescu has to threaten is that he will tell our authorities, and the victim will be exposed and possibly even sent back home where he is in great danger! A foolproof scheme.

"But something went wrong," Margo said. "Those three men killed themselves."

"That was dangerous for Liberation Front," Cranston said. "It could make us investigate too closely."

"Do you think they killed Pavlic?" Margo said.

"It's entirely possible, Margo, but I wonder about this second group. The three men who tried to attack me first. I think they only wanted to talk to me; they had their safeties on the guns. That would indicate that they, too, don't have what they want. I must know who and what they are."

Margo suddenly leaned forward where she was sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Lamont, that's what I came to tell you. Shrevvy reports that he saw two men in raincoats get on the train for Beach City right behind Helga Pavlic yesterday!"

"They must have her then," Cranston said. "Who are they? Papescu pretended to despise them, but he could have been lying. That gas gun is a professional's weapon. They could be Soviet agents, or agents from some Iron Curtain country."

"That sounds logical, Lamont," Margo said. "We know Pavlic was probably a double or triple agent."

Lamont Cranston began to pace the floor of the hotel room. His heavy-lidded eyes that hid the piercing gaze of The Shadow were knitted in concentration. He began to talk aloud about the case. Pavlic's meeting, the death that was now definitely no accident, the hotrod of Buddy Masters, the foreign accents of the two older men, Peter Anders and Michael Masters.

"The Iron Curtain countries have a way of using refugees as informants," Cranston said. "There is something about those two men, Anders and Masters. They always spoke of themselves as *we*, as if they were part of a group. But they insisted that they only read about

Pavlic's death in the paper after Buddy Masters came home with that damaged hotrod, and . . . Margo!"

Cranston had stopped in mid-stride. Now he turned to look at his beautiful secretary. Margo herself stared at Cranston.

"What is it, Lamont?"

"What I just said. Anders and Masters said that they read about Pavlic's death. Margo, they called him Pavlic! That was what I sensed was wrong. Out here he was known as *Jonson*. But they knew his name was Pavlic. The newspaper never called him Pavlic but always Jonson!"

"Then they knew who he was *before* he was killed," Margo said.

"They had to!"

Margo was about to say more, when the telephone suddenly began to ring in the hotel room. Cranston motioned to Margo to answer it. The dark-haired woman picked up the receiver and listened for a second. Then she covered the mouthpiece and turned to Cranston.

"Altman," Margo said.

Cranston took the telephone. To Altman he was still alive. The voice of the FBI man was excited. But the voice was low, muffled, as if Altman were talking where others could hear him.

"Cranston? Listen closely," Altman's excited voice said. "I think I've spotted something. I'm not sure, and I can't talk now, but come out to The Cedars Rest Home immediately."

"A rest home?" Cranston said. "But— "

"Listen, I don't have much time, I think I'll be missed soon. It's not a rest home, it's a front for a gambling house! Tell them Morgan sent you and they'll let you in the back. I think I've found . . . sorry, have to go!"

The FBI man abruptly hung up at his end of the telephone. Cranston put down his receiver and faced Margo. The pretty woman waited on the edge of the bed. Cranston began to check his .45 automatic.

"That was Altman, about a gambling house! I think I'm going to have a talk with Sergeant Morgan, Margo. I want you to wait here. While you're here, call Burbank and check on those bank accounts I asked about, and have Burbank contact Interpol and give them a complete description of Peter Anders and Michael Masters!"

"What about you, Lamont? Are you going to let them think you're dead?"

"For a time," Cranston said, "but The Shadow will be very much alive."

Margo was already talking to Burbank as Cranston left the room and vanished down the stairs toward the basement and the garage where his Jaguar waited. When the small, black car drove out of the garage and into the night, it was The Shadow who sat behind the wheel and drove the car swiftly north toward Sea Gate.

12

SERGEANT FRED MORGAN had completed his report on the examination of Buddy Master's hotrod, and now returned down the silent corridor of the Sea Gate Police Station to his private office. The sergeant was more than pleased with the results of his study. The hotrod was definitely the car that had struck the late Anton Pavlic.

Inside his office, Morgan crossed to his desk. The office was dim, lighted only by the green-shaded desk lamp on his desk. As Morgan sat down to prepare the report for forwarding to Beach City, he looked up and stared for a time at the door of his office. The sergeant was sure that he had left the door open. It was a practice of his; it enabled him to hear what went on down the corridor in the main room of the station where his men worked on routine matters. Now the door was closed. Morgan continued to stare at the door. He was absolutely certain he had left it open. He sighed and thought he must be getting old. He stood up to go and open the door. It was then that he saw the figure standing blackly in the gloom of the corner farthest from his desk and the single lamp.

Morgan watched the indistinct figure. He was a trained policeman, and he did not scare easily. He reached for his pistol with one hand, and flicked up the button on his intercom with the other. The cloaked figure stepped out of the shadows and into the circle of light cast by the single desk lamp. Sergeant Morgan stopped reaching for his pistol. In the hand of the cloaked figure there was a large and steady .45 automatic. The pistol was point at the sergeant, and two hard eyes were fixed on Morgan from beneath the wide brim of the black slouch hat. The sergeant raised his hands, but when he spoke he inclined his head toward the open switch of his intercom.

"You won't get away with this, mister," Morgan said. The sergeant's face was turned toward the intercom. "You can't walk into a police station and pull a gun. My men will be in here in a moment!"

The Shadow's laugh was low in the office.

"That will be of no help, Sergeant Morgan. Your will not hear you."

"You know me?" Morgan said.

"The Shadow knows all, Morgan."

"My men won't hear me? You've tampered with the intercom, but how.."

"Let us say your men are temporarily tuned out from your voice, Sergeant," The Shadow said. "Don't worry, they will still do their work, but they will not, for the moment, hear you or come to your aid."

Sergeant Morgan slowly sat down. "You can do that?"

"I can," The Shadow said.

Morgan narrowed his eyes as he looked at the cloaked figure facing him.

"The Shadow?" Morgan said slowly. "I've heard of you."

"Then you know why I am here, Sergeant. I am interested in punishing the murderer of Anton Pavlic," The Shadow said.

Morgan laughed at The Shadow. "Murder? Hardly that, mister. Vehicular homicide maybe, but Buddy Masters is no murderer."

"You are wrong, Sergeant. It was murder, cold and planned, and the car had nothing to do with the death of Pavlic."

Morgan turned purple with anger. The small sergeant was so angry he forgot any fears he might have been feeling in the face of the automatic and the powers of The Shadow. Morgan thumped the report on his desk and all but exploded with his righteous anger.

"Nothing to do with the death? Analysis shows it's the car! Blood type on the bumper, bits of cloth from his the dents and scrapes! It's all right here in this file, whole thing in detail!"

"It is the car that *hit* Pavlic," The Shadow agreed.

"You bet it is! I've got an open and shut case if I had one. I've talked to every kid at that beach party went to. They all tell it the same, Buddy was gone nearly an hour, no one saw him. Most of

the kids necking up a storm under the houses and didn't see anyone! No one saw any strange adults hanging around. The only prints on the car belonged to the family and friends-Buddy, Peter Anders, the older Masters, Shirley, Mrs. Masters. On top of that the boy can't swear the heart charm was in the car. I got Shirley to admit she wasn't all that sure she saw it hanging in the car. Masters and Anders swear they saw the heart charm in the car, and those two would just about swear to anything to help the kid."

Morgan continued to thump on the manila folder all time he was talking. As he finished he opened the file and pushed it across the desk toward The Shadow. The crime fighter did not look down at the file. Morgan up into the burning eyes of The Shadow with a bit of triumph in the knowledge that he had solved the case and that it was a hit-and-run accident. As Morgan looked at the cloaked figure in front of him his face slowly changed. Morgan's expression became confused, and then suspicious.

"What the hell am I telling you all this for? What do you know about the case? You said it was murder? How the hell do you know? Maybe you did it, eh? Maybe you're the killer! If you know so much, just tell me how you knew about the car in the first place!"

"I've told you, Sergeant, I know all," The Shadow said.

Morgan stared hard at the hidden face of The Shadow as if to somehow pierce the folds of black cloth and perhaps recognize the mysterious figure in black.

"How could you know anything about the car unless you were in on something!" Morgan said. "You say it was murder. Can you prove that? Show me!"

From beneath the folds of his cloak The Shadow's hand emerged. He held out the innocent length of pipe that was the gas gun that had killed Anton Pavlic. Morgan took the gun. The sergeant stared at it, turned it seemed deeply puzzled.

"So it's a pipe. Pavlic wasn't clubbed."

"That, Sergeant Morgan, is an assassin's gas gun," Shadow said grimly. "I want you to check it for prints and anything else it might reveal."

"Gas gun?" Sergeant Morgan muttered as he held simple-looking piece of pipe. "Too rough, no prints on surface this rough." The sergeant looked up again. "How do you know this is a gas gun? Where did you get it?"

"I know, and I found it a hundred yards from the where Pavlic died," The Shadow said.

"You seem to know too damned much!" Morgan said. "Don't think you can get away with this."

"You cannot stop me, Sergeant," The Shadow said "and I know far more than you imagine."

"Such as?" Morgan sneered.

"Such as the graft you take from the gambling at The Cedars," The Shadow said softly. "Such as roulette plaque you suppressed when you found it in the possession of Pavlic the night he was killed."

Even the anger drained from the face of Sergeant Fred Morgan. The small man seemed to wilt where he sat behind his desk. Morgan's face was deathly pale, ashen, in the silence of his office. The sergeant swallowed, tried to swallow, but his mouth was dry, as dry as a desert of ashes. His hands had begun to shake where they still rested on the open file folder of his report to Beach City. Morgan gulped again, forcing his almost paralyzed throat to swallow. His eyes were fixed upward toward the judgment of The Shadow's fiery eyes. At last Morgan reached up with a shaking hand and brushed the across his eyes. He shuddered once, and blinked.

"How . . ." Morgan began, his voice hoarse, a vision in his eyes of prison and the end of his career.

"That night," The Shadow said, "I saw you hide the plaque. I know where the gambling house is."

"You . . . saw . . . me . . . Then you were here!"

"I have always been here, Morgan," The Shadow said.

Morgan gulped, his face ashen. "What do you want?"

"I want to know who owns the gambling house," The Shadow said. "I want to know how Pavlic was connected with the gambling."

"He wasn't," Morgan said. "He just played. I used to see him. That was where he went at night. I didn't know he had been there until I found the marker."

"Why did you hide it?" The Shadow asked.

Morgan reached into the bottom drawer of his desk as the Shadow watched him. Morgan's hand came up with the small blue square of plastic. The numerals 100 seemed to leap out at the sergeant as he placed the roulette chip before him on the desk. Morgan shrugged.

"I got scared when I saw it," Morgan said in a toneless voice. "I never did anything like this before. They came to me and offered me a lot of money to just look the other way. All my life I've been a good cop and who appreciates it? So I took my cut. Then Jonson, or Pavlic, was killed. I was sure it was an accident, but he had that plaque on him, and that would have ruined everything. I mean, maybe Pavlic got drunk at The Cedars and that was how he got hit. I didn't know, so I just hid the plaque. I didn't think it was important except it would expose the gambling. I mean, Pavlic was on foot, he couldn't have walked far, you see?"

"I am not interested in your petty rackets, Morgan," The Shadow said. "You made a mistake, perhaps you have learned your lesson, we will see. But I must know what Pavlic did at that gambling house."

"I told you, he just played. I saw him there every time he came down."

"He was not connected with the operation?"

"No, I'm sure of it."

"Who does operate the place, Morgan?"

Morgan hesitated. Then the small sergeant shrugged again, all the fight gone from his pale face.

"Lima," Morgan said. "Big Charlie Lima."

"From New York?"

"Yeh, do you know him too?"

The Shadow knew Big Charlie Lima very well. The big gambler was well known to New York city authorities. An honest gambler; as honest as any gambling owner could be. Not a bad man as racketeers went, not given to violence, but when a man worked in an illegal profession, violence had a way of becoming involved even in the of a nonviolent man. And Anton Pavlic had probably been in the gambling house of Big Charlie Lima only a short time before he died. Gambling houses did not usually open before dark, and Pavlic, as Morgan had pointed out, had been on foot that night.

"Just where is The Cedars, Morgan?"

"On the other side of the golf course from Sea Gate," Morgan said dully. "On that north side road. It's a house back from the road about four hundred yards from Cape Ambrose Highway."

"Not far from the gateway to the golf club?"

"Not far," Morgan said.

"Was Pavlic there that night?"

"Yeh," Morgan said, "he was there. He was there about a half an hour before he died."

In the silence of the office the sound of distant traffic passing through Sea Gate on the Cape Ambrose Highway seemed almost in the room itself. Morgan appeared to be listening to the traffic. The sergeant sat limp now, drained, his whole small body as tired as a man could become. The Shadow felt a certain sympathy for him. Any man could make one mistake. If it had been only one mistake.

"And where were you that night, Morgan?" The Shadow said grimly. "You were not here, and you arrived on the scene late."

"Me? You don't think . . . No, oh no! I was out in my patrol car! I was making rounds and I can prove it! I have ten witnesses! Maybe I took a little graft, all right. I was wrong, but I didn't kill anyone!"

"That can be checked, you understand?" "Go ahead and check. I'm no killer!"

"What do you know about a Count Istvan Papescu?"

"Nothing, except that he owns that big yacht out in the harbor, and he likes to gamble, too," Morgan said.

The Shadow remembered the big yacht. So it belonged to the chief of Liberation Front. Blackmail paid well. But, then, Papescu had mentioned a private fortune. The Shadow had a shrewd idea that Count Papescu's private fortune had long ago ceased to be a reality, if it ever had been. But the reputation of a private fortune could be a valuable asset to a man who had far more money than work could account for easily. Count Papescu was obviously a clever and careful man, he planned for all eventualities, and he was far from shrinking at violence if it became necessary. Lamont Cranston had reason to know that aspect of the exiled Rumanian. The Shadow wondered how Papescu would react to the resurrection of Lamont Cranston when the time came? But that time would not be yet, there was still work for The Shadow before Lamont Cranston could be brought back to life.

"Morgan, I will consider what to do with you and your gambling connection," The Shadow said with deliberation. "In the meantime, you will say nothing of this visit. Is that clear? Perhaps, if you work well on this case, I will say nothing. Later, the gambling house can be closed down if the people of Sea Gate continue to reject legal gambling. Is that understood?"

Sergeant Morgan nodded. The small man had a faint glimmer of returning hope in his eyes. Morgan was almost grateful as he watched the cloaked figure vanish from his office without a sound. He sat for a long time staring at the closed door of his office where The Shadow had been last seen by him. A full two minutes passed before there was a sudden voice on the intercom. Morgan jumped in his seat. The voice was matter-of-fact.

"Yeh, Sarge, you want something?" the voice said from the intercom speaker.

Morgan realized that his intercom key was still open. Outside in the main room of the station Patrolmen Jones was answering his superior's signal. Morgan stared at the speaker. It was as if time had stood still all the while The Shadow had been with him. Almost that the mysterious cloaked figure had never been in the room with Morgan at all. Morgan continued to stare at the closed door before him.

"Sarge?" the voice on the intercom said.

"Nothing, go to work," Morgan suddenly barked into the intercom. He felt some of his old confidence returning.

Out in the night, The Shadow had returned to his hidden Jaguar. The moon was all but down now, and the low black car blended into the darkness. Inside the car The Shadow became Lamont Cranston again. He started the motor and drove slowly and all-but-silently off into the night. He drove perhaps a mile to a spot near where the long-forgotten salesman had seen him

like a giant bat in the headlights that night. He stopped the Jaguar and reached into a special hidden compartment beneath the seat. He held a small, but heavy box in his hands. Sure that he was unobserved, Cranston opened the box and lighted a small light. He set a mirror up on the dashboard where it was illuminated by the light. He began to work on his face.

As The Shadow had decided, it was not yet time for Lamont Cranston to return to life. From what Morgan had said it seemed more than likely that Count Papescu and his friends would appear at the gambling house sooner or later. It was clear that they, too, had discovered Pavlic's connection with the illegal gaming establishment. But even more important for The Shadow's purpose this night, while The Shadow knew Big Charlie Lima, Lamont Cranston did not. It was as Kent Allard, the renowned explorer, that The Shadow knew Big Charlie so well. At this moment Kent Allard was presumably deep in the jungles of Africa on one of his many expeditions. Lamont Cranston had helped to finance this latest exploit of Allard's, and was, of course, in touch with Allard as far as the public knew. Both guises were only two of The Shadow's alter-egos, and this night Lamont Cranston would have to remain dead while Kent Allard made an unexpected return from the depths of Africa.

In the Jaguar The Shadow worked with speed and precision. A special dye from the black box transformed the light hair of Lamont Cranston into the dark hair of Kent Allard. The dye could not fade or wash out, but could be instantly removed if necessary. A quick manipulation with a hair brush turned Cranston's side-parted hair into Allard's brushed back hair without a part. A false mustache was deftly applied. When he was being Allard for any length of time, The Shadow grew a real mustache, but for tonight the false one would serve. A small hypodermic needle, filled with a harmless wax-like fluid, was injected beneath the skin of The Shadow's nose changing the hawklike nose of Cranston into the thicker, heavier nose of Kent Allard. A change of clothes from beneath the seat, a new expression of the facial muscles The Shadow could control completely, and the well-known figure of Kent Allard was sitting in the Jaguar.

The box returned to its hiding place, Kent Allard drove rapidly to the all-night Car-Rental Agency in Sea Gate and rented an inconspicuous Buick sedan. He then turned the car toward the golf club and The Cedars. Allard drove steadily down the dark lane of Cape Ambrose Highway, past the fatal gateway, and down the side road to The Cedars Rest Home. As he parked just out of sight of the entrance, he noted how close the illegal gambling house was to the golf club and the gateway in the distance across the course. Allard left the rented car and walked straight to the door of the gambling house. He limped slightly, the result of an old wound while exploring the High Himalayas and being attacked by a tiger. Allard seemed a shorter man than Cranston, his shoulders stooped from the years of carrying heavy loads on his expeditions. No one would have thought for an instant that Kent Allard and Lamont Cranston were the same man-or that they were both The Shadow.

Kent Allard entered the gambling house, and, with the mention of Morgan's name, was ushered into the hidden gaming rooms.

13

KENT ALLARD saw Count Istvan Papescu the moment he entered the plush and hidden gaming rooms. The small Rumanian was standing at the roulette table. Papescu looked up quickly as Allard came in, as if the count were on the alert for anyone who might come in. Papescu looked

at Allard, and then looked away. The count was not interested in Kent Allard, not as he would have been very interested in Lamont Cranston. Papescu went on with his play. Allard strolled up to watch. The count was a skilled and daring player, Allard noted, as he watched Papescu playing precise combination of six numbers each time, and watched the Rumanian's stack of plaques steadily increase. Allard surveyed the room while pretending keen interest in the progress of the roulette as if he were a gambler studying the game before beginning his play. He saw the silent and deadly George alone and watching from a table only a few feet from Papescu. The FBI man Altman was directly across the table from Papescu. Altman, too, was a skilled player, but on the conservative side. The FBI man played combinations of red and black, odd and even, and gave Allard only the briefest of glances. Altman's eyes, ostensibly on his game to anyone but the keenest observer, were really watching someone across the long room. Allard allowed his glance to stray in that direction. The FBI man was watching the cashier of the gambling house. Allard was puzzled until the cashier turned and showed his full face. It was Peter Anders! Anders was the cashier of the gambling house! The dark, stocky man was handing out money and chips, and talking to his daughter, Shirley Anders. The girl still seemed distraught. Even as Allard watched, Anders seemed to say something to her in anger.

Cranston, as Kent Allard, let his eyes, permanently fixed in a squint supposedly from the explorer's constant exposure to wind and sun, travel on around the large room. What he saw continued to surprise him. At a blackjack table across the brilliant room the man deftly dealing the cards for the house was Michael Masters. The dealer at the Baccarat table was one of the men in the raincoats who had been watching Pavlic and who had attacked him, Cranston. The man was not in his raincoat now, but Allard was certain of his identity. He continued his scrutiny, but saw no one else familiar. They, of course, did not recognize Cranston as Allard, and it was now very clear that the gambling house was somehow involved in the death, and life, of Anton Pavlic. Allard was about to casually approach the FBI man Altman, which was the main reason for coming to the gambling house, when a loud voice boomed behind him from across the entire room.

"Kent!" the voice echoed as heads turned to look. "Kent Allard, you old gypsy, why didn't you tell me you back!"

Allard turned to face Big Charlie Lima who half across the brightly lighted room to slap Allard on the back. The gambler was as big as his name implied, a giant of a man with the manner and strength of a grizzly bear. Lima beamed down at Kent Allard, his great paw and arm around Allard's shoulder in a huge bear hug. Allard had known Big Charlie for many years, and the gambler's loud, awkward manner hid a mind as quick as a snake. Big Charlie was a fair man, but he had learned well how to survive in a dangerous world. Allard was well aware that Lima could, and would, do anything necessary to protect himself, and it was more than possible that Anton Pavlic had gotten in Big Charlie's way somehow. But Allard hid all this behind a smile as big as Lima's smile.

"Hello, Charlie," Allard said. "You've got a nice place here. Do I have a chance?"

"In my place Kent Allard always wins, I fix that," Lima boomed. "I thought you were in Africa."

"I was until a few days ago," Allard said. "I finished and came home. Africa isn't what it used to be, too many politicians."

"Nothing's what it used to be, Kent," Lima agreed. "Look at me, down in the weeds to make a living."

Big Charlie insisted that his friend Kent Allard join him for a drink at the bar. The bar was darker than the main gambling room. Big Charlie and Allard sat on stools in a corner away from any other patrons. For a time Allard let Lima talk about his new gambling business. His mind was on a new discovery-the bartender was another of the men in the raincoats! Allard waited until the bartender was out of earshot.

"Your employees, Charlie," Allard said, "did you bring them with you?"

"Sure, don't I always? I moved 'em all down here, set 'em up in houses, you know?"

"Are they more than they seem?"

"You mean are they hoods? Hell no, Kent, you know me better than that," Lima said. "They're pros, you know? Experienced dealers, cashiers, you name it. I use only the best in my places. You can't run a good gambling place with hoods. You got to have real skilled men, legit men. You need hoods, you can always get the muscle."

"They look foreign," Allard said casually. "That Cashier, for instance."

"Anders? He is," Lima explained. "You know that little guy at the roulette table? Well, he's Count Istvan Papescu, runs an outfit called Liberation Front. He brings over these refugees from the Commies, see? Well, he comes to me one day and says he's got some refugees experienced in gambling houses. He says they need jobs. He says the jobs got to be legit, only I can see he really don't care, so I hires the refugees when I opened down here. Between you and me I don't think the refugees are using their right names, but who am I to yell?"

"How many are there?" Allard asked.

"Seven right now, I use some more back in New York," Lima said.

"Was Anton Pavlic one of them?" Allard said.

"Pavlic?" Lima considered. "No, I don't know one named Pavlic."

"Perhaps he called himself Jonson."

Big Charlie's face became cautious. The gambler looked around, and then at Allard. Lima seemed to hesitate for a moment before he spoke again.

"The guy who got killed? Yeh, Kent, I knew him, only he didn't work here, he was a customer."

"He gambled a lot?"

"Well, that depends what you mean," Lima said. "He was in here a lot, regular like a clock every couple of weeks or so, but he didn't gamble much."

"What do you mean, Charlie?"

"Well, Jonson'd come in real regular every time he came down to Sea Gate. He'd stay at the roulette table playing real careful, small stakes, and then he'd cash in and leave after maybe an hour."

"An hour?"

"No more," Lima said. "Between you and me he wasn't no real gambler."

"You said small stakes," Allard mused, "so he couldn't have won a lot."

"Didn't win or lose much," Lima said. "Funny, because he always bought a damned big stack of chips. never saw him play anything except roulette, and he played red and black only."

"How about the night he died?" Allard said. Big Charlie had been talking low, and now the gambler studied Allard. Lima seemed torn between friendship and the natural caution and suspicion of a man in his particular line of work.

"You working on this case for someone, Kent?" Lima said.

"Yes, Charlie, only keep it quiet, okay?" Allard said.

"Okay, Kent, and let me tell you I'm clean on this. I knew Jonson, but that was all. Besides, I don't go around hitting guys with cars. If it was me, you'd still be looking for the body."

"I'm sure of that, Charlie," Allard said. "Now what about that night?"

"Nothing special. Jonson came in, got his chips, played maybe an hour, cashed in and left."

"At what time?"

"About nine-thirty, same as usual," Lima said.

"How long would it take to get from here to the golf club gate?"

"Depends," Lima said. "By car a couple of minutes. If he walked maybe ten minutes, maybe twenty, depending on if he cut across the golf course."

"At any event," Allard mused, "it looks like he left here and went straight to that gate."

"It looks," Lima said.

"Thanks, Charlie, and keep it quiet, okay?"

"Anything you say, Kent. Keep the place out of it if you can, right?"

"I'll try, Charlie."

Allard left Big Charlie looking somber at the bar. Lima did not like trouble anywhere near him or his business. Before he left the bar, Allard noted that a new bartender had come on duty, one he did not recognize. In the main gambling room he strode straight to the roulette table. He placed a blue chip on red, and watched the spin of the wheel. He lost, and placed another blue chip on red. This time he won. He continued to play red for some time. Then, having noted the set of the wheel favored odd slightly and on the lower side, he began to play odd. He won slowly but steadily. No one had paid much attention to him since it became clear that he was a cautious gambler. After some twenty minutes, Allard had edged close to Altman. When both Papescu and George were looking intently at the wheel, Allard dropped a plaque from Altman's pile, picked it up, apologized, and handed it to Altman. With it there was a prepared note. Altman showed no expression. The note told Altman to meet him out in the grounds of the house, and told who he was—Lamont Cranston.

The note planted, Allard was about to move to the blackjack table to keep as far from Altman as possible, when he looked up and saw her. The woman from the Mercedes and the Beach City House dining room had walked in the door. Her beauty was even more pronounced in the complimentary lighting and lush surrounding of the gambling house. She walked directly across the room to the roulette table. Count Papescu smiled. As she approached Papescu, the small man took her hand and kissed it, his smooth voice murmuring a greeting.

"Charming, my dear," Papescu purred. "How is Walter?"

"Shaken, Istvan," the woman said. "He seems to think he had some sort of an hallucination. I've given him sedation, Arnold is staying with him."

Walter, Kent Allard guessed, was the frightened driver who had met The Shadow with such unnerving consequences. As he had expected, the driver had only a hazy recollection.

"Such men are dangerous to us," Papescu said. "I thin! we must get rid of Walter. He must have been drinking."

They were speaking very low, too low for anyone to have heard what they were saying unless that person also had the heightened hearing power of The Shadow, as Kent Allard had. But they became aware of being observed, and Papescu suddenly raised his voice.

"There, my dear, we are being rude. A husband and wife should never whisper their little family secrets in public eh? Come, my dear, try your luck."

The beautiful woman, then, was Mrs. Istvan Papescu. Again Cranston, or Allard as he was now, remembered that Anton Pavlic had been a ladies' man. He wondered if there might not be

some more personal reason for Papescu's interest in Pavlic. Then he saw that the small count was staring straight at him. Papescu had obviously noted Allard's interest in his whispered conversation with his wife. He was considering the import of this new knowledge, and Papescu's interest, when he felt a light touch on his leg below the edge of the table. He turned casually to see the hand of FBI man Altman resting lightly on the edge of the table. There was a scrap of paper in Altman's hand. Suddenly, Altman very faintly shook his head and removed his hand. Count Papescu was smiling at Allard.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Papescu said across the roulette table, "but did I hear Mr. Lima call you Kent Allard?"

"You did," Allard said.

"Imagine," Papescu said. "In such an out of the way spot. Your adventures are legendary, Mr. Allard. I understand you only recently returned from Africa? I would like to talk with you about the political situation down there. My organization is most interested in helping any refugees."

Allard watched Altman from the corner of his eye while smiling in a friendly manner at Papescu. The FBI man inclined his head slightly toward the doors to the grounds of the casino. Altman's hand held a twenty dollar chip out on the table. The FBI man wanted to meet Allard in the garden in twenty minutes. There was obviously too much attention now to pass the note. Already standing beside Papescu was the girl, Shirley Anders. There was an expression on the face of the young girl that Allard had seen too often before—hero worship of the famous explorer.

"Are you *really* Kent Allard?" Shirley Anders said.

"I am, Miss— .?" Allard was aware, of course, that as Kent Allard he did not know the pretty young girl. He felt sorry for young Buddy Masters, the girl was more than pretty now that she was dressed in evening clothes. She was a woman, her body curved and full beneath her white dress.

"Shirley Anders," the eager girl said. "I've read all about *you*! You climbed the biggest mountains, and . . ."

"The second biggest only, I'm afraid. Kanchenjunga."

"Well, you climbed the Himalayas, and you went to Tibet, and you explored Africa, and New Guinea, and Australia, and China, and just about everywhere!"

"Not quite everywhere," Allard said.

"You're just modest, a man shouldn't be modest!" the girl said. "You've *done* things. I never do anything. I mean, you're so famous and important and a real man!"

Allard smiled as Shirley Anders continued to talk about him. He was afraid she would want his autograph next. He was thinking of the fickleness of youth, the girl seemed to have forgotten Buddy Masters already, when his keen eyes saw the bartender who had been one of the men in the raincoats. The short, dark man was standing in the doorway that led out to the grounds of the gambling house where Altman wanted to meet Allard. The bartender was signaling to someone. Allard still smiled and listened to the girl, but his eyes darted in the direction the raincoat man was signaling. He saw Michael Masters leave his blackjack table to a relief dealer, and walk quickly toward the bartender. The two men went out into the grounds.

"Can I have your autograph, Mr. Allard?" Shirley Anders said.

"Of course," Allard said.

He quickly signed his name to a menu of the casino, smiled at the girl, and began to walk toward the door out into the grounds. He walked casually until he was outside and hidden from view. Then he vanished into the bushes that surrounded the large house of the casino.

14

THE SPRAWLING grounds of The Cedars touched the side road on one side, and led down to an inlet of the sea on the other side. At the edge of the lawn, the trees, and the thick bushes that formed the grounds near the inlet, there was a large boathouse. The boathouse was two stories high, had space inside for three boats to tie up under shelter, and a large spotlight was mounted at the corner closest to the main house of the casino. This light was on to illuminate the grounds for those who wanted a brief respite from the games inside. There were two boats tied up inside the boathouse. A third boat had just arrived and bobbed now against the wooden dock inside the boathouse.

In this boat a short, stocky man in a raincoat held the boat against the dock, its powerful outboard motor still on but idling as the man looked up at two other men. The two men on the dock were Michael Masters and the bartender from the gambling house. All three men were talking low and urgently. The man in the boat held the boat to the dock as he spoke. The two men on the dock were squatted down so that they could speak low.

"He'll be all right," the man in the boat said. "He lost a lot of blood, but we had to get him out of there."

"I know," Michael Masters said. "The doctor says he's going to recover?"

"Yes, the wound was not so bad, he has had much worse, Michael. Someday, I will have the pleasure to kill that George!"

"What about Cranston?" the bartender said.

"No one has seen him since," Masters said. "Perhaps they have killed him."

"There is something very strange about this Cranston," the man in the boat said. "The way he struck me and Vincent. There is much training in him. He has no fear, and he is quick as a cat, Michael. A man like him we could have used with us, yes?"

"You are sure Papescu took him?" Masters said.

"Pauli says yes," the man in the boat said, "and he was awake if wounded. Vincent here, and I, that Cranston had placed us to sleep."

"What does he want, this Cranston?" the bartender, Vincent, said.

"I do not know," Masters said, "but I, too, wonder about him. When he was with the police at my house I felt that he was listening to *us*, not to what we said. I fear we made some error when we spoke, I saw it on his face."

"Now Papescu has him," the man in the boat said. "If you made some mistake in your story now *they* know it. Cranston would tell, I have seen a man like that George do his friend's work before."

"If only you had not bungled it with Cranston," Masters said, "I'm sure he must know where it is!"

"We did not bungle, Michael, but we were beaten," the man in the boat said. "It was that Cranston himself. Otherwise that pig George could not have surprised the three of us."

"Pauli is hurt badly. We have kidnaped," the bartender said. "Is it worth it, Michael?"

"Yes, Vincent, it is worth it!" Masters said,

There was a silence in the gloom of the boathouse. The three men were engrossed in their own thoughts for a moment. The water lapped against the dock, and the small boat with its idling motor bumped lightly against the wood. The three men were so engrossed that they did not notice a faint movement in the darkest part of the boathouse. A black shadow seemed to move. It had been there for some time, the dark area in the boathouse, but now it moved toward the three men. A faint creaking of the wood could have been from the wind that was rising now in the late night hours. At last, Masters looked at the man in the boat. The man still held the boat to the dock by one hand as his motor idled.

"I can get nothing from the woman," Masters said. "Perhaps we should move her to the cabin with Paull. It is dangerous to keep her here."

"You had to talk to her, Michael," the bartender said. Before Masters could answer, the eerie laugh filled the gloom of the boathouse. The three men jumped, their eyes searching the dimness. The weird laugh came again. It seemed to echo from every corner of the boathouse, blending with and dominating the lapping of the water and the rising wind. Masters leaped up to stand and stare into the shifting shadows made by the dim light reflecting from the moving surface of the water. The bartender, Vincent, froze where he was, crouched and unable to move. The man in the boat held tight to the dock and his eyes showed a sudden fear. The unseen voice mocked.

"Three conspirators," the voice said, "what will your crimes gain you?"

"Where are you?" Masters cried. The tall, slender man had much courage. He stood facing the empty darkness with defiance while the bartender cringed at his feet and the man in the boat watched warily.

"The weed of crime bears bitter fruit, Michael Masters," the unseen voice said. "What have you done with the woman? What is it you seek at such cost?"

"Crime? We have done nothing we did not have to do!" Masters said, the tall man's voice angry, almost bitter. "Who are you!? Where are you hiding?"

"Papescu's tricks!" the man in the boat said suddenly. "Get in, quick!"

Even as he spoke, the man in the boat threw his motor into gear and released his hold on the dock. The boat began to back out of the boathouse. Masters moved like lightning. Both Masters and the bartender jumped into the moving boat. They acted with the speed and precision of men accustomed to moving in a crisis. They were all three in the boat, and out of the boathouse, before the great black-cloaked figure of The Shadow could reach the edge of the water. The Shadow stood on the dock and watched them vanish into the night out on the water. Angry with himself for not realizing what they could do to escape, The Shadow stood at the edge of the water and listened until the sound of their engine faded to the east toward the open sea. Wherever they were hiding was in that direction, it was good to know that much at least.

Quickly, then, The Shadow began to search the boathouse. The whole boathouse was bathed in patches of light from the spotlight mounted outside. But The Shadow found nothing on the first floor. The door to the second floor was locked. The Shadow extracted a ring of keys from the folds of the black cloak. His long fingers worked on the lock. It opened with the third key, and the shrouded figure floated up the stairs. The Shadow moved swiftly but warily through the sail lofts and storerooms. In the third room, a sail loft filled with old and rotted sails and a fantastic cluster of old booms and rudders, he found Helga Pavlic.

The woman was tied to a chair, gagged, and her eyes were wide with fear and fright as she heard The Shadow. In the pale light from the spotlight outside all Helga could see was a figure that approached her. She struggled in the chair, her head moving as if she wanted to tear away the gag and scream. Then her fearful eyes saw The Shadow cross a patch of light and she knew

him. Hope came into her frightened eyes. She sat motionless in the chair as The Shadow removed her gag and untied her hands from behind her. Helga Pavlic began to sob hysterically. She fell forward and buried her face in the folds of the black robe of The Shadow.

"Thank God! Thank God," Helga sobbed.

"Have no fear, Helga, you are safe now," The Shadow said.

"I knew you would find me," Helga sobbed. "I knew! They made me come here. From the train. They sat down with me on the train and they made me come here. I was afraid of them."

"Did they harm you?" The Shadow said grimly.

The woman shook her head, her sobs already dying. She was a strong woman, and now she regained control of herself as quickly as she had lost control in her relief at the sight of The Shadow.

"No, they did not harm me. But I was afraid of them."

"You are sure?" The Shadow said.

"Yes, they did not touch me. They only tied me here and asked so many questions," Helga said. "They said they did not want to hurt me. I was afraid only of being held here. I think they, too, are afraid."

"Of what, Helga?" The Shadow said.

"I don't know, someone who threatens them. Perhaps more than one. They spoke of a George. Do you know a George?"

"I do," The Shadow said grimly. "He will be punished."

"They are afraid of this George and of other people,"

Helga said. "There is something they want that is dangerous."

"Do you know what it is?"

The woman shook her head, her blonde hair catching the light from beyond the window of the sail loft.

"No, they just kept asking me where *it* was, who had *it*, what Atnon had done with *it*. They wanted to know who Anton had met that night. I told them I did not know anything, but they would not believe me."

"They asked who Anton met?" The Shadow said.

"Yes," Helga said. "They called Anton a *swine*. They said they were glad he was dead, and they asked if I were part of his scheme. I told them I did not know what scheme Anton was part of."

"Do you think they killed Anton?" The Shadow asked. The woman again shook her head. "I don't know. They spoke as if they did not know who killed him, but that could have been a trick. They asked over and over where Anton had hidden it, who he had sold it to, and what did I know about Papescu? I know only that Anton worked for this Papescu once, I told them that but they did not believe me."

"They were sure that you and Anton were in some kind of 'scheme' together?"

"Yes," Helga said.

"Had you ever seen any of these men before?" The Shadow asked.

"No."

"None of them ever came into the Club Zagreb to talk to Anton? They were not among the frightened men you said often came to talk to Anton?"

"No," Helga Pavlic said, "I never saw any of these men before."

Beneath his black slouch hat The Shadow's piercing eyes studied the blonde woman. It was possible that she was lying, playing some devious and dangerous game of her own. She and

Pavlic could have been in a scheme together, and now she had only to wait a short time and then she could have the scheme to herself. But she could not have killed her husband, she had been in New York. Altman had seen her there at the Club Zagreb all that night.

"Very well, Helga," The Shadow said. "I am going to release you. You will go straight to the police station in Sea Gate, Do not tell the police anything except that you were delayed. They will want you to identify Anton, and then I want you to wait for Lamont Cranston, do you understand? You are to wait for a man named Lamont Cranston."

"Yes," Helga said. "I understand."

"Good," The Shadow said. "I think we are coming closer to the reason for Anton's death. I must now find out more about these men who abducted you, and . . ."

The faint sound would have been heard by no one but The Shadow. A soft, stealthy footstep outside the boathouse. Someone was walking very softly near the boathouse. The Shadow held his hand up to Helga to warn her to keep silent, and glided across the cluttered sail loft to the window that overlooked the lawn and trees on the landward side of the boathouse. At first The Shadow saw nothing but the trees and thick bushes blowing in the late night wind. In the glare of the spotlight mounted on the boathouse, the grounds of The Cedars looked like an eerie scene on the surface of the moon. Then The Shadow saw the man. He was walking cautiously at the very edge of the thick growth of bushes and trees that surrounded the boathouse and stretched in a semi-circle all the way to the corner of the gambling house. The man appeared to be looking for something—or someone.

The man was indistinct, on the edge of the glare of light, as if carefully remaining half-hidden. He was not searching the ground or the bushes as if for some thing, but was looking carefully around in the night as if looking for *someone*. Then, even as The Shadow watched from the window above, the man cocked his head to listen. The Shadow listened. He, too, heard the new sound. There was a faint rustling in the bushes below. The man standing below turned to stare into the thick bushes. Suddenly, the man walking below reached into his jacket, inside his jacket to where a shoulder holster would be. From his window above, The Shadow heard another sound—a very soft "plop" noise. In an instant the man at the edge of the bushes below staggered, grasped his throat, and fell to the grass. There was a sound of running in the bushes and a splash of something thrown into the water. The man who had fallen crawled weakly on the ground.

The Shadow leaped from the window of the boathouse. In the full glare of the spotlight on the boathouse, The Shadow plummeted to the ground a floor below like a great bat flying through the night. He landed almost on top of the man on the ground. The man lay face down, crawling. The Shadow bent to help. He turned the fallen man over. It was FBI agent Altman! The FBI man opened his eyes to stare up at the black-cloaked figure of The Shadow. Altman did not seem to know what he saw.

". . . pipe . . . gas . . . I saw the . . ."

Altman shuddered and lay still, his eyes staring up into the dark sky. He was dead.

The Shadow saw at once that Altman was far beyond help. He stood up and turned to pursue the unseen killer. Whatever Altman had seen, The Shadow would never know unless he caught the killer who had struck again. The Shadow was halfway to the gambling house when he heard the shouting. The people were pouring from the main house and coming toward the boathouse. They shouted and screamed like a mob after some wild animal. The Shadow guessed at once that he had been seen as he leaped from the boathouse in the full light of the spotlight. Someone had seen him, perhaps many people on the wide casino verandah, and now they were a mob howling for the kill.

The Shadow raced back into the boathouse and up the stairs to the sail loft. He repeated his warning to Helga Pavlic to say nothing, to not let the mob see her, to blend into the mob or they would perhaps harm her if they found her alone in the boathouse. Then The Shadow leaped again from the boathouse. He leaped this time from a side window and vanished into the night as the mob from the casino reached the boathouse and poured inside.

Some ten minutes later, as the people were just returning from their fruitless search of the boathouse, Kent Allard walked back into the gambling house. Big Charlie Lima was shouting orders to his staff. The big gambler was obviously very angry at this unwanted intrusion into his orderly operation. Lima had no time for his friend Allard now. The casino was a hubbub of excited voices all talking about the giant bat the people on the verandah had seen fly out of the boathouse. Many of the people seemed scared out of their wits, and the police had been called already. Altman's body had been discovered, and the people seemed close to panic. Allard let his eyes search the room. Count Papescu, the woman, and George were still close to the roulette table. They were not close to panic, but they were clearly worried-they had seen the giant bat before. Even as Allard watched, the three of them started for the door. They barely glanced at Allard. He could not help thinking how much more worried they would be if they knew that Allard was really the supposedly dead and buried Lamont Cranston.

Cranston, as Kent Allard, decided to let them go this time. He had noticed a much more interesting fact. The girl, Shirley Anders was wandering around the room as if frantically looking for someone. Peter Anders was not in the cashier's cage! The stocky man had been replaced by a stranger. Allard strode across the excited room to where Big Charlie Lima was trying to calm down his patrons.

"Pete Anders?" Charlie said, "He got a call, Kent, and had to run off. Said it was important. What the devil do you make of all this giant bat stuff?"

"Hallucination, probably," Allard said.

"The dead guy ain't no hallucination" Lima said.

But Allard's mind was on Peter Anders. A telephone call before the *bat* had been seen. Allard had a shrewd guess who the call was from. Masters and the other two would have wanted to talk about the strange figure they had seen in the boathouse. Allard wanted to know a lot more about Peter Anders and Michael Masters. He was on his way to the telephone booth just inside the door when he felt a light hand on his arm. Shirley Anders stood beside him. The girl was scared out of her wits.

"I *saw* it, Mr. Allard! It was *awful*! A real giant bat. I don't care what they say!" the girl said, and her eyes were close to tears again. "I can't find my father. I'm scared."

"It's all right, Miss Anders, Mr. Lima says your father just had to leave earlier. I'm sure he'll be back for you."

"But I'm afraid," Shirley Anders said. "Could you drive me to Seat Gate?"

"All right," Allard agreed, "but I have to make a call first."

In the telephone booth, sure that he was alone, Allard called Margo at The Beach City House. Margo was more than excited. She reported that Burbank had located five bank accounts in all in the name of Anton Pavlic. The total sum was over \$50,000!

"But that isn't the important news, Lamont," Margo said into the phone, unable, of course, to see that she was speaking to him as Kent Allard. "Interpol knows Masters and Anders well, at least they know two men of their exact descriptions. Interpol says even the aliases fit, their real names are Mastrovic and Andrevski. They were both famous freedom fighters in Poland. The

Russians want them for revolutionary activities and political assassinations! They both have prices on their heads."

"All right, Margo," Allard said. "Now listen, I want you to meet me at The Sea Gate Motel, I'll call for a room. Bring your waitress disguise. No, you better wear it in case anyone sees you. Right. Start at once."

Allard arranged for a room at The Sea Gate Motel, and left the booth. He was thinking about two men named Mastrovic and Andrevski, Men with prices on their heads in Russia were desperate men. And they were men of violence and conviction. He doubted that either of them would have hesitated a second to kill Pavlic if he threatened them in any way.

15

KENT ALLARD was still thinking about Mastrovic and Andrevski while the girl chattered beside him all the way into Sea Gate. He drove fast. Shirley Anders seemed to have recovered from her fright, as young people do, and now she chattered with excitement about the giant bat she had seen.

"I really saw it," the girl said. "Way off near the boathouse. It flew right out of the window! That poor man, they say he must have died of fright. Not a mark on him I heard Mr. Lima say. Did you know him, Mr. Allard?"

"I didn't see the body."

"You didn't go down to the boathouse? Well, he was that man standing right next to you at the roulette table. I remember him from when I talked to you."

"I remember him," Allard said, "but I didn't know him."

"What a terrible way to die— scared to death!" the girl said. "I hate to think about death, it's so awful, so . . . well . . . nothing, you know? I mean, I never want to die, I want to live all the way!"

"I suppose we all do," Allard said. "How long have you been in this country, Miss Anders?"

"Me? How could you tell? Isn't my accent all gone?"

"I talked to your father at the cashier's cage. Anders couldn't be your right name."

"He changed it," the girl said. "It was Andrevski. Daddy's a famous man, but he's in danger so we hide. I don't know just what it is, the danger, but I know Daddy and the others are always afraid of something. Sometimes I'm afraid of them, they seem so violent. I was just a little girl when we came here. That was nine years ago."

"You've always been in Sea Gate?"

"Oh no, we lived in New York until about two years ago when Daddy started working for Mr. Lima," Shirley Anders said. "I liked it in New York, but Daddy liked it better down here."

"Do you know why?"

"It's crazy, isn't it? I mean, liking this hick place better than New York. I guess he felt safer down here. He wasn't so scared, until about a year ago."

"A year ago he became scared?" Allard said. That was just the time Pavlic began to come to Sea Gate.

"He sure did. I hoped we'd go back to New York, but we didn't. I mean, I hate this awful place, it's so dull."

Allard was thinking about two wanted revolutionaries, and Papescu who brought illegal refugees into the country, and Anton Pavlic who had once worked for Papescu as well, perhaps, as the Reds themselves. It was beginning to come very clear. But he had reached Sea Gate by now, and beside him Shirley Anders suddenly spoke again.

"You can drop me at the police station, Mr. Allard. Daddy was going to take me to see Buddy before he went off."

"He'll probably look for you at the station," Allard said.

"Anyway, I want to cheer up Buddy," the girl said. "Are you staying in town?"

"I don't know, probably not," Allard said. He did not want Anders or Masters looking for Kent Allard.

He left the girl at the police station and drove straight to the motel. They had his room ready, but Margo was not yet there. He tipped the attendant to return his rented car and pick up his Jaguar. Inside the motel room he went into the bathroom. He had made certain that the attendant had barely seen his face. Now, in the bathroom, he went to work. No one at the motel had seen Kent Allard, and it was time for Lamont Cranston to return to life.

The dye came out easily, he recombined the hair in its side part. A special solvent injected under the skin of his nose harmlessly dissolved the wax that had changed the shape of his nose. He removed the mustache. When he heard the Jaguar drive up and park, he waited a few minutes, and then slipped silently out and brought back the clothes of Lamont Cranston. A few minutes later he emerged from the bathroom fully returned to Lamont Cranston. A half an hour later Margo arrived wearing her waitress disguise.

"I used the same disguise, it was effective at the club Zagreb," Margo explained. "Why do we need it, Lamont?"

"I'm sure that the gambling house is involved in this whole case, Margo," Cranston said. "I want you to get a job there and watch Anders and Masters. A note from Kent Allard to Lima will get you the job, I'm sure."

"You think Pavlic was winning at gambling?"

"No, Margo, but he went there very often. I found Helga Pavlic there, Anders and Masters and their gang had her. I'm not exactly sure what they are doing in this case yet, but they are obviously looking for something the same as Liberation Front. It appears that Anton Pavlic died for something he had, but no one appears to have found what it was they wanted."

"Would a gang kill Pavlic without getting what they wanted if it was important enough to kill for?" Margo observed.

"You have a good point, Margo," Cranston said, "but I have a strong idea that it was equally important for them to get rid of Pavlic. With the money Pavlic had, his connection to Liberation Front, the three suicides of refugees in hiding who all *knew* Pavlic, it seems to me that there is only one answer—Pavlic was blackmailing the refugees *on his own*."

"You mean, Lamont, that he stole Liberation Front records, and then used those records to blackmail the same victims?" Margo said.

"That's just about it," Cranston said. "He must have blackmailed the same people Papescu was blackmailing. For three of the poor victims the double strain was too much. They felt so hopeless that they killed themselves rather than go on."

"That would be very dangerous for Liberation Front," Margo said. "A blackmailer like Papescu never wants his victims to become *too* desperate."

"Precisely," Cranston said. "The great danger to any blackmailer is desperation to the point of no longer caring. That is when the victim either tells, fights, or gives up by suicide or confession."

A blackmailer is only safe as long as his victim can afford to preserve his secret, or cares to keep his secret. An international blackmailer of Papescu's proportions and respectability would be particularly careful not to drive anyone too far."

"So when Pavlic appeared and became greedy," Margo said, "Papescu's operation was in grave danger, Especially after the three suicides. Papescu could never know when the next squeezed victim would confess and implicate him instead of killing himself."

"Exactly. So Papescu would want to stop Pavlic as well as secure the return of the stolen records," Cranston said.

"And so would the victims!" Margo said. "They would want to stop Pavlic and destroy the records!"

"Perhaps, Margo, but I have an idea those records are even more valuable. Papescu just about said that the records would reveal his whole operation! Those records must be both identifiable and traceable to Liberation Front."

"What could they be?"

"I would say microfilm," Cranston said. "Pavlic would not have been stupid enough to steal the originals, and quite clearly Papescu did not know of Pavlic's activities until very recently. Pavlic must have been blackmailing for years, so it follows that Papescu did not know his records had been pilfered until the three suicides, exactly the same as we."

"Who could possibly have the microfilm?"

"That is the big question," Cranston said. "Possibly Papescu has them, and is hiding the fact. Possibly Anders and Masters have them, and are also hiding the fact. Frankly, I'm not sure. A third possibility is that no one has the film, and Pavlic hid it."

"Is that likely?" Margo said.

"Yes and no," Cranston said. "A blackmailer usually has his information carefully hidden, especially if he is meeting one of his victims at a lonely gateway. However, I have a very strong suspicion that Pavlic was not meeting a victim, but a confederate!"

"You mean someone we don't know?"

"Possibly, or probably someone we do know but who is carefully hidden from us. Helga would be the most logical, but so far she is the only one actually ruled out. Anders and Masters were here in Sea Gate, Papescu had a large organization and it could have been any of them. Sergeant Morgan knew more about Pavlic than he cares to say. And any single one of them could have been double-crossing his own people! Whoever it may be, he undoubtedly has the microfilm, and has already killed twice to protect that film!"

"Twice, Lamont?" Margo said.

"Yes," Cranston said grimly. "The FBI man Altman was killed tonight. The same weapon, a gas gun."

"That's a professional's weapon," Margo exclaimed. "And Masters and Anders were professional revolutionaries and assassins."

"Papescu and George and the others are professionals, too, Margo. Don't forget the woman, Papescu's wife. And, Margo, Pavlic himself was a professional."

"You mean he could have had such weapons from his work with the Iron Curtain side?" Margo said.

"It's possible, Margo."

"Which means the guns could have been used by anyone who worked with Pavlic," Margo said. "Why was Altman killed, Lamont?"

"He obviously saw something, or someone, in that casino. He wanted to tell me, but we never had the chance. Whatever it was it could not have been conclusive or he would have made an arrest. And, also, whatever it was, it was known to him but not to me. There is some element in all this that I am missing, I know that . . ."

The sound of glass smashing, of glass falling to the floor of the motel room, and the sound of the shots loud and echoing like explosions inside the room, came all at the same time. The smashing of the window, and the first shot, and Lamont Cranston pushing Margo to the floor before he dove for the floor himself, all happened in the first instant. Time seemed to stand still. The brief seconds it all took stretched into an eternity. The first shot smashed into the wall behind where Cranston pushed Margo and fell himself.

The second shot buried itself in the floor. The third shot hit Margo. She screamed once. Footsteps ran away from the broken window. Cranston crawled to Margo. Blood spread on the cheap motel carpet. Margo was unconscious. Cranston searched for the wound. He found it high up in her chest on the right side. A bad wound. But, his practiced eye told him, not fatal. Margo had only fainted, but she was badly hurt. Cranston ran to the telephone and called Sergeant Morgan.

"Morgan? Cranston here. Yes! Send an ambulance, my secretary has been shot! Hurry!"

When Cranston turned, Margo lay looking up at him with her eyes open. The beautiful woman was in great pain, but there was a faint smile on her face.

"I'll be . . . all right . . . Did you see . . ."

"No, whoever it was ran too fast. I had to tend to you, Margo."

"Are you , . all . . right?" Margo whispered from where she lay, her blood soaking the carpet around her.

"Yes, damn it, that had to be meant for me! Someone must have seen me pass that note to Altman and guessed I was there to talk with him. I bungled the whole thing! That's all it could be, Margo. Someone followed me back from the gambling house and tried to shoot me because they were afraid I knew something the same as Altman. No one knew I would be in this motel. I only took the room just before I left the gambling house."

"Someone could have. . . followed . me."

"In that waitress uniform? How would they have known who you were, or that you would lead them to me?" Cranston said. "No, it has to have been someone who connected me to Altman, and who thought I might have contacted him."

"I'm., glad . . . you're , . safe , . ." Margo whispered.

"Someone has a lot to pay for, Margo, and they will pay highly!"

In the distance the sound of the siren was faint but growing rapidly louder in the night. The ambulance approached swiftly. Cranston kneeled beside Margo to comfort her. But she was growing weak from the loss of blood, and when the doctor and the ambulance attendants ran into the room Margo was unconscious again. The doctor worked over her to stop the bleeding, but he could only staunch it. A transfusion apparatus was set up in the ambulance. Sergeant Morgan stood beside Cranston and took down the details of the shooting. Cranston gave Morgan the details, but he did not tell the small sergeant of his suspicions or activities that night. Cranston answered Morgan's question in a flat, distracted monotone as he watched his friend and secretary being carried out on a stretcher. Margo seemed not at all like herself. She lay pale and forlorn in her waitress disguise, her face made up and changed for her role, the uniform now wrinkled and bloody. She looked not at all like Margo Lane, but only like the anonymous waitress from the

Club Zagreb. Cranston suddenly stopped thinking. He stared at the vanishing form of Margo—the waitress at the Club Zagreb!

"How come she was wearing that waitress uniform?" Morgan asked. "She was your secretary, you said."

Cranston mumbled something in answer, he hardly knew what. He was thinking of Margo as the waitress from the Club Zagreb. He, himself, had never been inside the Club Zagreb until after the death of Pavlic. But Margo had, and so had Altman! All at once Lamont Cranston remembered that he was, indeed, Lamont Cranston. Here, now, in this room he was *Lamont Cranston*. But it had been Kent Allard who had passed the note to FBI man Altman. It had been Kent Allard who had driven into Sea Gate, and then to the motel. But when the shots were fired he had been Lamont Cranston. Why would someone who wanted to stop Kent Allard from talking shoot at Lamont Cranston? Unless the unknown attacker had seen him change, but he doubted that, he had been hidden in the bathroom. It could have been—a simple error, the killer having seen Allard enter the motel room, and shooting without seeing that he was not shooting at Allard. Cranston doubted this. The room was well lighted, the window no more than ten feet from where he had been standing.

"You want to come down to the station?" Morgan said.

"No," Cranston said. "But I suggest you get LaPine and Cardona back to Sea Gate as soon as possible."

"Don't give me advice, Cranston!" Morgan barked. The small sergeant had regained all his customary bluster and belligerence.

"I may well give you a murderer!" Cranston said. "You see to it that my secretary receives the best of care, Morgan, I trust you."

Cranston spun on his heel and ran out of the motel room to his low, black Jaguar. Behind him Sergeant Morgan was shouting for Cranston to stop, to come back, the sergeant was not finished with him! Cranston ignored the choleric sergeant. In the Jaguar he started the engine, and with a squeal of tires, roared out of the motel along Cape Ambrose Highway. A mile or two away he stopped. When the car started again, and roared through a faintly growing dawn past the fatal gateway, it was The Shadow behind the wheel, his piercing eyes burning with justice and retribution, the black robes billowing enormous in the faint grey light.

16

MICHAEL MASTERS, born in a far-off country as Mikhail Mastrovic, sat at his desk in the tiny study of his cottage on the beach. He sat in the dark. There was a pistol in his hand. It was a large, heavy Mauser, and he rested it flat on the desk. His eyes were half-closed with a desperate weariness. When the telephone on his desk jangled, Masters jerked awake, his hand raising the pistol automatically. The telephone continued to ring. Masters stared at it. Then he lowered his pistol and picked up the receiver. For a time he listened. Then he spoke in a harsh, hoarse voice.

"No, nothing," Masters said into the receiver. "No. Yes, perhaps we are safe after all. Whatever he was, perhaps he did not see us. We could not see him. Yes, a trick perhaps. A microphone or such things. No, how can he know who we are? The woman did not know us, how could she tell him?"

The distant voice at the other end of the telephone seemed to grow louder. In it, even so far away, there was a clear tone of hysteria. Masters sighed, and then spoke even more harshly.

"Yes, yes, I know we are not safe until we find it, of course. You think I am a fool? Very well, I know what we must do, but I do not like it! Yes, if the voice comes again I am ready!"

Masters hung up the receiver. For a time the tall man sat and looked at the silent telephone. Then he sat back in his desk chair and appeared to listen to the faint dawn wind. The whole world was silent in the dawn but for the low brushing of the wind. Masters began to mutter half aloud, "Stupid fears. Giant bats and voices! Childish delusions."

The mocking laugh cut through the silence.

"For what are you ready, Michael Masters?"

Masters whirled, came to his feet, his pistol steady and pointed in an instant. The tall man half-crouched in the cover of his desk, his eyes assessing his position with the skill of a trained guerrilla.

"Where are you? It is a trick, no?"

"A trick of your conscience, Michael Masters?" the voice said sternly.

"I have done nothing to... How do you know my name? Who are you?" Masters said, his pistol raised, his body tense and ready, his eyes searching the darkness of his small study.

"The Shadow knows all, Masters. The Shadow knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men!"

"Shadows? Evil? What stupidity is this?" Masters cried. The tall man edged sideways around his desk, the Mauser raised and ready. Master's eyes squinted to penetrate the darkness. It was only then that the tall man saw the looming black figure that had seemed to be only a darkened area of the room. Now The Shadow stepped forward, his shrouded figure towering in the room. The Shadow's eyes glowed in the faint grey dawn light through the single window of Masters' study. The tall man raised his pistol.

"So, you are then not invisible?" Masters said. "Are you also human and can die?"

"You will kill me, Masters?" The Shadow said.

"I have killed," Masters said.

"Yes, you have killed for a reason, in defense, for a cause," The Shadow said. "But there is no evil in you, Michael Masters, you will not kill without a reason. You will not kill what you do not yet know is an enemy."

Slowly Masters lowered his pistol. The tall man stared into the burning eyes of the Shadow. He passed his hand over his eyes, and the gun dropped to his side.

"No, I want no more killing. I want only peace," Masters said.

"Was Pavlic, then, the last of your killings?" The Shadow demanded suddenly.

Masters jerked backward. "I did not kill Pavlic! My son did not kill Pavlic!"

"But you knew him! You knew Anton Pavlic very well!" The Shadow thundered in the small dark room.

"No! I know no Pavlic!"

"Do not lie, Masters! When the police came to you and asked about the death of the man who was struck by the car, you called that man Pavlic. But no one here in Sea Gate knew him as anything but Mr. Jonson! The papers called him Jonson! Yet you called him Pavlic. Because you knew him!"

Masters stared at the black cloaked figure before him. The piercing eyes seemed to bore into the tall man.

"That was it, what Cranston heard," Masters said slowly. "We were stupid, and Cranston told you! You are with Papescu!"

"No, Mikhail Mastrovic, I am not with Papescu. I fight all evil, and the count is a man of great evil. Tell me why you hated Pavlic and Papescu."

The tall man now sat down heavily into his desk chair. The pistol rested on his desk, his hand still on it, but the pistol did not move. Masters looked up at the figure of the secret avenger. The tall man appeared crushed, the fight gone, a tired and weary man.

"You know who I am? Mastrovic. That was what you called me," Masters said.

"Mikhail Mastrovic and Peter Andrevski, two names with honor," The Shadow said. "How are you reduced to abducting women?"

"We thought she would know," Masters said dully.

"You must tell me the whole story, from the start," The Shadow said.

Masters nodded slowly. The tall man pushed his pistol away. Masters looked once at his pistol lying on the desk, and then pushed it away. He leaned forward as he spoke, his hands clasped between his knees in the growing dawn light that came grey through the single window.

"We had families, we were too well known, we had to run. Peter Andrevski left his wife dead behind on our trip. We got out. Papescu found us and helped us. Oh, he was so helpful. There was a price on us, we had to hide, change our names. He got us into this country many years ago. Then he told us it was illegal and we would pay him or he would expose us. We could not risk that, so we paid.

"Then a year ago this Pavlic appeared here. He was clever, All these years we could not accuse Liberation Front because that would expose us to deportation and to our enemies as well. Besides, we had no real proof against Liberation Front. We would endanger our families, our friends, and could not be sure of hurting Papescu. So we paid. Then this Pavlic comes and we must pay him. He was clever, he warned us not to tell even Liberation Front or *lie* would expose us!

"He showed us his filmed copies of Papescu's files. What could we do, we paid again. But this Pavlic was a greater evil than Papescu. At first he threatened only we who Papescu had brought to this country. But over the years we ourselves had brought other friends into the country, illegally because there was no other way. Soon Pavlic was bleeding them, too! He was so clever, he found us all, and we could not even tell Papescu of his actions!"

"You paid at the gambling house?" The Shadow said.

Masters nodded. "Yes, it was simple. When Pavlic came to the casino, Anders simply gave him our money as extra chips for play. After Pavlic had played for a time, he cashed in all the chips and so had the money. The money itself Anders put into the cash box."

"A foolproof method," The Shadow said. "No money ever appeared to change hands."

"The swine knew us all! We paid both Pavlic and Papescu for a year! Then three of his victims in New York, men we did not know, killed themselves. We read it, and we knew. Soon we saw that animal George watching Pavlic. We realized that Papescu had found out. We saw a chance. We had seen those microfilmed records, and they identified Papescu and Liberation Front, showed what they had been doing to us. If we could get those records!

"So we organized to stop Pavlic, to watch him, to get our hands on the film. We had men who were not known to Papescu go to New York and watch the Club Zagreb. They found nothing, perhaps Pavlic recognized them because he knew who they were if Papescu did not. Pavlic came here on his usual trip. We paid him at the casino as usual. That same night he was killed and we are glad he is dead, but we could not find the film."

"You paid him that night?" The Shadow said. "No money of that amount was found on him. The killer took the money. How much was it?"

"A thousand dollars, no more."

"Go on," The Shadow said. It was a small sum for a man like Papescu. But perhaps not for some other person in business with Pavlic for himself.

"We heard how Pavlic died, my son came home with the car damaged. We knew someone had used my son's car. We read about that watch charm heart! I knew my son was innocent, so someone was involving us. We could not stand investigation. We were desperate. We had to find both the film and the killer of Pavlic, and we had to try everything. We hoped Helga Pavlic would know something. We thought Cranston might know after we saw him here. We did not know what to do but try everything we could think of."

"Why did you keep the car in your garage?"

"It was too dangerous to destroy it," Masters said. "And, then, it would perhaps help the police find out who really did the crime. We only hid it to try to find the film first. If we could find the film, then we would be safe to turn in the car. But that stupid girl must tell you of her heart charm!"

"Morgan is sure the charm was in the car and fell out," The Shadow said.

"It must have been," Masters said, "but . . ."

"But . . . ?" The Shadow said sharply in the room that was growing lighter each minute, the sun about to come up over the sea outside the cabin.

"But my son is sure he did not have it in the car."

"Where did he think he had it?" The Shadow said.

"In a box in his room. It is where he hides his special things, you understand? He has his school medal, his running medals, some of the things we brought with us from Poland."

"Your son was sure the heart charm was in that box?"

Masters nodded. "Yes, because when Shirley and he they are not steady sweethearts any more he says he stopped carrying it, but he did not want to give it back to her, so he put it in the box. My son is in love with the girl, I think, but she is so young, she changes so much."

"Did you look in the box?"

"Of course, but it was not there."

"When does he think he saw it last?"

Masters hesitated. The tall man glanced out the window at the thin streak of red low over the sea through the single window. Then Masters shrugged and turned back to look up at the piercing eyes of The Shadow.

"That is what makes us think my son does not know," Masters said. "He says he thinks he saw it the next day, the day *after* the accident. But he is not sure, and he could not have seen it then because the police they already had it. We read of it later in the paper."

The Shadow watched the face of the tall man. Masters did not blink or flinch. The Shadow thought. The day after the accident, and that could not be true. Still, the boy could be mistaken and yet be right about the charm not being in the car. On the other hand, what if the boy were right? The Shadow's piercing gaze fixed on the tall man again.

"You said that Pavlic blackmailed even those whom Liberation Front did not know about?" The Shadow said.

"He was a fiend, worse than Papescu!"

"A man was killed this night at the gambling house," The Shadow said. "Do you know who the man was?"

"No. Some of us looked at his body, we do not know him."

"You had never seen him?"

"Do you know who killed him?"

Masters shook his head, and then looked straight at The Shadow. "We heard of the giant bat. We thought you had killed him."

"Now you know I did not," The Shadow said.

"Yes, you did not."

"Then who?"

Masters shrugged again. "Who can say? Papescu was there, and George, and the wife of Papescu."

"And you were there, and Peter Anders, and the rest of your friends," The Shadow said.

"We did not kill him!"

"Do you know how he was killed?"

"No, we have wondered."

The Shadow's eyes burned from beneath the wide slouch hat and above the high collar that hid all but his eyes. His gaze was fixed on the face of Michael Masters.

"He was killed with a lethal gas gun, and so was Pavlic,"

The Shadow said. "Have you ever used such a weapon?"

Masters seemed to shudder. "No, but I have heard of such a weapon. I have never seen one, but I have seen men who died by such a gun. It leaves no trace, no clues. Many have died by that weapon and have been buried without anyone knowing how they died."

"Could any of your friends get such a weapon?"

"No! How could they?"

"Perhaps from your enemies years ago?" The Shadow said.

"I do not believe that! Wait, of course, Papescu, he could have such a weapon. He has the money and the power. His men work behind the Iron Curtain."

"So did you and your friends."

Masters sagged in his chair. "It is possible."

"And Pavlic?"

"He, too. I have heard things he did in the past. Such a gun could have come to him," Masters said, and looked up at the black-cloaked figure of The Shadow. "But it must be Papescu. Yes, it has to be Papescu and that animal George!"

"Perhaps,"~ The Shadow said. "But I must know more. Do not think I am finished with you, Michael Masters. You have done wrong."

"I have told you all I know," the tall man said.

"You may have told me more than you know," The Shadow said grimly. "Do not leave this house, I will talk to you again!"

Masters sat dully in his chair. The tall man seemed weighed down by a great weight. Perhaps it was what the black-cloaked figure had implied— that perhaps there was one of his own friends who had used a lethal gas gun on two people. That one of his own friends was not what he seemed, was not, in fact, a friend at all. Masters raised his eyes to ask the mysterious figure who he thought it could be.

The small room, light now, was empty. Masters looked all around him. There were no shadows to hide a man or The Shadow. The small study was empty. Masters rubbed his eyes, then jumped up and ran out of the cottage toward the home of Peter Anders next door.

17

EARLY MORNING sun bathed the waterfront of Sea Gate in a pale red glow. The early fishermen were sorting their tackle. Motors were coughing and smoking in the still dawn air. A few people strolled idly along the sea wall. Two young boys from the nearest hotel were already plunging and laughing in the water. The pleasure boats were still tied up and shrouded against the morning dew, their owners not belonging to the breed of early risers. A long stream of outboard motor boats, jutting with fishing rods, now began to wind out of the marina toward the fishing grounds. The day had started.

Far out on the placid bay, just inside the inlet from the open sea, Count Istvan Papescu's giant yacht rocked gently at anchor. From the marina a small inboard launch left a wake etched like an arrow in the smooth bay. The arrow of the wake pointed straight at the count's yacht. In the small boat, as it approached the yacht, an old man stood leaning on a stout cane. As the small inboard swung close to the landing stage of the yacht, a sleepy-eyed sailor leaned over the yacht rail with a scowl in his surly face. He motioned the small boat away with an offhand, but impatient, wave of his swarthy hand. The old man standing bent and leaning on his cane in the bow of the small boat paid no attention to the sailor on the yacht. With an imperious flick of his cane the old man waved the boat to tie up at the yacht's landing stage. The swarthy and half asleep sailor seemed unable to believe his eyes as the boat swung in and tied up. The old man with the cane leaped spryly to the landing stage. The sailor waved at the old man furiously.

"Go way! Private! You go!"

The old man leaned on his cane and cocked one sharp eye up at the impatient sailor.

"Balderdash, young man!" the old man said. "Tell Count Papescu that Phineas Twambley wishes to see him, immediately!"

The old man, Phineas Twambley, began to climb the stairway that swayed up from the landing stage to the deck of the yacht. The swarthy sailor stood there unable to think of just what to do in this situation. He had his orders to keep strangers away, but the old man was already there. The sailor seemed relieved when another sailor came running up from forward. This sailor was obviously of greater authority, older, and carried a rifle in his right hand. The old man with the cane, Phineas Twambley, jumped lightly from the top of the gangway stairs to the deck just as the second sailor ran up. The new sailor was furious.

"Get the hell off this ship! What the devil do you think you're doing, you old fool! Didn't you hear us! This is a private yacht! Now you get the hell . . .""Keep a civil tongue in your mouth, young man!" the old man snapped. "And one of you fools tell Count Papescu that Phineas Twambley wants to see him. If he doesn't know me, inform him that I represent the Twambley Foundation. We give away money. That should interest him."

"Listen, you old jerk, I said beat it, and I mean beat it, or else."

The older sailor raised his rifle menacingly toward the old man with the cane. The old man seemed to barely notice the rifle. He never looked directly at the older sailor or the threatening rifle. The older sailor took one step closer to the old man with the rifle still pointed. The old man hardly moved. There was a flash of sunlight, and the cane in the old man's hand flicked out and struck the rifle to the deck before the older sailor saw the cane move. The rifle clattered loudly in the clear morning air as it hit the deck.

"Why you. . .!" the older sailor began as he bent and reached to pick up the rifle.

The old man flicked the cane again. It cracked across the man's wrist with amazing force. The older sailor howled and jerked his injured hand back. The old man manipulated the cane again, deftly picked up the rifle by the trigger guard, and dropped it cleanly over the side into the water of the bay. The older sailor swore, and turned on his heel to vanish into the nearest cabin. In the morning sun the old man took out a long, thin cigar, lighted it, and stood calmly smoking while the younger sailor watched him. The old man had taken hardly three puffs on his cigar when the older sailor returned with another man.

"Mr. Twambley? Now what can I do?" the new man began,

"Are you in authority here?" the old man snapped? "I want *someone* who can do more than shout and point rifles! Now my name is Phineas Twambley. I am founder and principle trustee of the Twambley Foundation. We give away money, young man. I understand Liberation Front is in need of funds?"

"I am Count Papescu's private secretary," the new man, Arnold, said. "Of course we are more than interested in donations for our work, Mr. . ."

"Twambley!" the old man snapped irascibly.

"Of course. But it is rather early, the count is asleep. We usually do business at our offices in New York, not down . ."

"Young man, do you or don't you want to talk to a man who represents twelve million dollars!" Twambley roared.

Arnold hesitated. Then the muscular secretary nodded to the old man with the cane.

"Very well, Mr. Twambley, if you'll come with me," Arnold said.

The muscular secretary led the old man along the deck of the yacht, and down a single flight of stairs in a forward companionway. He led the old man into a sunny room where there were easy chairs and dining tables. The secretary told the old man to wait in the salon, and disappeared somewhere to the stern. While the secretary was gone, the old man stood at the porthole that faced the landing stage. As he watched he saw the secretary appear on deck and lean over to speak to the boatman who had brought the old man out. The boatman protested. The secretary motioned to the two sailors who still stood on the deck. The boatman shrugged and started his engine. The old man in the salon watched his boat swing away from the yacht and head back to shore. The old man walked quickly away from the porthole. When Count Istvan Papescu entered the salon, the old man was standing admiring a shelf of books. Papescu was smiling. The small count was not alone. Arnold, the secretary, and Papescu's wife were with the smiling count. The woman was even more beautiful in a thin housecoat that swept along the deck.

"Mr. Twambley?" the count said. "I understand you want to discuss a contribution to Liberation Front?"

"I do, and damned hard it is to give you money," the old man snapped.

The count smiled. The woman appeared to casually wander across the salon to the dining table behind Twambley. Arnold, the secretary, took up a position near the only door out of the salon. The old man did not appear to notice any of this moving into position.

"Can we speak privately, Count Papescu?" the old man demanded.

"Hardly," Papescu said softly, "since I am quite sure there is no Twambley Foundation. I just checked my files which, I assure you, are quite complete."

"Really?" the old man said. "Careless of me, wasn't it."

Now the smile was gone from Count Papescu's small face. The Rumanian curled his lips in a wolfish snarl. Arnold, the secretary who looked like a light-heavyweight boxer, stepped closer to

the old man, his hand in the pocket of his very proper blue blazer. Behind the old man the very beautiful Mrs. Papescu had produced a small pistol from the folds of her voluminous housecoat. Papescu sneered at the old man.

"Very careless," Papescu said. "Now if you will tell us just who you are and what you are doing here . . ."

The sneering voice of the Rumanian stopped. He stared at the old man. The old man seemed suddenly much taller, the stoop gone. The old man's eyes were clearer. The whole face of the old man seemed to relax, change, flow into a new shape there in the middle of the salon. Then the old man reached up and pulled off his thick white hair and drooping white mustache. Papescu stared. The Rumanian's eyes bulged in his small face.

"No . . . it can't be . . . we killed . . ." Papescu stammered.

There was a loud cry of incredulous fright that ended in a choking rattle as the muscular secretary, Arnold, collapsed in a dead faint as he looked at the face of Lamont Cranston that he had last seen lying dead in a grave. Before the muscular secretary hit the floor, Cranston whirled, flicked his cane, and the woman's pistol went flying. The beautiful Mrs. Papescu was made of much sterner stuff than Arnold. She darted after her pistol. A sharp command from Lamont Cranston stopped her. She turned to face the .45 automatic now in Cranston's hand.

"Now, I think, we can talk," Cranston said evenly.

Papescu, too, turned out to be made of a considerable amount of solid steel. The small count, his initial shock over, and the situation clearly in Cranston's hands, at least for the moment, turned to look at the fallen Arnold. The Rumanian shook his head sadly.

"Poor Arnold, he was such a promising young cruiser-weight, but you see his trouble—a very weak stomach, poor boy. So, Mr. Cranston, you are obviously not dead although very much buried. A remarkable trick! A trance and shallow-breathing, of course, I have studied some Yoga in my day, but you are clearly an adept. I knew you were more than you seem."

Cranston motioned with his automatic. "Tie him up."

Papescu and his wife proceeded to bind the unconscious Arnold with stout cord from the long window curtains that hid the portholes. At another motion from Cranston's pistol, they dragged the trussed Arnold into a closet and closed the door. All the Count's urbane suavity had come back. Now he smiled at his wife.

"Apparently Mr. Cranston wishes to talk, my dear," Papescu said. "Perhaps he would care for some breakfast. For myself, I am famished."

"Of course, breakfast by all means," Cranston said with equal urbanity.

While the woman ordered breakfast through a speaking tube to the galley, Count Papescu sat down in an easy chair and studied Lamont Cranston. Cranston sat comfortably facing the Rumanian. The woman soon joined her husband. She sat on the arm of his chair and stroked his hand. There were a very calm pair of criminals. Now the count suddenly leaned forward.

"Yes, how stupid of me, that black-cloaked figure! You have something to do with that, yes? Some trick of hallucination, I expect."

"Perhaps," Cranston said.

"Well, no matter, I no longer care just who you may be, Mr. Cranston, it is now clear that you are a remarkable man in any case. A very remarkable man. Not even a limp! The power of the mind, of course. What do you think, my dear?"

Papescu turned his face up to the beautiful woman. Until now she had not spoken a word. Now she shrugged.

"I think we are beaten, Istvan," she said.

The count nodded. "Yes, yes, you may be right. Well, at least we can enjoy our breakfast. Here it comes now. My cooks know how I hate to wait."

There was a sharp knock at the salon door. Cranston put his pistol into his pocket, his hand still holding it, his finger on the trigger. The steward served the breakfast onto the table and left quickly. The table was elegant with sausage, orange juice, hot breads, muffins, bacon, ham, and a large pot of steaming coffee. The woman served, and, their plates full, Papescu and Cranston faced each other. Papescu chewed on a sausage speculatively. He looked at Lamont Cranston.

"You want to know about us, yes?" Papescu said. "How much do you know already, Cranston?"

"Enough to know that you bring in illegal refugees and then blackmail them for what little money they have," Cranston said.

"You know enough, then, but it sound so, well, ugly the way you say it," Papescu said. "I do not think of it quite that way."

"How did Pavlic think about it?" Cranston said.

"Yes, Pavlic, a greedy man. A worthless creature who had no right to live or to have money," Papescu said. "But to understand I must start at the beginning, yes?"

"Go ahead," Cranston said.

The woman broke in. "You know, Mr. Cranston, we have done much good with Liberation Front. We have brought in many real refugees."

Papescu waved his hand to dismiss this point. "Mr. Cranston is not interested in our helpful byproduct. Naturally we did good, it was our, how do you say it, our 'cover?' Yes, our 'cover.' We had to be an authentic refugee organization in order to find those bigger fish who would pay, yes?"

"Get to the point, Papescu," Cranston said.

"Ah, yes, the point," Papescu said. "What is the point? I am a man engaged in crime, very large crime. I was born Count Istvan Papescu, the last of a long line of Count Papescus who had ruled in Rumania for centuries, perhaps since the last Romans left, who can say? I was born to title and money, much money. I was a friend to kings. And yet the change had begun so many years ago. By the time I was the count it was almost too late to save my way of life."

Papescu reached into the pocket of his silk robe. Cranston watched him. The count noted this, smiled, and brought out only a long cigar. The count lighted the cigar and looked at it speculatively, as if seeing in the fine cigar all his lost power.

"There were so many schemes in those years between the wars. The lines were drawn, the old way or the new; right or left; count or peasant commissar. You will say there was a third way: your vaunted republican democracy. But not in Rumania, not in my world. Besides, I despise such weakness. Better the rule of a peasant commissar, then the rule of solemn shoemakers and shopkeepers! But I digress. Suffice to say there were many men fighting to save my world, and I helped them. It was my money behind the schoolteacher Codreanu and his Iron Guard. Tin soldiers! How did I know what they were, weak fools in the end!

"Still, perhaps I knew, eh Cranston, because my name was never linked with such men. I remained loyal to my king, I retained my good name. A conservative, yes, but a lover of the people—the fools! So when Adolf Hitler bungled the job, my fortune was gone but not my reputation. No one knew of my connection to Hitler. It was simple to start Liberation Front, first for Rumanian refugees from the Red swine, then for all refugees.

"As my dear wife has said, we helped many, but it was the more important fish we hooked. Why not? I was a count! A count must have wealth, lands, retainers! My fortune was gone, my lands taken, my retainers turned Communist! I could not live like a pauper! Never!"

Cranston studied the count in disgust. "Think of the thousand who trusted you!"

"Trusted? Them?" Papescu cried. The small count leaped to his feet and went to the nearest porthole. "Look out there! See them walking on shore, playing on the beach. Look at them! Insects! Worms! Who can care about the lives of insects when Count Istvan Papescu is torn from his lands and power! What do I care for such stupid worms as those out there!"

"Pavlic was more than a stupid worm," Cranston said.

The count turned from the window, his small face choleric with rage.

"Fools, all fools! My staff! They let Pavlic get his filthy hands on my private files! He microfilmed them and used them to blackmail the same people. Stupid! He drove them to desperation. It could have ruined me. Only a few weeks ago did I discover what he was doing."

"So you killed him," Cranston said softly.

"I? Don't be another fool, Cranston. Would I use that ridiculous hit-and-run excuse? I know the gas gun leaves no trace. Why call attention to Pavlic by such a stupid action as that hit-and-run? No, if I had done it there would have been no evidence, I assure you."

"What about your dear wife?" Cranston said quickly. "Pavlic was working with someone. How did he get your private files?"

For an instant Papescu turned to look at his wife where she still sat on the arm of the chair. The woman was red with suppressed rage. Papescu appeared to be considering Cranston's suggestion. Then the small count began to laugh loudly. The woman smiled.

"Really, my dear Cranston, it is good I know how clever you are. My wife never leaves my side, and we are of one mind. She is an aristocrat, a Rumanian patrician, as I am. Work with that Pavlic? No, Cranston, you are playing some game, baiting me, yes? Now let me offer you a proposition. I can use a man who can rise from the dead. With your money and skill, and my money and organization, we could have real power. Who knows how far we might go?"

"Perhaps very far," Cranston said, "but your organization does not have much to offer, you don't have that microfilm."

"Not yet, Cranston, but soon we . . ."

The count stopped in mid sentence. The woman sat stiffly on the arm of the chair. Almost together they both glanced at the ship chronometer on the wall of the salon. Together they smiled and looked at Cranston. The chronometer read nine o'clock. All at once Lamont Cranston looked slowly around the salon.

"George," Cranston said. "Where is George?"

"Yes, Mr. Cranston, where is George," Papescu said mockingly.

"Breakfast all ready," Cranston said. "You were so reasonable. You told me the long story of your life. All for . . ."

"Time, Cranston, of course," Papescu purred like some giant cat. "We needed only a little time. You surprised us, and I had to play for time. You did not even guess, you were so busy thinking of who killed that insect Pavlic! Fool, I know who killed Pavlic, but what does that matter? The film, that is all that matters, and by now George has it. You are too late, Cranston, like all your stupid kind!"

Cranston reached quickly for the ship-to-shore telephone on the table. He asked the operator for Sea Gate Police Headquarters. When he got through, he asked to speak to Lieutenant LaPine. But it was Detective Joe Cardona who came on the line. Cardona was excited.

"Cranston! Where are you?"

"Never mind that, Cardona," Cranston snapped. "I've got Papescu out here on his yacht. He says he knows the killer!"

"We'll send some men out to help," Cardona said, "but never mind about the killer. We've got the killer! LaPine is bringing him in now, what's left of him!"

18

LAMONT CRANSTON and Count Istvan Papescu entered the small room of the Sea Gate Hospital. Two silent policemen stood directly behind Papescu. In the room, Detectives LaPine and Cardona were standing above the bed that held the man who breathed with great difficulty. Cardona nodded to Cranston.

"How is Margo, Mr. Cranston?"

"She's out of danger now, but still in pain," Cranston said.

Cardona looked down at the bed. "Our man isn't so lucky, he may make it, or he may not. Not that it matters, it's the chair for him anyway."

Cranston walked to the bed and looked at the pale face of Peter Anders. The stocky man, Anders or Andreviski, had been shot twice in the chest. He breathed now with a deep rasping sound in his chest, a bubbling of blood in his throat. Behind the bed, Michael Masters stood alone in front of the shaded window watching the suffering face of his friend. Anders had his eyes closed in pain. When Cardona spoke, it was Masters who answered.

"Peter does not kill anyone!"

"It's open and shut, Masters, and you're in it up to your neck. You seem to have forgotten Anders has confessed," Lieutenant LaPine said.

"Peter did not kill Pavlic!" Masters said.

Papescu suddenly laughed. "Of course the fool killed Pavlic! To me, also, he said so. Did he not have the film?"

"He sure did," Cardona said.

Cranston watched the labored breathing of Peter Anders. "Perhaps you better tell me what happened?"

"Sure," LaPine said. "About an hour ago Shirley Anders, that's the girl, you know? Well, Shirley called the station. She was scared to death. She said her father and some man she didn't know were shooting at each other outside her cottage. We went out there mighty fast, let me tell you."

"Shirley called?" Cranston said.

"No one else there," Cardona said. "Masters and his wife were in town here visiting Buddy."

"Anyway," LaPine went on, "when we got out there it was all over. The shooting part, at least. Anders was shot twice and lying on his front porch. He had a Mauser pistol with six shots fired. He had a roll of microfilm in his pocket. The film lowers the boom on Papeseu's blackmail racket but good."

Papescu shrugged. "Poor George, even he bungled in the end."

"George?" Cranston said.

LaPine nodded. "We found him about twenty feet from the porch behind a car, his own car, Papescu says. He was as dead as yesterday's news. Shot once clean through the head. From the look of it, Anders and this George tied up in a shooting match and shot each other down like clay pigeons. It figures that this George was after the microfilm, and Anders didn't want to give it up. Since Anders had the film he has to be the killer of Pavlic and Altman. Besides, as I said before, Anders confessed it all after we mopped him up."

The small count nodded. "It can make no difference now, "George went to get the film from Anders?" Cranston asked Papescu.

The small count nodded. "It can made no difference now, yes? Ah, it was so nearly all right for me, but let that pass, eh? How do you Americans say, 'A miss is as good as a mile?' "

"How did you know Anders had the film?" Cranston said.

"He told us," Papescu said. "This morning, very early, we heard a noise. There was a small boat. It left a message for me. The message was from this Peter Andreovski. He said in the note that he had the film, he was willing to sell it to us for a fair price. In a way it was funny, the victim turns to blackmail, yes? Naturally we do not intend to pay, that is a dangerous precedent."

"How did you know he was telling the truth?"

"He enclosed a sample of the film, one dossier document on himself, yes?" Papescu said. "So I sent George. We must have the film, and George would pay this Anders in his own way."

"Obviously George tried to jump Anders," LaPine said, "and the shooting match started. Lucky for us Papescu decided not to pay."

The count sighed. "Perhaps a mistake. Yes, I fear it was a mistake. I should have remembered that Andreovski has killed men before, that he was, indeed, a highly skilled guerrilla. I suppose I had too much faith in George. Poor George met his match."

"Which finishes you, Papescu," Cardona said. "When I turn that microfilm over to Commissioner Weston you're out of business. I don't think they give any privileges to counts up in Auburn Prison."

"There are always risks to live well," Papescu said.

"So Pavlic found out," LaPine said. "I guess be just drove Anders too far with his blackmail, Masters has given us the whole story, payoff at the casino and all. I guess Anders just decided to handle Pavlic alone. It was easy for him to fake that hit-and-run, he knew just where Buddy Masters' car would be since Shirley was on the same beach party. I guess he figured we wouldn't ever find the car. He didn't know he had dropped that heart charm out of the car."

Lamont Cranston listened to LaPine's summation. It was logical, and it fitted all the facts. Anders certainly had the motive. Double blackmail had driven three men in New York to suicide, it could just as easily drive to murder. Anders could have stolen the car; his prints were on it. He could have killed Altman and shot at Allard. Yes, Anders fitted all the facts, he was capable of all the killings, and yet Cranston did not think Anders was guilty. Somewhere in all of it there was a wrong note. There were many wrong notes. Why would Anders have killed Altman? Perhaps Altman had discovered a clue that pointed to Anders—the microfilm, possibly. All right, Why would Anders try to kill Margo, because Cranston was sure now that the shot that hit Margo had been intended for Margo. Or, rather, intended for the waitress at the Club Zagreb. Cranston had no answer for that. He was still puzzling over it, when he heard the wrong note again. This time he heard it clear and sharp.

". . . one thing just led to another," LaPine was still summarizing. "Altman must have gotten a lead at the gambling house and Anders had to kill him. Then he really panicked, needed money, and tried to reverse the blackmail on Papescu. George came instead of the money, and they shot

each other. But it was really just that heart charm that did it. He should never have faked that hit-and-run."

Cranston jerked his head up and out of his reverie. The gas guns— and the hit-and-run. Papescu had said it. A man who knew about gas guns would not have faked a hit-and-run! No need. The gas guns left no trace. Anders was a man who knew the power of the gas guns. Where could he have gotten them? Somewhere in the past during his underground fights against the Soviet. But if he had gotten them then, he would have known their power. Cranston looked straight at Masters.

"Masters! You said that Anders knew about those gas guns, knew what they could do!"

"Yes, he knew," Masters admitted, "but I . . ."

"Cranston, what the devil are you talking about?" LaPine snapped.

Cranston ignored the lieutenant. He was looking down at the man in the bed, Peter Anders had opened his eyes. The wounded man was watching Cranston now. Anders tried to move, weakly, his hand making small motions in the air above his shot chest. Anders stared at Cranston and tried to speak. The effort cost the wounded man great pain. Anders' lips moved, fought to speak. The pain was etched in deep lines on his bloodless face.

". . . I . . . kill . . . Pavlic . . . George . . . gas gun . . . I kill . . . them . . ."

"What the devil are you doing, Cranston?" LaPine said again. "He confessed, damn it. He knew Pavlic had been killed with a gas gun before we ever asked! Now how the devil would he have known that if he hadn't used them?"

"Masters?" Cranston snapped.

The tall man nodded. "Yes, I told him this morning about them. Peter knew all about such guns."

The wounded man was frantic. Barely able to move, his eyes rolled around in his head wildly. His hands clawed at the air as if trying to draw all their attention to himself. His weak voice croaked horribly.

"I . . . kill . . . all . . . gas . . . gun . . . I . . . kill . . ."

 Anders gasped, croaked, forced the words out of his pain-wracked chest.

Cranston bent over the wounded man. "You knew those gas guns, why would you fake a hit-and-run? Why use the car of your best friend's son?"

The look in the wounded man's eyes became one of sheer terror. His terrible voice croaked.

". . . I . . . kill . . . I . . . kill . . ."

Cranston leaned close to the wounded man. "Why did you kill Altman and try to kill the waitress?"

Anders fell back, all his strength gone now. The wounded man just lay there, his eyes staring up at Cranston. Cranston turned again to Masters.

"Masters," Cranston said, "when was Anders in New York last?"

"Not for a long time," Masters said. "New York is dangerous for us. We do not want to be seen. He has not left Sea Gate in perhaps a year."

"Has he ever been in the Club Zagreb?" Cranston asked. "Pavlic's club? No, never, why should he?" Masters said. Through all the questions of Cranston, Lieutenant LaPine had been smoldering. Now LaPine burst out angrily.

"I think you better get out of here, Cranston. Remember, you're just an unofficial visitor!"

"I think you're right, Lieutenant," Cranston said. "I had better get out of here."

Without another word, Cranston turned and left the hospital room. He walked from the hospital and through the sunny streets of Sea Gate to the Sea Gate Motel where his Jaguar was

parked. In the Jaguar Cranston drove fast out of Sea Gate toward the north. When he reached the cluster of cottages on the beach, two policemen and Sergeant Morgan were still there. Cranston did not let them see him. He parked the Jaguar in a grove of trees back from the water and a quarter of a mile from the beachfront cottages. A few moments later neither Sergeant Morgan nor the two policemen saw the black, batlike figure glide swiftly and silently through the trees toward the cluster of cottages.

The small room was dark. Behind the drawn shades and closed curtains a figure kneeled in a corner of the room. The room, on the side of the cottage away from the sun, was nearly as dark as at night. The person in the corner stood up and crossed the dark room to a small dresser. The person moved with the sureness of complete familiarity with the room even in its present darkened state. At the dresser the person paused to listen. In the distance there was the sound of cars on the beach road, and the faint voices of the policemen on guard outside. The person smiled in the dark, and glanced at the rumpled bed. The bed was unmade as if someone had been sleeping in it only minutes ago.

The person who was hidden in the darkness picked a small roll of film from beneath a pile of clothes in the top dresser drawer. At the bed the person drew a large pistol from beneath the mattress. In the corner again, the indistinct figure kneeled over the open hole in the floor. A section of floorboard had been removed. Beside the hole there was a ring of keys and a large packet of money. The person placed the film, the money, and the keys into the hole. The pistol lay on the floor. As the figure picked up the pistol to place it, too, in the secret hiding place, there was a faint noise in the room. As if the door to the room had been swiftly opened and closed, The person whirled, pistol in hand.

The mocking laugh filled the small room.

"Will you kill again as you killed your lover!" an unseen voice said softly in the darkness.

"Who is it! Where are you!"

"Your lover, and your father, too!" the voice said.

"Show yourself!" the figure cried, and moved forward to where a single thin beam of light came through the shades and curtains over the windows and fell full on the pretty, childish face of Shirley Anders.

19

THE PRETTY young girl smiled. She looked down at the pistol in her hand, and stepped out of the single beam of light into the darkness again. The pistol dropped to her side. She seemed to shiver.

"You startled me," the girl said in her small, girlish voice. "I found the pistol. I was afraid so I kept it, I mean after what happened to Daddy. There might be more men, I mean, you know?"

The unseen voice was stern. "Anton Pavlic was your lover, Shirley Anders. You were his partner in his evil."

"Pavlic?" the girl said, her voice questioning. "No, I didn't know him." She peered into the dark areas of the small room. "I can't see you? Who are you, one of the policemen? I was sleeping, but I couldn't sleep. I mean, I was remembering poor Daddy. Did you just come in?"

The mocking laugh filled the small room. "No, Shirley Anders, I saw all that you have there hidden under the floor. Pavlic's ring of keys, the money you took from his body, the second roll of microfilm, and the pistol!"

"I found them, you know?" the girl said innocently. "They must have been Daddy's. Yes, of course, he killed that man, didn't he?"

"Peter Anders killed no one," The Shadow said. "The police will soon know that."

Suddenly the girl smiled again. A cold, tigerish smile. The pistol in her hand whipped up and pointed toward where she thought the voice had come from.

"So, you're not the police! I can kill you! You have no right to be here. I'm sick, half-crazy over my poor Daddy, they won't touch me! Whoever you are, you've seen too much!"

The pretty young girl, her face hard and cold and twisted with anger and hate, held her pistol leveled steady before her. Her blue eyes, no longer wide or innocent, searched the dark of the room like a tiger looking for its prey. She was dressed in a man's denim jacket and denim trousers that clung like skin to her slim legs. The Shadow watched her now from where he stood just inside and to the right of the door in the darkest part of the room. From the girl's wrinkled clothes, and the rumpled bed, it was obvious that she was supposed to be sleeping away her grief for her father. But when she spoke again there was no grief in her voice. Her voice was no longer the voice of an eager teenager. It was the hard voice of a killer.

"I don't care who you are," her cold voice said. "You can't hide long in here!"

The girl, her eyes steady, moved slowly forward in the small room. The pistol in her hand moved steadily back and forth with her eyes, the pistol unwavering. Suddenly he stopped. Her eyes blinked. She took a step backward. She had seen the burning eyes of The Shadow as they fixed their piercing gaze on her face. She brushed her hand across her eyes as if to clear a mist away. The Shadow's eyes glowed beneath his slouch hat. His fire opal girasol glistened and flashed in the dark with no light falling upon it. The girl stepped forward again. She blinked her eyes. Her pistol was like an antennae searching the dark, probing.

"Damn you, where are you?" the girl cried.

"I am here, Shirley Anders, but you cannot see me now," The Shadow said. "Your mind is clouded. It is my power."

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Men call me The Shadow, Shirley, and evil men fear me."

"I don't fear you!" the girl cried, her eyes straining to see through the clouded fog that had descended over them. "I fear no one! You hear me, Shadow? Why should I fear you?"

The mocking laugh echoed eerily again through the small, dark bedroom of the Anders cottage. The girl turned right and then left, searching for the direction of the laugh. But it came from all directions, surrounded her.

"I know all, Shirley Anders," The Shadow said. "You cannot escape justice now."

The girl sneered. Her small face was twisted with arrogance. She stepped back until her back rested against a wall. She laughed an arrogant laugh.

"What do you think you know? What are you? A voice, a coward who can't be seen? What do I care if I can't see you. You can't hurt me, I have my gun, you hear? Do you think you can stop me now? You can't know anything!"

"The Shadow knows all evil."

"You know nothing, and I will be rich, powerful! Do you hear me, Shadow? What do you think you know that will hurt me now?"

Her back against the wall, the girl bared her pretty lips in a sneer that was half snarl. She looked like a small wolf with her fangs bared. Her pistol never wavered in her small, almost childish, but deadly hand. The arrogance on her face had pushed away all fear, all innocence. She was now a greedy animal defying the world, sure of her evil power. The Shadow stood there inside the door with his eyes fixed steadily on her childish face.

"I know that the fruit of evil is bitter, and that you are about to eat of it, Shirley Anders," The Shadow said with the voice of justice. "I know that Anton Pavlic was meeting someone that night. He was a wily man, he would not have been killed so easily if he had not known and trusted his killer. I know that he did meet and speak with his killer, a witness can prove that. You were heard to drive up and stop before the second time when you struck an already dead man."

"Lies! There was no one to see!"

The Shadow did not pause in his damning statement. "I know it could not have been Anders or Masters or their friends. Pavlic had already met them, he had been paid that night. Liberation Front would not have killed him without securing the microfilm. They would have captured him and tortured him to get the film."

The girl laughed a wild laugh where she stood with her back pressed hard against the wall of the room.

"Guesses! Pavlic could have had the film with him! My stupid father killed him and took the film!" the girl sneered.

"Pavlic was killed with a gas gun," The Shadow went on. "But any professional with such a gun would have known that it left no trace, no clues, and would never have faked that hit-and-run! If the hit-and-run had not been faked, Pavlic would have been found dead of a simple heart attack, and there would have been no investigation! Only an amateur who did not know the power of those guns would have been so foolish. An amateur who had access to such weapons, to only two of them. They were Pavlic's own gas guns, and you knew their power, but you did not know that they left no symptoms! You were Anton Pavlic's lover, and you knew how to get his gas guns!"

The girl was pale as death in the dim light of the shaded bedroom. Frustrated hate and anger filled her bloodless face now as The Shadow told her of the power of the gas guns. She bit her small lip until a faint drop of blood showed clear against the pale pink.

"You can't prove that," Shirley Anders said in a low, deadly voice.

"Helga Pavlic suspected that Anton had a lover," The Shadow said, "and I know that Pavlic had a partner, someone who knew more about your father's friends than even Liberation Front or Pavlic. He was blackmailing even those Liberation Front had not brought into this country. Someone had to have told him who those people were, and where they were. It was you! You betrayed and blackmailed your own people!"

Now the small girl waved the pistol wildly. She began to scream in the dark room.

"Coward! Show yourself! Come out, you coward! Come . . ." the girl stopped screaming. She listened. Far off there was still only the sound of steady traffic on the distant Cape Ambrose Highway, and the closer sound of the cars that came past from time to time on the beach road. There was the light sound of the calm surf across the road, and above the light surf the voices of the policemen outside. The voices of the police, were still faint and slow and unhurried. They had not heard the girl's screaming. She seemed to nod, and rubbed her eyes again. She licked the drop of blood from her lip. The pistol steadied in her childlike hand.

"You want to make me panic," she said in a calm voice. "But you won't do that. That's always the big danger, panic. You have nothing but guesses, accusations. And even then you won't live

to repeat them. You have to leave this room through the door or the window, and then I'll see you."

"You will add me to the list as you did your own father?" The Shadow said.

"Another accusation?" the girl sneered. "There was no one here who is still alive!"

"Your father was not a man who would betray his friends The Shadow said. "Masters knows that, and so do I. It was you who sent the note to Papescu. You are a very clever girl, and you planned it just as it happened. You knew Papescu would not pay, but was sure to send someone, probably George, to take the film. You shot George, you shot your own father, and you planted half the film on your father.

"It was a clever plan, if it had worked. You were afraid of George, and he was dead. You were afraid of Liberation Front and Papescu, and with half the film in police hands they would be broken and out of business. You still had half the film for future blackmail when everything died down. You only needed one more thing-a person to be given to the police as the killer of Pavlic. Your own father was a perfect victim, he fitted all the facts. So you shot him and planted the film to make the police sure he was the killer. A clever plan, Shirley Anders, but your father is not dead!"

The girl blinked. "Not dead? Not yet?"

"No, Peter Anders is still alive," The Shadow said.

For a moment the girl seemed puzzled. She looked around the dim room as if wondering why no one else was there. Then she smiled her tigerish smile.

"Then why haven't the police come?" She laughed. "He's still alive and the police haven't come here. He didn't tell them, did he? No, and he never will! He'll take the blame himself, won't he? You see, I'm all he has. The fool. Besides, he will die, he has to die!"

"And if he doesn't?" The Shadow said. "How long will he lie to protect you? How long will he believe in you when I tell him what you have done?"

"Forever, you stupid fool," the girl said, "because he won't believe you!"

And then the small room was filled with the sudden and inhuman sound of the girl's laugh. It was a high, endless, chilling laugh as weird as the laugh of The Shadow himself. A loud, shrill, wild laugh that froze the blood of even The Shadow as he stood there in the room and listened to the childlike girl. There was an animal horror in the insensate laugh of the innocent-seeming girl. The savage laughter pealed through the silent room, and the eyes of the girl glowed now like the eyes of a tiger prowling the depths of some savage jungle.

"He thinks I killed Pavlic for him!" the girl said suddenly, the laugh ceasing for the moment. "He thinks I shot *him* by accident! He saw me kill that George. He ran out onto the porch. When I turned and shot him I was horrified, you see, Shadow? I cried, I begged him to forgive me! I said I thought he was another one of Papescu's men after me! I *told* him I had killed Pavlic to help him and our friends, to stop Pavlic and get the film! I told him Papescu had found out and sent George after *me*. He believed me. It was *his* own suggestion to put the film in his pocket. You hear, Shadow? He believes me! He will protect me until he dies!"

The animal laughter welled from deep within the childlike girl. It carried inside it the horror of forgotten beasts and savage jungles filled with terror. A savage and bestial laugh from deep within the heart of darkness that lurked beneath the thin veneer of civilization. A laugh that carried within it the howl of the wolf, the chilling roar of the tiger at its kill. The laugh of a savage loping down hidden jungle paths. In the laugh The Shadow heard all the evil he knew lurked within the wide heart of all darkness. And suddenly it stopped, the laugh, and the girl's

blue eyes filmed with cunning. They were the eyes of a small animal who carried her own jungle locked inside her soul.

"What can you do now, Shadow? He will not tell, and you have nothing but guesses."

The final peal of savage laughter died slowly in the dark of the small bedroom shut away from the sun and air and distant sounds of human life.

"No, Shirley Anders," The Shadow said softly, "I have more than guesses. You have forgotten Margo Lane!"

The girl blinked warily where she stood with her back pressed to the wall, her pistol pointed into the dark.

"Margo Lane? I don't know any Margo Lane!" the girl said.

"No, you don't know Margo Lane," The Shadow said, "but you tried to kill her. She was the waitress at the Club Zagreb! You tried to kill her for the same reason that you killed Paul Altman. You did not *know* Altman either, *but he knew you!* He was often *inside* the Club Zagreb, and he saw you come to meet your lover Pavlic! Helga Pavlic said that many woman came to see Pavlic-some trying to look younger, and some trying to look older. You went to the Club Zagreb to meet Pavlic, and Altman recognized you.

"When you saw Kent Allard pass Altman a note, you were afraid. Then you saw Altman try to pass a note to Allard, and that was when you stepped in to talk to Allard. You killed Altman, but you did not know how much Allard knew, so you rode to Sea Gate with Allard, You followed him to the Sea Gate Motel. Only Allard disappeared. There was another man at the motel, Lamont Cranston. But there was also the waitress from the Club Zagreb, and you knew she might recognize you so you tried to kill her.

"You see, Shirley Anders, your one most important asset was that no one knew you had any connection to Pavlic at all. The waitress and Altman could prove that you knew Pavlic! Once anyone knew you were connected with Pavlic, you would be a possible suspect! You could not risk that, because you had made one fatal mistake, and you knew you had!"

The girl's voice was like the hiss of a cornered snake.

"And what mistake was that?"

The Shadow laughed. "The heart charm! You stole Buddy Masters' car and killed Pavlic when you met him as you always did when he was down here. That loud music he played was your music when you sneaked into his cabin. After you had killed him and faked the accident, you hoped that no one would ever find the car. But you read about the heart charm, and you had to act. You see, I know that the heart charm that was found in the road was not the one you gave Buddy Masters-it was an *identical second charm* you had given to Pavlic!

"It was the only explanation for your peculiar actions in coming forward to tell the police the charm was yours. You knew they could trace it sooner or later, but you would not have cared about that if the charm had really belonged to Buddy Masters! No, it was the charm you had given to Pavlic as a love token that worried you. If that were traced you were in trouble. So you came forward and told the police about Buddy's charm to stop any further investigation of the charm.

"But Buddy had seen his charm in its box *after* the death of Pavlic and before you had time to steal it and throw it away! You had read the paper and learned about the charm before anyone else because you were vitally interested in the 'accident.' It almost worked, and you did not care what happened to Buddy Masters."

Suddenly the girl stepped away from the wall. Her hand was shaking now. She began to scream again, her small, childish face contorted with rage and hate.

"Lies! All lies! Coward! Where are you, coward! All lies!" The mocking laugh of The Shadow came from every part of the dim room.

"The police will find where the second charm was made, there will be a jewelers' mark on it. And Margo Lane is not dead. The waitress you tried to kill is not dead, she will know you as a visitor to the Club Zagreb. Masters will tell that someone was giving information to Pavlic, and it had to be you. You have the film and Pavlic's keys and money. That pistol is the one that killed George and shot Margo Lane! Your father will .."

The girl came away from the wall. Her screams were now hysterical. All humanity was gone from her now, and she stood there in the dark room a wild and cornered animal. The pistol waved in the air. Then she began to shoot. The shots split the silence of the room, splintered wood from the walls, shattered pictures and glass, tore the silent afternoon. She shot wildly, spraying the shots without direction. Her hysterical voice babbled madly.

"He was going to leave me! I'll kill you too! I loved him, he was a man! He was so strong. I loved him. He was going to leave, run away, cheat me of my share after all I had done to help him! I killed him! Now I will kill you!"

Her shots smashed the walls, tore the room, ripped into the bed and dresser. She shot at everything and at nothing, and still the mocking laugh of The Shadow goaded her to madness. Where he lay on the floor now, protected by the bed, The Shadow watched the violent girl with the childlike face as all the fury poured from her like a stream of blood that would, soon, leave her empty and broken.

"Where are you! There and there!" the shots roared and shattered. "He was going to run! He was afraid of them, of that George! I loved him but he was going to run! No one leaves me! No one cheats me! No one . ."

The door to the small bedroom burst open. Sergeant Morgan and the other two policemen stood there in the doorway, their guns drawn and ready. They stared at the maddened girl. She whirled, her pistol already firing at Morgan and the policemen, Morgan shot her. She reeled back against the wall. She raised the pistol to fire again, and the hammer clicked on an empty gun. Morgan fired again, and Shirley Anders crashed against the wall, her chest bloody, and slid down the wall to the floor. Her wide blue eyes stared up innocently at Sergeant Morgan.

"I killed them all," Shirley Anders said. "I'm glad I killed them! I'm glad . , glad."

Then Shirley Anders was dead.

Sergeant Morgan looked down at the dead girl. He looked at the room torn to a shambles by her fury. His eyes slowly went around the whole smashed room. The single window was open, the curtain blowing lightly in the breeze as the sun flooded in. Sergeant Morgan studied every inch of the room, and then looked down at the dead girl.

"Nothing at all," Morgan said, "She was shooting at nothing."

"She must have gone crazy," one of the other policemen said, "that laughing we heard, you know?"

"Yeh," Morgan said, "She must have gone crazy. Shooting at nothing at all."

None of them heard, far off now, the final mocking laugh of The Shadow that rose clear in the silent afternoon over the dead body of Shirley Anders.

Two weeks later Detective LaPine of the Beach City Police stood with Lamont Cranston in Margo Lane's hospital room. Margo still lay on the bed, but she was dressed now, and ready to go back to New York in Cranston's limousine. LaPine held a picture of the dead Shirley Anders. Margo had identified the girl.

"Yes, I saw her in the Club Zagreb," Marge said. "But I'm not sure I could have sworn to it."

"She couldn't take the chance, Margo," Cranston said.

"You were right about that heart charm, Cranston, only I don't know how you guessed," LaPine said. "We traced the jeweler's mark to New York. Pavlic was even with her when she picked it up after it was made. The jeweler identified his picture."

"Anders has admitted she shot him anyway," Cranston said. "Will he be all right now?"

"Yeh, he's out of danger, except for the Government's case against all those illegal refugees."

"Will they be sent back?" Margo said.

"I don't think so, Margo," Cranston said. "Commissioner Weston is helping them all he can. I think he'll save them, get them to be admitted legally."

LaPine was angry. "They'd be in real trouble if that Helga Pavlic would admit they kidnaped her, but she won't. I know she never went with them voluntarily even if she says so."

"Pavlic and the girl hurt them all enough," Margo said.

"Yeh" LaPine said. "It's funny, you know? Pavlic comes down here to blackmail her father and the girl falls in love with him! He dazzled her, I suppose. The big international operator. She met him when he blackmailed Anders, and she joined him. She was quite a girl, a real bad one."

"They were two of a kind," Cranston said, "but at least it all finished Papescu and Liberation Front. He'll be in jail a long time."

"The whole bunch will," LaPine said. "One thing I still don't understand, you know? Why did the girl crack? What was she shooting at in that room?"

"At shadows," Lamont Cranston said as he held out his hand to help Margo to her feet to walk to the limousine for the trip back to New York.

"Yes, Lieutenant," Margo said. "A shadow destroyed her." A few minutes later, as the limousine drove away toward the north along Cape Ambrose Highway that was bright in the sun now, Lieutenant LaPine was sure he heard a strange and mocking laugh drift back on the gentle wind.

THE END