



“They, and the mirror, were absolutely blinding—like incandescent fire—”

*Illustrated by
Howard V. Brown*

Blinding Shadows

An experiment destroys a fundamental law—and makes man's mightiest city a place accursed. A Thought-variant

by DONALD WANDREI

PASSING NOW from the ten-year period of reconstruction that salvaged what was left of civilization after the second World War in 1955-58, we come to the year 1970, and the phenomenon generally called "The Blinding Shadows." It is not easy to approach this topic, deserving though it is of a volume in itself, for much that brought it on, and indeed its very nature, is still and likely always to remain a riddle.

The area involved roughly comprises what was formerly known as Greater New York, and includes a circle whose radius is some ten miles, even extending out into the harbor and the Atlantic. This area, now protected on land by great cement, steel, and barbed-wire fortifications erected by the government, is dead ground, which tens of thousands of sight-seers visit weekly to view the "lost" city and its strange conquerors, the Blinding Shadows.

One may stand upon the western wall, atop the Jersey Palisades, and look through barbed wire at a deserted city, where a vast and immeasurable fortune in gold, jewels, merchandise of every description, real estate, art treasures, libraries, museums, and the very cream of man's wealth, lies forever beyond human hands. No ship has sailed into New York harbor in ten years, nor has even dared try to break the

pontoon barrier that curves beyond Staten and Ellis Islands, southwest to the Jersey coast, and northwest to Long Island.

It is a matter of cosmic irony that New York, the dream city that withstood war and all the natural forces of destruction, has fallen before a mysterious, extra-natural enemy who remains unidentified. It may be that the scientists who have labored for a decade will eventually solve the puzzle and liberate New York, but in this year of 1980, the solution seems as far off as ever.

The Blinding Shadows first appeared on May 9, 1970.

As nearly as has been ascertained, however, their origin dates back to May 27, 1969. Upon that afternoon, Professor G. M. Dowdson of the University of Minnegon delivered a paper which created a sensation among learned societies. Dowdson was professor of mathematics, and also held degrees qualifying him as a doctor of optics and of philosophy.

Born in 1920, an infant prodigy, he received his B. A. at fifteen, his M. A. at sixteen, and his Ph. D. at eighteen. He achieved international fame for his researches into optical laws and the invention of lenses which made possible the great Mount Everest observatory, built in 1950. He taught mathematics, evidently pursuing his researches in

private, until he read his celebrated paper.

The occasion was the meeting of the International Scientific Academy at the University of Minnegon. On the afternoon of the second day of the session his paper was presented. One may imagine the professor, a short, nervous, dyspeptic man of keen eyes and extraordinary energy, striding back and forth upon the rostrum while he electrified a gathering that in its small compass of three hundred delegates included the greatest investigators of the time, men who were outstanding in every field of science. Dowdson's paper is too long to be quoted in full, but excerpts are interesting not only in themselves, but for the light they shed upon the Blinding Shadows.

SHORTLY AFTER his opening remarks, Dowdson stated: "One by one, our fundamental laws have been challenged as the boundaries of our knowledge have expanded. Among the few remaining was the ancient axiom: Two solids cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Gentlemen, that axiom is a fallacy. Two bodies *can* occupy the same space at the same time. The experiments of Rutherford, Bohr, Ellingsen, and others, proved that so-called solids were actually composed of atoms with spaces between the constituent particles as great comparatively as those between the stars of our galaxy.

"What is to prevent another solid, but with its constituent particles in these gaps, from occupying the same space at the same time? What is to prevent many apparent solids from occupying the same space simultaneously?"

"The skeptic will retort, if two or more bodies can occupy the same

space at the same time, why do we not perceive them? My answer is, we cannot perceive them because we have insufficient senses, because they are beyond our range of perceptions, or because they lie in a separate world.

"Gentlemen, there was a time long ago when objects were considered to have two dimensions, namely, length and breadth. After Euclid, it was discovered that length, breadth, and thickness comprised three dimensions. For thousands of years, man could visualize only two dimensions, at right angles to each other. He was wrong. Now, for more thousands of years, man has been able to visualize only three dimensions, at right angles to each other. May there not be a fourth dimension, perhaps at right angles to these, in some fashion that we cannot yet picture, or perhaps lying altogether beyond our range of vision? Objects emitting infra-red rays, and lying in such a four-dimensional world, might easily be past our ability to see and our capacity to understand, while existing beside us, nay, in this very hall."

Professor Bonnard was seen to turn red at this point, though he listened with polite deference. He had mathematically proved in the preceding session that no other than a three-dimensional universe was tenable.

Dowdson reached the crux of his paper with deep, if skeptical attention from his audience: "A three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow. If such a thing as a two-dimensional object existed, doubtless it would throw a one-dimensional shadow. And should a four-dimensional solid be extant, its shadow would be three-dimensional. In other words, gentlemen, it is entirely conceivable that in our very

midst lies a four-dimensional world whose shadow, of itself, or could we construct a mirror to reflect or materialize it, would be characterized by three dimensions, though we might never have eyes to see or minds to understand the nature of the four-dimensional origin of that shadow."

Later in his paper, Dowdson stated: "You may well ask why, if my theories are correct, no such shadow has ever been seen. The answer, I think, is fairly simple. Subject to laws alien to those we know, and imperceptible to our range of vision, it is quite probable that the object *does* cast such a shadow, but of such a color as to be also invisible. The alternative theory is that some intermediary, such as a mirror based upon radical principles, would reflect the shadow.

"One of my assistants is now working with infra-red photography. He may some day succeed in proving my theory with actual photographs. I, myself, am experimenting with lenses and mirrors of hitherto unknown refractive and reflective indices by which I will ultimately support or disprove my statements. Gentlemen, at next year's meeting of the International Scientific Academy, I hope to have a complete report, not only upon the principles underlying my mirror and its construction, but also upon the results of my research."

IF THE FLOOD of bitter debate started by his paper, the opportunity it gave to satirists and cartoonists, and the wide publicity it received, influenced his actions, Dowdson did not show it.

He made an extended tour that summer. Various records indicate that he circumnavigated the globe in a zigzag course covering both hem-

ispheres from pole to pole. We may assume that he was selecting a site for the completion of his experiment.

It is noteworthy that those who knew him during this period, and they were few, remarked on his increasing testiness and irritability. He became secretive. In July, from Omsk, Siberia, he tendered his resignation to the university authorities. In August, he turned up at the Mount Everest observatory and obtained a variety of astronomical data, including photographs, records of celestial phenomena, charts, and miscellaneous information on displacements and other peculiarities in the motions of stars.

Later in the month, he took the Sub-Pacific Corporation's regular descent by marine bell to the ruins of the lost continent Antiquus, lying in sunken valleys and mountain peaks around Easter Island. He copied the famous diagrams of Loa-*Thoth*, those strange and undeciphered formulae and inscriptions which still incise a vast block of basalt at the corporation's Descent Route Three.

August 30th found Dowdson computing magnetic fields and electrical phenomena at the south pole. September 6th witnessed his arrival in the Northwest Territory where he studied the aurora borealis and made several observations on the higher wave-length radiations which are peculiarly active in that region as a result of its tremendous deposits of intruded magnetic ores. The middle of September saw Dowdson back in New York. On September 17th, 18th, and 19th, he appeared at a number of firms and bought quantities of optical and electrical supplies.

On October 3rd he was reported missing. An intensive search failed

to disclose his whereabouts. Despite the disruptions of the World War, communication remained in a highly fluid state, but all the resources of public agencies failed to find the missing man. So international a hunt may seem unusual, but it must be remembered that Dowdson was a leading figure in science, and that the scientists were the world's rulers after the peace treaty of 1958.

It seems evident that his wanderings and disappearances were directly connected with his theories. These theories, it should be recalled, were: that the universe is four-dimensional; four-dimensional objects coexist with our three-dimensional perceptions; a four-dimensional object may occupy at the same time the same space occupied by a three-dimensional object; such a four-dimensional object might be perceivable by human beings with their present sensory equipment, but only as a three-dimensional shadow; and since no such shadow had ever been recorded, some intermediary must be essential, such as a mirror of radical design.

THESE THEORIES are repeated in order to clarify the following deposition. The statement was written and signed by Dowdson's assistant, Lawrence A. Gilroy, on May 10, 1970, but is inserted here because it is the only knowledge we possess of Dowdson's activities up to the appearance of the Blinding Shadows. The salient parts alone are quoted from his statement. The original lies alongside Dowdson's famous paper in the Hall of Documents in the National Museum at Washington.

After a brief résumé of identity and previous life, Mr. Gilroy continues: "I served as Professor

Dowdson's assistant at the University of Minnegon from 1967 to 1969. In 1956, I had helped him develop the Earth-Eye which directly ended the Great War." (The Earth-Eye was the electrical mirror that reproduced the scene on any part of the world's surface. It was operated by a complex series of keyboards that controlled each twenty square feet of earth. The Eye made it possible for the Anglo-American-Soviet Union to witness, forestall, and defeat all plans of the Asiatic-African League, resulting in their conquest and virtual annihilation.) "From 1968 to 1969, I made researches in infra-red photography and assisted in the construction of mirrors. I followed his computations. He was trying to reflect a four-dimensional world. None of the mirrors was successful. Altogether, I built four. One was a complete failure, one melted when the current was turned on, two showed only an unidentifiable blur.

"My contract with Minnegon expired in 1969. The university, faced by serious financial troubles, could not renew it. I conferred with Dowdson. He asked me to keep in touch with him throughout the summer. In June, when he was about to begin a world trip, he asked me to dispose of my effects, close my affairs at Minnegon, and without saying a word to any one, meet him at the Hotel Montesport in New York on September 20th. I told him I would. Neither he nor I had immediate relatives or obligations. That was one reason why we had always made a good partnership.

"When I called upon him, we had a lengthy conversation that resulted in my agreeing to disappear from sight and help him perfect his experiment. He was afraid of the experiment itself, or of its success,

though I do not know why. I think also, he was secretive lest other scientists try to obtain his data and get ahead of him.

"Our laboratory lay in the safest of all hiding places, the heart of New York City. It occupied a warehouse on Wendel Street near the North River. That grimy district of warehouses, piers, produce markets, and coffeepots was ideal as a retreat. There we lived and worked. I do not know how Dowdson got the place, but we were seldom outside, were free from interruption, and never recognized during the seven or eight months we stayed.

"From remarks he dropped occasionally, I learned that somewhere in the course of his travels he had obtained formulae vital to the testing of his theories. I believe that this essential data is contained in the diagrams of Loa-Thoth, but if he finally deciphered those remarkable tables, he kept the translation a closely guarded secret.

"On the basis of the data he had collected, we began a new series of experiments. First, we built a mirror of prisms instead of the usual flat surface. The prisms were arranged with infinite variability upon concave, convex, flat, and other modified backings. The results were always striking. Sometimes distorted reflections of recognizable objects would appear. Again, there would be only a confusion of light. Once we saw a mirage. We never found its source and never succeeded in recapturing it. Only for a second, the prisms, whirling through the complex variations made possible by a sequence of four hundred and ninety-six numbers, showed up the outline of some far-away and fantastic city, Cyclopean in size, of shining black architecture, ineffably strange, and apparently deserted,

though I thought I saw a curious mechanical contrivance move and operate as if by unseen hands.

"For all his knowledge, Dowdson found it a physical impossibility to arrange four right angles at right angles to each other. He experimented with cubes, pyramids, tetrahedrons, parallelepipeds, cones, and other geometric solids, by themselves, and in combination through endless patterns of crystal.

"Then Dowdson hit on the idea of using prisms made out of other materials than glass and abandoned his previous work. He tried glyptol, which has the same refractive index, but with no better results. He also tried chromoberyllium and other metal alloys. At that time the newly created elements above 92 were just becoming available.

"No. 95, a peculiarly brilliant and transparent compound, of marked radioactivity, low ductility, high fracturability, and other unusual attributes, interested him. It was extremely heavy, fluorescent, and an exceptional conductor of electricity. In addition, its most noteworthy characteristic was its absorptive nature in that it apparently consumed about fifty per cent of the power fed into it. By that I mean that if we introduced a current of one thousand volts, for example, the resulting current was only five hundred volts. This energy was not grounded, was not transformed to heat, and did not pass off by ionization or other discharges.

"We made exhaustive tests without discovering what happened. In other words, a fifty-per-cent loss of energy occurred that was not accounted for. The best guess was that rhillium, No. 95, transformed the energy into something undetectable, possibly an emitted ray or radiation of such a nature as to re-

quire special equipment to identify it. Because of its ease of fracture and its conchoidal fracture edges, rhillium was difficult to work, but Dowdson persisted and finally succeeded in cutting several hundred perfect prisms.

"I SHALL never forget the day when we completed the rhillium mirror. It was May 8, 1970. Against the south wall of Dowdson's laboratory stood the mirror, a concave reflector five feet in diameter, and composed of six hundred and eighty-one prisms in absolute symmetry. Each rhillium prism was separately wired, power being supplied by a motor that rotated an endless belt that charged the surface of a hollow aluminum globe with static electricity.

"The globe was less than a foot from the cathode that would receive the charge and relay it to the rhillium mirror. In this way, by speeding the motor, the current could be built up to half a million volts if necessary. At various points were ammeters, voltmeters, interferometers, and so on, to record what happened at each key point. Past the mirror was a final series of measuring equipment before the current was grounded. Everywhere stood vacuum tubes, retorts, discarded mirrors, reflectors, refractors, mercury disks, grinding and polishing materials, and miscellaneous equipment that we had been using. The laboratory was a confusion of electrical, optical, and astronomical supplies.

"When Dowdson started the motor, the globe began to shine. Little sparks danced upon its surface. A terrific flash blinded me. Intermittent at first, the man-made lightning roared. The air became pungent of ozone. The discharges

grew more regular as the motor droned on, and the whirling belt began to sing a high song of its own. At last the discharge steadied, and an unbroken arc ripped from globe to cathode, though the flame danced in an ever-changing zigzag in space.

"The bluish flare of the current fascinated me no less than the crackling surface of the globe. Dowdson bent over to make sure that the instruments were registering properly. I heard the dynamo drone on monotonously. And now the many-faceted prisms of the mirror began to shine and glowed like diamonds reflecting all the brilliant colors of the spectrum, and by the expression on Dowdson's face I knew that the old phenomenon was recurring. Somewhere in the rhillium mirror, a fifty-per-cent loss of power occurred and could not be explained.

"But I was more interested in the mirror itself. The prisms shaded through blues and oranges and reds and violets, even whites and blacks and all the tones between, a coruscation of many-varied color that played and shifted through more subtle harmonies than ever the northern lights or the Clavilux showed, a phantom and dazzling parade of hues. Then they softened and flowed into each other, and the prism-mirror became pearly as though one witnessed a rainbow disappearing into fog.

"Then the fog, too, cleared away, and a curious thing happened. The mirror became strangely transparent. It flickered like a draft of hot air, but otherwise it was barely visible. I strained my eyes until they ached, but all I could see was the elusive suggestion of heat waves where the mirror had been. Yet I could not see the wall behind it, hence this was a matter of more than

mere transparency. I can explain it only by saying that I saw nothing—neither mirror, nor wall behind it, nor the outside world. I might have been looking at a blank spot in space.

“A half hour passed, and nothing happened. I felt that we had another failure. There was a certain hypnotic effect in the sounds in the room and the invisible mirror.

“I was recalled from my abstraction by a cry from Dowdson: ‘Larry! Behind you! What is it?’ I swung sharply around.

“Directly back of me lay the first of the Blinding Shadows.

“It was a three-dimensional shadow.

“I SUPPOSE I should have leaped with glee as Dowdson did at this verification of his theories, but I didn’t. The shadow was of too sinister a nature. It was absolutely blinding, like an incandescent fire, and so intense that it could be watched only with smoked glasses, so that we were unable to determine its real color. Perhaps its blinding nature was only the effect of a new color which our optical nerves could not record. I sometimes think so.

“At any rate, the shadow hung for all the world as if it were stayed in the act of leaping at us. It occupied a space opposite the mirror, about three feet from the ground, and eight feet from me. It made me acutely uncomfortable to realize that that shadow was cast in spite of the fact that I stood between it and the mirror.

“It is impossible for me to express my immediate reaction. The queer shadow hanging in mid-air roughly resembled a parallelepiped, slightly tilted downward from the mirror, or upward toward me. I believe that the true shadow would be a rect-

angular solid, but that there must have been present a distortion similar to the lengthening of a two-dimensional shadow when the light is shifted behind the object casting it.

“Dowdson and I walked to the shadow and passed our hands through it, not without qualms. Nothing happened. We judged it to be some five by two by two feet in size. We put screens between it and the mirror, turned all the lights off, turned even brighter lights on, tried to photograph it, subjected it to all sorts of tests, many sound, but a few doubtless absurd, in our attempt to analyze it. Any one who has ever seriously tried to test a two-dimensional shadow can imagine what we were up against. We found absolutely no clue to its nature or its origin.

“Then my guess about the object casting the shadow had a sudden corroboration. Without warning, as we were staring at the baffling shadow, a second blinding luminance leaped into being. It was a similar shadow and several feet away. It hung below the first shadow and seemed more fantastic still. There was a greater degree of distortion in its parallelepiped shape, and it curved through a thirty-degree arc. Now I knew that whatever objects cast these shadows were placed in different relationship to the unknown light, and consequently the shadows differed in appearance.

“I need not go into detail about that afternoon. Shadow after shadow appeared. Sometimes only one would come in an hour. Then a succession would materialize rapidly. They all remained, once they came. They all differed. There were thick, squat shadows, and shadows like torsos, some that curved weirdly, and others assuming

the form of asymmetrical cones, helical spirals, and shapes for which geometry has no classification.

"Each shadow possessed the extraordinary brilliance. Most of them were poised in mid-air. As the long afternoon drew to a close, the laboratory blazed with the singular radiance of these shapes, the dynamo droned on, the lightning roared from globe to cathode, the air became distressingly pungent of ozone, but we scarcely heeded, so fascinated were we by the rapid and sinister materialization of the Blinding Shadows. I think we both felt the invisible presence of whatever objects cast the shadows, but because the shadows varied so, we had no conception of what their source might be.

"There were seventeen shadows by nightfall. They radiated fanwise from the first shadow. Two or three overlapped. Some encompassed our laboratory apparatus. One shadow sprang into existence piercing Dowdson's body and terminating at an electric furnace.

"I remember Dowdson's saying: 'Larry, we've opened the way to fields of investigation that may turn the whole course of civilization! Why, these are only shadows! The next step will be to find out what casts the shadow, and then to bring the fourth dimension to ours, or ours up to theirs.'

"The shadows disturbed me. I couldn't share his enthusiasm. I said: 'What if they are hostile? This is new ground to science. How do we know that we aren't opening a Pandora's box of trouble?'

"Dowdson pooh-poohed my suggestion. 'Nonsense; we've only shadows to go on, and it may be months before we progress further. Besides, these beings are probably just as anxious to learn about us as

we are about them, if the shadows are cast by living organisms as I think they are.'

"I had my doubts, but it was his experiment. The shadows bred in me a distaste akin to the unreasoning fear that children have of dark woods at night. There was something dreadful in the knowledge that something in this very room cast a three-dimensional shadow, and that we might study the shadows for all eternity without obtaining one clue to the real nature of the objects casting the reflection.

"I WENT OUT for sandwiches and coffee at midnight. We lunched hastily. Neither of us slept. All night long, we studied the Blinding Shadows. The dynamo hummed incessantly; the lightning sizzled; and the rhillium mirror, all but invisible, reflected those enigmatic shapes. There were thirty-three of them at dawn. They filled the laboratory. Of every size, form, and kind, they completely baffled us. Each remained fixed, once it appeared, but none was the same. Despite my goggles, my eyes burned from the intolerable glare of the Blinding Shadows.

"We were both pretty far gone when noon came. It was over thirty hours since we had slept, and the tension was unbelievable. What was the nature of the shadows? What beings cast them? How did the rhillium mirror function? Where did the loss of power occur and why? What accounted for the increase in the number of the shadows? Was their source material, or organic? Could those beings, if they were beings, see us, and if so, what was their purpose and attitude?

"'I've got a hunch!' Dowdson suddenly exclaimed. 'That unex-

plained loss of power represents energy that is transformed and sifted into the world where those shadows originate. It must be visible to them, and they are gathering around the dispersal point to watch!

"I objected. 'Do you honestly think any one would stand still for twenty-four hours? Remember, the first shadow hasn't moved one inch since we first saw it.'

"'What of it? A day of our time may be only a second to them. You yourself have seen how the shadows literally leap out, as if something at a high speed from our standpoint shot in front of a beam of light and stopped, whereas, it might merely be a living entity strolling to watch some oddity of nature in its world, an entity that has summoned its companions to see also. Larry, that's it! The beings are coming to watch a new energy in whatever fashion it registers in their world! And that unknown radiation at the same time reflects their shadow back to us through the rhillium mirror. Perhaps it is *our* shadow that *they* are watching. The rhillium mirror may work two ways. Perhaps they'll be able to see us eventually and we them!'

"'It sounds possible,' I agreed, more from weariness than anything else. 'I'd like some more coffee and sandwiches.'

"'Good idea!' he muttered. 'Run out and bring me some.' He hovered around the apparatus like a demon, his eyes beneath the goggles bloodshot from lack of sleep. He walked through a couple of shadows, and I thought it strange to see them intersecting his body. As I left, he was bending over the mirror. Ionization of the air, and the intermittent, innumerable sparks

of electrical discharges gave the only clue to the mirror's location.

"I saw Professor Dowdson just once more.

"I bought sandwiches and a container of coffee. Then I hurried back and climbed the single flight of stairs.

"A shriek greeted me as I opened the door.

"THE TERROR came with that wordless cry. I had no more than entered when one of the shadows moved. It leaped on Dowdson and infolded him. The dazzling shape vanished, and so did Dowdson. I think I dropped the sandwiches in my paralysis of fright. I don't know. I was exhausted, and everything happened at once.

"Dowdson's cry still echoed when the strange shadow reappeared. But Dowdson did not come back. I sensed the shadow curving to spring at me. It was a dreadful feeling, what with the everlasting drone of the dynamo, the flaming shadows, the radiant, invisible mirror, the roar of electricity, the crackle of sparks and discharges, and the ever-changing play of fire and color through all the intricate globes and prisms and parts of that damnable invention. And the Blinding Shadows, no longer still, marched alive and purposive. The same shadow that got Dowdson raced after me.

"I turned and took the whole flight of stairs in two bounds. I tore into the street. A couple of men were unloading a truck at the other end of the loft. I raced by them with a yell of warning, but they only looked at me stupidly. They saved my life unintentionally. I heard hoarse cries and looked around. The shadow, more dazzling than daylight, swerved and swallowed the men. In a flash it was gone, and not

a trace of the men remained. There were other people on the street, tradesmen and teamsters. I gasped and begged them to flee, but they must have thought me a madman, and I don't blame them.

"I turned the corner. My last look backward impressed on me a scene I shall never forget. The Blinding Shadows were pouring out of the loft, from its doors and windows, from the solid walls themselves. Every person on the street was being attacked, surrounded, and engulfed. The light of the sun was darkness compared to the blaze of the destroyers. The disappearance and rematerialization of those cryptical reflections came with a fitful rapidity, but the people who vanished with them never came back, and hardly a cry but was cut off abruptly as the victim was stolen from our world, to a fate unknown. There had been forty-nine shadows in the laboratory. There were hundreds now swarming out.

"The next hours are a blank in my memory. For two days I had had no sleep. The shock of the tragedy upon my exhausted system evidently finished me. I came back to my senses late at night and in Jersey, speeding westward. My subconscious mind probably drove me from the scene and toward my birthplace. I got off at the next station and made my way back to New York.

"The city was a shambles. I never saw such black, enormous mobs of people evacuating any site even in the worst slaughter of the Great War. By hundreds of thousands they stormed every exit. The policemen, guards, and troops were absolutely helpless in that tide of stampeding humanity. Panicky faces, the sputter of automobile engines, the roar of airplanes, the play of floodlights, and the endless

torrent of beings, the mutters and shouts, all blending in a vast and continuous babel of sound and frenzy were as terrifying to me as the shadows.

"From the Jersey heights, I saw the lights of the city shining, but shining more brilliantly than all the lights together were those strange, blinding, voracious, three-dimensional shadows that charged through the streets, hounding every laggard and passing easily through stone, cement, steel, and all obstructions in their quest for prey.

"I convinced a captain at the Holland Tunnel that I could help explain the menace. He took me straight to a conference of the mayor, the police commissioner, the secretary of national defense, and others.

"In their presence, at two o'clock, on this morning of May 10, 1970, of my own free will, I make this statement, repeating what I have just told them, to which is affixed my signature, with the signatures of the last three designated persons as witness.

(Signed)

LAWRENCE A. GILROY.

(Witness) F. A. Waite,

J. N. Norris,

Arthur McCoy."

ON MAY 9th, New York City was still the dream metropolis, raising its proud spires to the sky and seeming as eternal in stone and steel as Rome was in legend. On May 10th, by nightfall, New York was a wilderness where only the Blinding Shadows prowled, and no human being lived. Those who had not fled were swallowed. In one day, a great city became a tomb. For the first time, it was wholly silent, all its noise and sound and smoke, all its traffic and life, stilled. All that

enormous and infinitely varied wealth mentioned before, and concentrated within its limits, a wealth beyond estimate, though guesses have ranged all the way from twenty billions to one hundred billions of dollars, has tempted many but remains unreclaimed.

Gilroy's statement explained without solving. The Blinding Shadows ruled the city. That they did not overrun the State or the country, or indeed the world, can only be understood by a paragraph from Dowdson's famous lecture:

"I have stated that two bodies can occupy the same space at the same time. This, of course, does not mean that they need necessarily do so. It is entirely conceivable that a four-dimensional world might overlap only some portion of our world, such as a continent, a country, or even a municipality, and that neither that world nor our world would have any points whatsoever of contact, identities, or communication, outside that overlapping area."

As this history is being written, ten years later, the catastrophe is sufficiently vivid in the mind of the nation to require no further details.

No one, so far as known, has ever seen the source of the Blinding Shadows, or, in other words, a four-dimensional being. None of the missing persons, whose total number runs into tens of thousands, has ever returned. Their fate is merely conjectural. The Shadows halted within the limits of the area de-

scribed, thus lending support to the theory that the world of their origin overlaps Earth only in a small section centering around New York.

Gilroy died in 1970 at the hands of an infuriated mob, two days after his confession. No successor to Dowdson has yet been found, though one million dollars in cash and the same sum annually throughout his life await the person who releases New York. Meanwhile, the Blinding Shadows roam restlessly about the streets, prowl through deserted buildings, and hover in mid-air, waiting, endlessly waiting. They pass through solids and lie upon the ground with equal ease. Their proportions change when they move. Their eternal silence is rivaled only by the eternal silence of the city that they have conquered.

Why they remain and what they seek are unsolved riddles, nor indeed is there surety that somewhere, sometime, they may not flame outside the barriers and sweep onward, or that some other scientist may not unwittingly loose upon the rest of the world a horde of mysterious, ravenous, and Blinding Shadows, against which mankind is powerless and about whose source nothing is known.

For ten years, the Blinding Shadows have possessed the dream city; and ten thousand times that many years are likely to slip into oblivion without one human tread in streets where not even the ravens hover and where the hellish Shadows endlessly rove.

Next Month:

A "different" Interplanetary novelette

CRATER 17, NEAR TYCHO

by **FRANK K. KELLY**

In the June Astounding Stories