

THE CRIME CLINIC

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. COMING EVENTS

A SHORT, stocky man was strolling beneath the superstructure of an East Side elevated. The collar of his brown overcoat was upturned. His gray hat was tilted down over his forehead. His hands were thrust deep in his side pockets. The man had all the appearance of an idler. He looked like a typical denizen of this dingy district in Manhattan.

Jostling shoulders with bums, the saunterer continued his slow pace. He growled at those whom he encountered, and there was a challenge in his air that commanded immediate respect. He seemed to be as tough a rowdy as any in the neighborhood, which abounded in tough characters.

The street was gloomy; nevertheless, the stroller showed a marked aptitude for turning his head away from any lights that he approached. Shop windows were lighted, for there was some evening business even on this tawdry thoroughfare. The muffled man avoided the glare from the little stores, sought only the shadows.

Only once did the stocky individual relax his effort to remain unrecognized. That was when he reached the entrance to a side street, where he idled in meditative fashion. He wanted to be sure that he was unobserved,

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and in convincing himself that this was the case, he unwittingly eased his vigilance. The glow of a street lamp temporarily revealed the man's upturned features. That light showed a swarthy, square-jawed countenance.

The muffled man was Detective Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force. A prowler in the borderlands where crime was fostered, he had every reason to keep his identity unknown. After short, quick glances along the street, Cardona turned and entered the alleyway.

Perhaps there were those who knew Cardona's gait; perhaps there were spying eyes that had caught that momentary revealment of the detective's face. Whichever the case might be, there was a distinct activity along the street immediately after Detective Cardona's departure.

Another idler across the street turned suddenly and walked away. A sneaky, stealthy man slipped from the protection of an obscure doorway. He passed a lounger who was standing beside the steps of an elevated station. This fellow sidled away as though a relayed message had been given.

NEWS was going through the underworld that Joe Cardona had arrived within the realm of crime. The grapevine telegraph was hard at work, reporting this event. Such was the way in the badlands of Manhattan.

Yet amid the subdued excitement, no one had noted the activities of the first individual who had taken action after viewing Joe Cardona's face. This fellow had passed as one of the underworld. He looked like a husky gangster, who had every right to be in this forlorn district. Hence he had passed unchallenged.

In the light of a dingy cigar store, this man who had seen Cardona appeared as a different type. His face, though firm and determined, showed a keenness lacking in the usual gangster. Ensconced in a telephone booth, he called a number, and announced his identity in a low voice.

"Marsland reporting," were his words.

"Report," came the order, in a quiet voice.

"Cardona in vicinity," announced Marsland. "Entered alley alongside Climax Brass Shop. Went into third house on the left."

"Report received."

This secret conversation had a meaning. Cliff Marsland, pretended gangster, had reported Cardona's arrival. The man to whom he had spoken over the wire was a chap named Burbank – one whom Cliff had never seen, yet with whom he had much in common.

For Cliff Marsland was an agent of The Shadow; and Burbank was The Shadow's contact man. As a prowler in the underworld, Cliff picked up data of importance, and sent it to Burbank; the contact man, in turn, relayed it to The Shadow.

To the underworld, a secret visit by Joe Cardona was a matter of importance. Whatever concerned the underworld, concerned The Shadow also. For The Shadow, mysterious personage whose very identity was unknown, battled crime and swung the balance of power into the hands of justice.

Cliff Marsland, sensing suppressed excitement in the neighborhood, had picked up the information that Joe Cardona had been seen. He had passed the word along to The Shadow. From now on, it would be The Shadow's province to learn why Joe Cardona had set forth on a secret mission.

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JOE CARDONA was a detective of capability. He had a tendency, however, to rely upon grit rather than craftiness. He had come to this district, confident that he could conceal his identity. So sure of that had Cardona been that he did not suspect that he had been recognized and trailed.

The detective was laughing gruffly he ascended a pair of dilapidated stairs within the building that he had entered. He stopped in front of a door on the third floor and gave two short, quick raps; after a pause, he repeated the double knock.

The door opened, and a peaked, wild-eyed face stared through the crack. A sickly grin appeared upon the hunted countenance as the door opened farther.

Joe Cardona stepped in. The little, stoop-shouldered man who had admitted him quickly closed and locked the door.

"Nobody seen you?" he questioned, in a hoarse, frightened voice. "Sure nobody seen you, Joe?"

"Not a chance, Scoffy," returned Cardona, with a grin. "Look – I had my collar up – my hat tilted. I looked like any other mug on the avenue. Sit down – sit down –"

"Don't stay long, Joe," pleaded the little man as he sank to a tumble-down chair. "I ain't got much to tell you tonight. I took a big chance, Joe, when I told you to come to this hide-out. Say – if anyone wised that I was playin' stool –"

"Forget it, Scoffy. You're safe. Let's hear what you've got to tell me."

"It ain't much, Joe" – "Scoffy's" voice was a hoarse whisper – "but it may mean a lot – later on. I just got the word that The Jackdaw is workin' again."

Scoffy's lips twitched as his beady eyes stared toward Cardona. The little stool pigeon was anxious to see what effect his words had on the detective. He expected that Cardona would be startled. The expectation was fulfilled.

Cardona's eyes narrowed. His jaw hardened. His fists tightened. The star detective sat down upon the only other chair in the dilapidated bedroom and looked firmly at his informant.

"What do you know about The Jackdaw?" he demanded.

"Nothin' at all, Joe," pleaded Scoffy. "Nothin' – honest. I'd blab if I knew who he was –"

"Tell me what you think about him."

"Nothin' you don't know, Joe."

"Tell me, anyway."

"Well," asserted Scoffy, in a confidential tone, "he's a real guy, all right. Everybody knows how he used to work. He went after swell stuff – jewels – bonds – the kind of swag you'd find in a big banker's home."

"Alone?"

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"Sometimes – an' sometimes with a mob. All dependin' on the lay. Then he scrammed – an' came back. But he scrammed again. Now I think he's comin' back."

"Why?"

"Because I seen Bennie Lizzit back in town – and Bennie was workin' in The Jackdaw's mob."

"Do you know any others in the outfit?"

"Not a one, Joe – honest. Say – Bennie an' me used to be pals. If he knewed that I was squealin' to you, Joe, I'd get the works, sure."

Cardona eyed the furtive-faced stool pigeon. There was no question about Scoffy's sincerity. The palefaced gangster was telling all that he knew. Joe was determined to take advantage of Scoffy's potential usefulness.

"All right," said the detective, rising. "I'm counting on you, Scoffy. Keep your eyes open. Pal around with Bennie Lizzit again. Find out the fellow he's working for. If The Jackdaw is back again, I'm going to crack his mob and get him, too."

"It ain't goin' to be easy," volunteered Scoffy, with a shake of his head. "I knowed Bennie was workin' for The Jackdaw. I was the only guy that knowed it. But I never got no hook-up on the rest of the mob."

"The Jackdaw is a silk-hat, Joe. He may use some gorillas when he needs 'em, but he ain't in their class. He's a guy that moves high. He knows the swells, an' he works alone whenever he can."

"I know his game," nodded Cardona. "If he had stayed around long enough I would have grabbed him. Now that I know he's back, I can get to him. But I may have to do it through the mob. That's where you come in. Understand? Watch Bennie Lizzit."

"All right, Joe," nodded Scoffy reluctantly.

"Give me a call," ordered Cardona. "Tell me as soon as you have any new dope. Nobody knows that you're tipping me off. Don't worry."

With this assurance to the stool pigeon, Cardona closed his coat collar about his chin. He slouched his hat down over his eyes, opened the door, and thrust his hands into his pockets as he stalked down the stairs.

Scoffy listened at the door. He heard the thud of Cardona's footsteps. He was glad that the detective had gone. The interview had taken only a few minutes. Scoffy tried to convince himself that no one had recognized the detective. The stool pigeon realized that he had taken a long chance in bringing Cardona here.

Satisfied as to Cardona's departure, Scoffy closed the door. He stood trembling as he fished in his pocket for a pack of cigarettes. Matches rattled as a wooden box came out in the shaky hand.

Scoffy's gaze was toward the window. Suddenly, it turned to the door. With a wild gasp, the stool pigeon sprang to lock the barrier.

He was too late.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the sound of footsteps, the door swung open, and a big-shouldered, ugly-faced ruffian thrust himself into the room. In his right hand, this fellow held a big revolver. He covered Scoffy with

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a weapon, and a fierce grin appeared upon the pockmarked countenance.

"Bennie Lizzit!"

The name was gasped from Scoffy's lips. The intruder laughed as he closed the door behind him.

"Didn't expect to see me, eh?" he snarled. "Who'd you think I was – that smart dick comin' back?"

"What dick?" questioned Scoffy, trying to bluff.

"Joe Cardona," jeered Bennie Lizzit. "Say – that clod-hopper was lamped when he hit the avenue. Everybody knew he was down here. I heard where he headed. I figured maybe he was comin' to see you."

"What'd he want to see me for?" asked Scoffy. "I ain't said nothin' to him, Bennie. You an' me – we're pals and –"

"We was pals," retorted Bennie. "But not no more – you squealin' rat!"

Scoffy saw what was coming. Bennie Lizzit was between him and the door. With a frenzied cry, the trapped stool pigeon made a dash for the window. Bennie overtook him; with a sweep of his arm, the big gangster sent the little man spinning into the corner.

"Honest, Bennie!" Scoffy was pleading. "Honest – I didn't squeal!"

"You mean you ain't goin' to squeal no longer!"

With these words, Bennie shot his left hand forward, and pinned the stool pigeon's neck to the wall. Before the cornered squealer could manage to squirm away, Bennie made a vicious swing with his right arm. His revolver landed squarely upon the side of Scoffy's head.

The little fellow sagged. Bennie Lizzit delivered another skull-crushing blow. He released his left hand. Scoffy's body tumbled to the floor. The stool pigeon was dead.

Bennie gloated as he surveyed the work which he had done. Still holding his revolver, he turned toward the door.

The murderer's eyes began to bulge. His fist tightened on his revolver. His hand, however, did not rise. Bennie Lizzit, killer though he was, felt pangs of fear at the uncanny event which was taking place before his gaze here in this gangster hide-out.

The door was swinging open, of its own accord. As Bennie stared into the darkened hallway beyond, all that he could see was a pair of blazing eyes. As he stared, the murderer saw a form materialize. He gasped as he observed a being in black that appeared just within the doorway.

"The Shadow!"

Bennie's blurted recognition was a fitting tribute to the mysterious presence of The Shadow. A tall form garbed in black, The Shadow had arrived as an avenger from the night. His shape seemed spectral beneath the folds of a black cloak. His features – all save those terrible, blazing eyes – were invisible beneath the shade of a broad-brimmed slouch hat.

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THE one symbol of realism was the huge automatic that projected from a black-gloved hand. The sight of that weapon brought terror to Bennie Lizzit. The mobster had killed. His victim lay at his feet. The Shadow had trapped the murderer.

An ominous laugh came from unseen lips. The Shadow had arrived too late to prevent the death of Scoffy, the stool pigeon. He was here, however, to learn the reason why Scoffy had been slain. His sinister laugh was the token of his power.

Had The Shadow trapped Bennie Lizzit at any other moment, the gangster would unquestionably have quailed. From his lips, The Shadow would have learned the reason for the murderer's crime.

But with Scoffy's body at his feet, Bennie Lizzit still was dominated with a savage thirst for murder. At the sound of The Shadow's laugh, the killer spat a fierce oath and swung his gun arm upward to fire point-blank at the avenger who had caught him on the scene of crime.

The room re-echoed to the roar of an ear-splitting report. The flash of flame came from The Shadow's automatic. A split second before his enemy, The Shadow had delivered his message to prevent the gangster's shot.

Bennie staggered backward, clutching his left shoulder. Crippled, he still snarled his rage. With clawing finger, he managed to pull the trigger of his revolver. Shots went wide from his wavering gun.

Once more the automatic thundered. The bullet clipped the gangster's arm. With a shriek of pain, Bennie Lizzit sprawled sidewise. He was against the window as he fell; his useless hand, as it lost the revolver, struck against the drawn window shade.

The sash beyond was open. Lurching, where he had sought solidity, Bennie Lizzit floundered headforemost over the low sill. He made a wild clutch with his left hand; his fingers slipped as they clicked against the window frame.

The window shade snapped loose. Wrapped like a shroud about the hurtling gangster, it accompanied Bennie Lizzit on his three-story plunge to the paving beneath the window. A hideous scream ended in a crash below.

Silent, The Shadow stood within the door of this room where death had been delivered and avenged. Shouts came to him from the street below. The black cloak swished. The tall form disappeared into the darkness of the hallway.

Coming events had brought The Shadow to this spot. Joe Cardona had talked with Scoffy. The stool pigeon had died at the hands of Bennie Lizzit. The murderer, in turn, was dead. These startling occurrences were but the prelude to a trail of crime.

The Shadow, though he had not heard the words from Scoffy's lips, foresaw the coming conflict. Though Joe Cardona, alone, had received word that the smooth crook called "The Jackdaw" had returned, The Shadow soon would know what the detective had learned.

The stage was set for the events that were to come.

CHAPTER II. THE SHADOW BEGINS

LATE the next afternoon, Detective Joe Cardona was seated at his desk in headquarters. The place was deserted. Cardona, alone, was giving vent to his feelings by means of a sullen scowl. The chief object of

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Cardona's annoyance seemed to be the evening newspaper that was lying on the desk before him.

Leaning back in his chair, Cardona spent a few minutes in reflective thought. Then, in a decisive manner, he arose, picked up the newspaper, and strode into another office.

He sat down in a chair on the opposite side from a gray-haired man who was busily engaged in completing a report sheet. This was Inspector Timothy Klein, Cardona's superior.

Klein did not appear to notice Cardona's arrival. When he had finished his report sheet, however, the grizzled inspector looked up and greeted the detective with a friendly smile.

"What's the matter, Joe?" he inquired.

"Plenty," admitted Cardona. "This, for one thing."

He pointed to the newspaper as he spoke. Klein looked at the item indicated and shook his head.

"Why does this bother you?" he questioned. "A couple of small-fry mobsters killed – that's all. There have been other shootings in that neighborhood."

"Listen, inspector." Cardona's voice was serious. "I've got a hunch that there's trouble coming. There's something big behind this. I'll tell you why. I was using this fellow Scoffy. Just breaking him in as a high-grade stool pigeon."

Inspector Klein arched his eyebrows. The statement aroused his immediate interest.

"Last night," went on Cardona, "I went down there to see him. He told me about this fellow, Bennie Lizzit. Scoffy was afraid of Lizzit. More than that, he told me Lizzit was hooked up with a big game. I told Scoffy to keep an eye on Lizzit. Then what happens? This. Lizzit kills Scoffy; and someone gets Lizzit."

Inspector Klein began to nod thoughtfully.

"Which leaves me out," declared Cardona. "My stool's dead; so is the man he was watching. That's why I think the game is going to break."

"What do you think it's all about, Joe?"

"I know what it's about," asserted Cardona. "You know the trouble we had with those swell society robberies. You know how little we learned. Some rumors about a smart crook they called 'The Jackdaw.' Whether he was a gentleman burglar or a gang leader, we didn't find out. The only way we figured that he'd ducked out was when he quit operating."

"Well, last night Scoffy tipped me that Bennie Lizzit had worked for The Jackdaw. With Bennie back in town, Scoffy figured The Jackdaw might be back. Now that Scoffy and Bennie are both dead, I figure The Jackdaw is back."

THE statement brought a frown from Inspector Klein. Cardona knew the reason. He spoke before Klein had an opportunity to express himself.

"I know what you're thinking, inspector," said the detective. "It's going to raise hob if we start going after some unknown bird that we call 'The Jackdaw.' The commissioner put the taboo on my mentioning The

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Shadow in reports – even though I knew there were cases in which The Shadow figured. Now, if I say there's a crook called The Jackdaw –"

Inspector Klein raised his hands. He tried to curb Cardona's outburst.

"Easy, Joe," he said. "You're getting ahead of yourself. There are no reports of robberies as yet."

"That's just it," returned Cardona grimly. "The other times we came in after The Jackdaw was gone. This trip I want to be ahead of him."

"Excellent," affirmed Klein.

"I've figured it this way," asserted Cardona. "If The Jackdaw is back on the job, he'll be after big game. Here – right on the same page of this afternoon's newspaper – is something that ought to interest him."

Inspector Klein looked at the item which Cardona indicated. Half aloud, he read the words which most impressed him:

"Among the gems which Rutherford Casslin will exhibit at his home on Wednesday night is a large diamond of a decided reddish tint. Its value has not been stated; but Mr. Casslin stated that he regards it as the prize of his collection."

"Casslin is a millionaire," explained Cardona. "Lives out on Long Island in a big place he calls 'Five Towers.' I talked to him on the telephone this afternoon."

"About the diamond?"

"Yes. I told him who I was. I asked him about being present at his home on Wednesday night."

"What did he say?"

"I think he's crazy," growled Cardona. "He told me to go back to Bombay; that he was tired of people calling him up and misrepresenting themselves. He wanted to know if I was the same fellow who talked to him in London, and claimed to be from Scotland Yard."

"That's odd," commented Klein. "He must have obtained the diamond in India. Listen, Joe; why don't you go out here this evening and see this millionaire? Get his slant on whatever he suspects; but don't mention anything about The Jackdaw. That ought to pave the way for a visit on Wednesday night."

A shadow fell across the floor as the inspector was speaking. Joe Cardona saw the approaching streak of black; he wheeled in his chair, and looked toward the door. He grinned as he saw a tall, stoop-shouldered janitor, who was carrying a pail and mop. The fellow looked at the detective with dull, listless eyes.

"Hello, Fritz," laughed Cardona. "Cleaning up early again, eh?"

"Yah," returned the janitor.

"Well, I'm not interfering," said Cardona. "I'm on my way right now." He turned to Klein. "I'm all set, inspector. I'll run out to Casslin's place some time this evening."

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"So he can see you're not from Bombay," added Klein, with a short laugh. "That sure is an odd one, Joe, unless some —"

"Unless Casslin is goofy?"

"No." Klein was rising from the desk as he spoke. "Unless there is some Hindu business mixed up with that diamond. I've seen some strange hookups in my time."

"I'll find out the whole story, inspector."

The two men walked from the room. Klein was pocketing his report as he went. He looked toward the janitor, who was busy with mop and bucket.

"Good night, Fritz," he said.

"Yah," was the janitor's reply.

Footsteps died in the corridor.

IT was then that Fritz ceased his mopping. His tall form seemed to straighten to unusual proportions. A soft laugh came from his thick lips. In the direct light of the room, Fritz's face took on an artificial expression that neither Cardona nor Klein had noticed. It was more a mask than a face.

Stooping again, this curious janitor shambled from the office. He emitted a friendly "Yah" to a detective whom he passed in the hall. He reached an obscure room, placed mop and bucket upon the floor, and opened the door of a locker.

Folds of black cloth tumbled forth. A cloaklike garment rolled over the janitor's head. Long hands placed a slouch hat upon the head above. With swift, gliding stride, a phantom shape swung away from the locker, and reentered the gloomy corridor.

The metamorphosis was complete. The pretended janitor had become The Shadow.

No one could have traced The Shadow's course from then on. Not even the real Fritz, arriving for janitor duty, saw the lurking shape which waited near the outer door until he had passed. The Shadow, by his remarkable impersonation, had listened from the corridor to the conversation between Detective Cardona and Inspector Klein. He had learned why Joe Cardona had visited Scoffy; he had also discovered why Bennie Lizzit had slain the stool pigeon.

To The Shadow, the information gained was usable for a more direct purpose than an immediate visit to the home of Rutherford Casslin. One hour after his departure from headquarters, The Shadow appeared in an obscure portion of Manhattan. A corner light revealed him only as a passing shade of blackness against a dingy wall.

The Shadow had arrived in a district of cosmopolitan Manhattan where members of a dark-skinned race were wont to be. Hindus are rare in New York, but the spot chosen by The Shadow was one which they frequented. The tall shape was lost in obscurity; it reappeared at a little used doorway, and glided into the side entrance of a small restaurant.

Half an hour passed while The Shadow watched from obscurity. The proprietor of the restaurant was a Hindu, garbed in American attire. Most of his patrons were Americans; but as The Shadow lingered, a dark-skinned

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individual entered and spoke to the restaurant keeper. After that, he went to a table in a corner of the place and sat down.

The Shadow glided from the unused entrance. Shortly afterward, a second Hindu entered, spied the one seated at the table, and joined him. The men waited until bowls of curried rice had been set before them.

Alone, they were about to speak, when a tall American strolled in and took his seat at a table near by. One of the Hindus glanced in his direction, then shrugged his shoulders, and started to talk to his companion.

THE Hindus were obviously men of intelligence. The fineness of their Aryan features showed that fact. Their talk was partly English, partly the native tongue familiar to them. It would have been an indecipherable jargon to the average American.

The customer near by had ordered a dish of Indian food. He seemed quite oblivious to the words which the Hindus were uttering. Nevertheless, his ears were keen, and nothing escaped him. The dialect came within his understanding.

"It can only be the one," a Hindu was declaring. "Its color – red – is all that we need to know. It is the diamond taken from Bishenpur."

"Would Changra of Bombay still seek it?" queried the man's companion.

"No," was the reply. "Once it had left London, and come to New York, the price would be too great for any offer he might make. Changra sells his gems at profit."

"He sought the Bishenpur diamond."

"Yes. The Nizam of Hyderabad would gladly buy it for his vast collection. The Nizam would pay a great price."

"How much would Changra offer for the diamond?"

"One hundred and fifty thousand rupees."

An eager hiss came from the listening Hindu.

"You are going back to India," said the first speaker. "If you should carry with you the Bishenpur diamond, it would mean great gain for each of us."

"Changra would ask no questions?"

"None."

"But the diamond? How can you obtain it?"

"Tippu is watching at the American's castle. Tippu is bold. He will do his utmost to seize it."

The listener nodded in agreement. His dark eyes gleamed at the thought of great gain. The ensuing discussion dealt with the arrangements which he must make upon reaching Bombay.

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While the Hindus were still talking, the American finished his meal and arose. He strolled leisurely from the restaurant. The plotting Hindus gave no more thought to him. They had no idea whatever that he had understood their conversation.

NOT far from the restaurant, the tall listener stopped beside a parked coupe. He stepped into the car. Blackened folds of cloth dropped over his shoulders. Black gloves and slouch hat completed his adopted garb.

The coupe moved, guided by an unseen hand. As it rolled from the vicinity where New York's small Hindu population thronged, a soft laugh betrayed the hidden thoughts of the driver of that car.

The Shadow had learned more than Joe Cardona. He had discovered why Rutherford Casslin had regarded the detective's telephone call as a hoax. Possessor of a rare stone which he had brought from India, the American millionaire had refused all offers which had been made for its purchase.

The Shadow had learned of a definite danger which overclouded Rutherford Casslin's possession of the diamond. He had heard the name of a man who was watching the millionaire's Long Island home – Tippu, a vigilant Hindu bent on crime.

The Shadow, like Joe Cardona, was bound for Rutherford Casslin's home. Whether or not The Jackdaw was concerned in this enterprise did not matter. Crime threatened and where crime hovered, there would The Shadow be.

The clock on the dashboard of the coupe showed the hour of nine as The Shadow guided his car through the traffic of Manhattan, headed for an East River bridge.

CHAPTER III. CASSLIN'S CASTLE

THE chimes of a jeweled clock were striking nine. A fashionable throng was gathered in the spacious living room of Rutherford Casslin's home. The group had come to this apartment following a sumptuous dinner.

Rutherford Casslin, a tall, portly man of fifty years, surveyed the group with a self-satisfied air. Most of the men present were ones who had gained prestige and wealth through commercial success. A small group, but a select one, so Casslin decided.

Most of the women were of middle age. There was one exception, Casslin noted, as he smiled beamingly. That was Yvonne Lydell, a beautiful girl in her early twenties. Garforth Lydell, Yvonne's father, was one of Casslin's old friends. Garforth, Casslin remembered, was away from New York at present.

Beside Yvonne was seated a young man, attired in a perfectly fitted Tuxedo. This was Bart Melken, wealthy scion of an old New York family. Melken was Yvonne Lydell's fiance. The pair would make an excellent match, Rutherford Casslin decided.

Only one guest was not seated. Of middle height, but thin to an extreme that made him seem tall, this worthy was standing in a corner of the room. He was a man whose status as a surgeon had gained him high recognition, yet who seemed out of place in this purely social gathering.

Rutherford Casslin had considered long before inviting Doctor Lysander Dubrong to dine here tonight. There was something about the physician's cynical demeanor that made it difficult for Casslin to understand him.

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Rutherford Casslin was a domineering, boastful individual. So long as he could hold the center of conversation, he was a perfect host. His guests seemed to sense this; out of courtesy, they listened as Casslin took the floor. The millionaire was about to make an announcement which he regarded of paramount interest.

"Tonight," declared Casslin, "I have a treat in store for you. This is Monday. I have announced that on Wednesday I shall exhibit certain rare gems which I possess. Those jewels are in a safe-deposit vault – with one exception.

"I refer to the prize of my collection – a beautiful diamond of high value. I brought the stone from India. It is here in my mansion tonight. I am ready to show it to you on this occasion."

A murmur of surprise swept through the throng. Casslin had created the effect that he wanted. He paused to add further remarks.

"Many persons have wondered," he stated, "how I am able to keep valuables in my home with absolutely no fear of burglary. My answer is that this house is itself as strong as any vault.

"This building, which I have called 'Five Towers,' is the modernized replica of a famous English castle. No feudal lord ever possessed a more formidable fortress. Each turret of this castle has walls of solid stone; and one tower, in particular, is especially provided against attack. It is there that I keep any valuables that I bring to my house; it is there that the diamond is now safeguarded."

Casslin stared about him with a proud smile. Seeing interest on the faces of his listeners, he proceeded with a new statement.

"Some of you," he declared, "have seen the arrangement of my stronghold. Others have not. I am going to my tower to procure the diamond. Any who wish may accompany me."

THE invitation was promptly grasped by several of the persons present. There were exceptions, however, and chief among them was Doctor Lysander Dubrong. With a cynical smile upon his thin, dry lips, the physician advanced and extended his hand to Rutherford Casslin.

"Sorry," he explained. "I must forgo the pleasure. I have visited your tower before."

"You are welcome again," returned the millionaire.

"It is after nine o'clock," objected Dubrong. "I have an important appointment in Manhattan."

"You are not remaining to see my diamond?"

"I can wait until Wednesday night."

"Evidently you are not a connoisseur of gems, Doctor Dubrong."

There was criticism in Rutherford Casslin's tone. It was matched by the sharp sarcasm of Dubrong's reply.

"Cold stones," said the physician, "do not impress me. Though they may sparkle, they are mere baubles. The real gems in life are human achievements."

Dubrong was shaking Casslin's hand as he spoke. With a gesture that bordered almost on contempt, the physician swung and walked from the living room. He stopped in an outer hallway.

THE CRIME CLINIC

Alone, he donned his hat and coat, in slow, methodical fashion. He was peering through a curtained doorway, and his gaze was centered upon Bart Melken, the young man of wealth who was engaged to Yvonne Lydell.

So far as the group was concerned, Doctor Dubrong's departure was of no importance. Even Bart Melken, the man Dubrong watched, had given no further thought to the physician. When Dubrong went from the outer hallway, no one noticed his final leave-taking.

Rutherford Casslin had summoned two servants. Husky fellows, attired in uniform, they looked like a pair of bodyguards. Casslin referred to one as "Hubert" to the other as "Hodges." At the millionaire's order, each servant exhibited a loaded revolver.

Casslin's living room was on the second story of the castle. It had two doorways; one at the side, through which Doctor Dubrong had gone; the other at the rear. It was through this opening that the millionaire invited his guests to follow him. Three men and two ladies responded; the others remained in the living room, for they had previously seen the strong room.

Mrs. Casslin, the millionaire's bejeweled wife, remained in the living room talking to the few who had not followed her husband. Among these persons were Yvonne Lydell and Bart Melken. Speaking to Yvonne, Mrs. Casslin mentioned the magnificent diamond of which Casslin had boasted.

"It is a marvelous stone," said the portly hostess. "These jewels which I wear are merely trifles compared with it. They are worth only a few thousand at the most —"

"Your necklace, Mrs. Casslin?" inquired Yvonne in surprise, as she indicated the string of jewels which the millionaire's wife was wearing.

"They are paste," confided Mrs. Casslin, with a smile. "I would never dream of wearing the real ones. They are in a safe-deposit vault. I do not like to have valuable gems here in the house."

Bart Melken, half a dozen paces away, was listening to Mrs. Casslin's statements. With an attitude of indifference, as though talk of jewels was boring, the young man strolled toward the side windows of the big living room. There, he extracted a cigarette from an ornate case. He drew a lighter from his pocket and flicked it.

THE flame responded and died. It was repeated. Melken seemed nervous. A third attempt failed. It was only after he had stepped away from the window that Melken managed to obtain a light for his cigarette. At the moment of such accomplishment, his back was toward the window.

No one had been watching the young man at the time of his odd performance. Keen eyes might have taken his flickering work with the lighter as a signal to someone on the ground beyond the window. The few persons present, however, were talking with Mrs. Casslin.

Meanwhile, the guests who had accompanied Rutherford Casslin had reached a gloomy spot in a hallway that paralleled the rear of the living room. They were standing in front of a steel door that was set in the solid wall. A massive lock showed the strength of this formidable barrier.

Casslin was talking like a lecturer as he drew a key from his pocket. He turned the lock, and before he opened the door, he finished with a few concluding remarks.

"This," he said, "is the entrance to the rear tower. I alone hold the key. It is my practice to enter here by myself. I entrust the key to one of my servants only while I am in the tower."

THE CRIME CLINIC

Unlocking the door, Casslin revealed the interior of a circular, stone-walled tower that extended upward for thirty feet, a hollow shaft. A narrow circular stairway of iron formed the mode of ascent. The stairway ran about the inner sides of the wall. It had a thin rail of metal.

Casslin pressed a switch. The interior of the turret was lighted with dim illumination. The visitors noted that the steps of the circular stairway were unblocked; one could see between them. The entire shaft showed emptiness.

Casslin handed the key to Hubert. While this servant and Hodges waited below, Casslin led his guests up the steps. The big door clanged behind them. Their footfalls sounded weirdly upon the iron steps.

Casslin's voice came in echoes as the millionaire preceded his friends on the thirty-foot climb. Casslin was pointing out a feature of the tower: tall, slitlike windows at intervals along the stairs.

"These windows," he explained, "were placed here before I made the tower my stronghold. You will observe, however, that they are less than eight inches in width. Moreover, they are strengthened by horizontal bars, set at intervals of six inches."

The guests could observe what Casslin said. The windows were tall, each nearly three feet high, to admit light. They were fitted with glass in iron frames, so that they could easily be opened. The crossbars, however, made it impossible for more than a hand and arm to enter through any opening.

Casslin reached the top of the steps. Here was another door, of wood, but braced with iron, which he opened with a smaller key. The door swung inward. Casslin pressed a single light switch and conducted his guests into the lighted turret.

THE room was stone-walled and unfurnished. It was about a dozen feet in diameter. It possessed three long, slitted windows, like those on the stairway. They were also barred with crosswise metal rods.

"In old-time castles," explained Casslin, "these served as openings through which archers delivered their shafts. You will notice that three directions are covered. The openings were purposely narrowed, so that if the enemy scaled the wall with ladders, it would be impossible for them to enter.

"This portion of the wall" – he turned to the half which had no opening – "holds the strong box. It is a small wall safe of a specially designed pattern. I, alone, know the combination."

The guests saw the spot indicated. The front of a small, square safe projected from the wall. Set in solid stone, buttressed by the house itself, this device was capable of withstanding the attack of a dynamiter.

"Now," decided Casslin, "I shall ask you all to retire below. I never permit anyone to be here when I open the wall safe."

The guests filed out through the door. While they were clanking down the circular steps, Casslin shut the barrier. He opened the safe and removed a small metal box. He closed the safe and followed the others who had gone below. He closed the door of the strong room as he departed.

Hubert and Hodges were waiting outside the lower door. The guest had opened it from the inside; Casslin did the same. He took the key from Hubert, shut the steel door, and proceeded to join his guests who had gone back to the living room. The two servants, holding their revolvers, formed a bodyguard for the millionaire.

THE CRIME CLINIC

The tension was dramatic when Casslin entered the living room and placed the box upon the table. In the light, the small container showed its beauty. The box was inlaid with ivory. Casslin pressed a catch; the lid came open. Incredible gasps came from the onlookers.

Set upon white plush was a diamond of lustrous beauty. The stone sparkled with gorgeous radiance; its size, too, was remarkable. The feature which made the spectators gaze in awe was the coloring of the gem. A distinctly reddish tint seemed to pervade the diamond; and this elusive hue was always present.

"I purchased this diamond in India," lectured Rutherford Casslin. "It is said to have come from the collection of the King of Bishenpur. That monarch owned two of the most magnificent rubies in existence! I suppose that he fancied the diamond because of its reddish tinge.

"Shortly after I bought the diamond, I was approached by a jewel merchant of Bombay, who offered me one hundred and fifty thousand rupees for it. I could have shown a fancy profit above the price I paid, had I disposed of the diamond to Changra, the jewel merchant.

"However, I refused his offer. I would not part with this gem at any price. I am simply mentioning, though, that in India, this jewel would command the equivalent of fifty thousand dollars.

"The offer I had received followed me on my journey from India to England. In London, persistent representatives of the Bombay merchant still tried to buy the gem. They failed. I am keeping the diamond from Bishenpur."

As he concluded his talk, Rutherford Casslin held the jewel between thumb and forefinger. He raised it above the level of his eyes. A pale crimson aura seemed to hover about the Bishenpur diamond. Then, with a dramatic gesture, Casslin replaced the jewel in its case. With a bow that caused the guests to spread apart, he turned to return to his strong room in the tower.

Yvonne Lydell walked toward the side window, where Bart Melken, cigarette lighter in hand, was having trouble making new bursts of flame. The young man looked up as his fiancee approached. He dropped the lighter into his vest pocket.

Yvonne, as she came from the back of the room, was facing toward the front window. Something made her stare in that direction, instead of looking at her fiance. Suddenly, the girl gripped Bart Melken's arm.

"Look! Look!" she gasped.

Pressed against the front window was a brownish face. Dark, glittering eyes caught the girl's stare. Then, in a twinkling, the face was gone.

Bart Melken, as he followed the direction of Yvonne's gaze, was too late to see the visage that had been peering in from the outer darkness.

Yvonne's startled gasp faded on her lips as the girl felt Bart Melken's firm and reassuring grip upon her arm.

CHAPTER IV. MURDER STRIKES

"DID you see it, Bart?"

The question came in a whisper from Yvonne Lydell. Bravely, the girl was trying to curb the sudden terror which had caught her in its sway.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"See what?" returned Bart, in a calm undertone.

"The face," whispered Yvonne. "The face at the window."

"No," replied Bart. "It must have been pure imagination on your part."

Although the young man's voice was calm, his own face had turned ashen. Yvonne did not notice Bart's strained expression. She was staring toward the front windows. Beyond them, she could see the rail of a narrow balcony that ran to the right from the living room, and probably opened upon other windows at the front of the house.

The intruder, whoever he was, had gone. With a slight shudder, Yvonne turned back toward the other guests.

Rutherford Casslin, with Hubert and Hodges beside him, was departing in the direction of the tower. Guests were asking questions about the Bishenpur diamond. Yvonne's suppressed excitement had not been noticed by anyone save Bart Melken.

"Say nothing," prompted the young man. "There is no need to alarm anyone – at least not until after Mr. Casslin has returned from his strong room."

Yvonne reluctantly nodded her agreement with her fiancee's decision.

Casslin had walked through the rear door, in company with his two servants. He had evidently entered the steel door to the tower, and had gone up, for Hodges had returned, and was standing just within the doorway through which he had come.

Every guest was in the living room. Hodges, as though to make sure that all was well, stayed in the room himself. After a short interval, he turned to go back and join Hubert at the foot of the stairway to the tower.

At that moment, a hoarse, raucous shout came from beyond the door. Hodges stood momentarily startled; some of the men started toward the door before the servant moved. Then Hodges sprang to action. With three men at his heels, he dashed into the hallway.

THE cause of the cry was immediately apparent. Backed against the steel door was Hubert. He was clutching at a man who had pinned him there – a man in rough clothes, who turned a dark face toward those who came rushing into the hallway. At sight of Hodges, Hubert's assailant broke away.

In his hand, the dark-skinned man held a flashing knife. It was dripping with crimson blood, for the fellow had stabbed Hubert before the servant had gained an opportunity to shoot him. Seeing Hodges, the assailant made a move as though intent on flight; then realizing the predicament, leaped suddenly at the advancing rescuer.

The knife gleamed as the dark hand came upward. Hodges, justifying the faith that Rutherford Casslin held in his ability, fired point-blank. The assailant was uttering a wild cry as he sprang forward. It turned to a shriek as Hodges delivered the shot.

The dark-skinned man rolled to the floor. His features showed in the light as he landed on his back. It was plain that the man was a Hindu.

Startled exclamations came from the guests who were with Hodges. All remembered Rutherford Casslin's talk of Hindus who had sought the Bishenpur diamond.

THE CRIME CLINIC

The Hindu was dying. His hands lay loosely at his sides. The knife had fallen a foot away, and the man made no effort to grasp it. One of the guests seized the weapon. Hodges, whose quick action had saved the situation, was turning to his fellow servant, Hubert.

The man at the door had collapsed to the floor. Blood was issuing from his side. His revolver lay beside him. His lips were trembling. He could only gasp a few feeble words.

"The master" – Hubert panted as he paused – "in the tower. The master – look after him. The key – here – the key –"

Hubert's fingers clawed at a pocket in the side of his coat. His effort failed. His body sagged and sank away from the arm that held him. Hubert, like the Hindu, had received a mortal wound.

Worried guests were crowding about. They looked to Hodges for advice. The servant, thrust in a position of importance, showed excellent judgment. He managed to calm the excited men about him.

"Someone call for a doctor," he said. "Mr. Casslin is in the tower. We can inform him what has happened. The key must be in Hubert's pocket."

Hodges stooped over Hubert's body and found the key. One of the guests was trying the steel door. It was locked. Another had gone to make the telephone call.

They could hear Mrs. Casslin in the living room, talking excitedly. A few moments later, the woman appeared in the hallway. She placed her hands to her head in horror as she saw the bodies on the floor; then, with an effort, she managed to ignore the gruesome scene.

"Where is my husband?" she questioned. "Where is Rutherford?"

"In the tower, madam," returned Hodges. "The key was in Hubert's pocket. I have it here."

"He is safe, then!" exclaimed Mrs. Casslin. "He does not know what has happened here. This is terrible! Why did Doctor Dubrong go? Oh, why did he go? If he were only here now!"

"Shall I inform Mr. Casslin what has happened?" questioned Hodges. "Or shall I wait, madam, until he has come down from the tower?"

"Wait a few minutes, Hodges," decided Mrs. Casslin. "He will be back here any moment. He must be safe; the tower door is locked."

One of the guests appeared, to announce that he had called Doctor Dubrong's apartment. There had been no answer. Mrs. Casslin stood in a quandary.

"We must call another physician," she decided. "Yes, we must call another. We must call the police, also –"

"I got the apartment house on the phone," informed the guest. "They said that if Doctor Dubrong returned or called, they would tell him to come here. There was no answer when they rang his apartment. Probably he has not had time to reach there."

Mrs. Casslin was nervously wringing her hands. She looked from one guest to another. She seemed incapable of speech. Her eyes turned toward the steel door.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"What is keeping Rutherford?" she questioned. "He must have put the diamond away by now? Where is he? Where is my husband?"

AT that moment, another servant appeared at the end of the hallway. The uniformed man stopped short as he saw the confusion that existed. His face turned pale. He stared at Hubert's body, then looked toward Mrs. Casslin.

"Where have you been, Gilkins?" questioned Hodges.

"Downstairs," stammered the arrival. "What – what has happened here?"

"Didn't you hear the shot?" questioned Hodges.

"No," returned Gilkins, his face still ashen. "We – we were sitting in the kitchen. The door bell just rang – I went to answer it."

"Who was there?" questioned Mrs. Casslin excitedly. "Doctor Dubrong?"

"No, madam," returned Gilkins. "There is a man who wishes to speak with Mr. Casslin. He says that he is from detective headquarters. His name is Mr. Cardona – it is important, he says, that he should see Mr. Casslin."

"A detective!" exclaimed Mrs. Casslin. "Tell him to come up at once, Gilkins!"

The servant hurried from the hallway. Mrs. Casslin rested against the wall, pressing her hands to her heart. One of the guests was supporting her.

All the others had come from the living room, including Bart Melken and Yvonne Lydell. They formed a small, silent group, away from the center of the hall where the bodies lay.

Everyone waited in tense silence. Then footsteps sounded, and Gilkins reappeared at the other end of the hallway. As the servant stopped, another man stepped by him. Detective Joe Cardona appeared to view this scene where death had fallen.

The first object that Cardona noted was the gun which Hodges was still holding. Without a word, the detective stepped forward and plucked the weapon from the servant's hand. Hodges yielded the revolver without question.

With precision, Cardona opened the gun and noted its contents. He pocketed the weapon; stooped and picked up the other gun, which was lying beside Hubert's body. He examined that weapon also, and dropped it in another pocket of his coat.

The guest who held the knife moved forward and gave the weapon to Cardona. The detective looked at it, and placed it on a small, narrow table that stood beside the wall. He bent over the Hindu's body, and saw that the man was dead. He made an examination of Hubert's prostrate form. Then he looked at the pale-faced group about him.

"Both men are dead," he asserted. "What has happened here? Has anyone left this place?"

MRS. CASSLIN was too weak to answer. One of the guests, a middle-aged gentleman, stepped forward, and drew a card from his pocket. He handed it to Cardona.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"Ah!" exclaimed the detective, in a respectful tone. "You are Stephen Gloucester, of the State banking department?"

"Yes," replied the gentleman, with dignity. "I am a guest here this evening. I observed ail that occurred. This servant" – he indicated Hodges – "is in no wise culpable. He is to be commended. His companion" – Gloucester pointed to Hubert's body – "was slain by the Hindu. This man Hodges was forced to shoot the murderer to prevent him from attacking us."

"Where did the Hindu come from?" demanded Cardona.

"I don't know, sir," interposed Hodges, who had gained his tongue now that blame had been lifted from him. "Hubert, here, was standing by this door. He was guarding it while Mr. Casslin was above. I heard Hubert cry for aid. I rushed here from the living room. This is the key to the tower door, sir. It was in Hubert's pocket."

Cardona took the key and nudged his thumb toward the steel door.

"You mean that Rutherford Caslin is in there?" he asked.

Universal nods came from the amazed guests.

"Why hasn't he come out?" demanded Joe.

"I doubt that he heard the shot, sir," began Hodges. "This door is thick; there is another door above"

"Rutherford should be here!" blurred Mrs. Casslin suddenly. "He should not have remained in the tower so long. What is keeping him? What can be keeping him?"

Cardona raised his hand for silence. He motioned to all the guests, and lined them along the hallway. He strode to the living room, saw that no one else was there, and walked back to the steel door. He passed a revolver to Stephen Gloucester.

"I shall ask you, sir," decided Cardona, "to see that no one leaves this hallway. I am going into the tower. I shall ask you to accompany me, Mrs. Casslin, and you" – he turned to the servant, Hodges – "can come along also."

Cardona opened the steel door with the key that Hodges had given him. The light was on within the tower.

As Hodges and Mrs. Casslin started up the circular stairs, Cardona made sure that no one was under shelter of the spiral. He followed them rapidly. He reached the top of the stairs just behind the two who had gone ahead. The closed door blocked the passage.

"Mr. Casslin is in here, sir," vouchsafed Hodges. "He has the key with him."

Cardona pounded upon the door. There was no response. Mrs. Casslin gave a nervous cry.

"Go down to the bottom of the stairs," Cardona ordered Hodges. "Call that other servant, and tell him to bring an ax."

Hodges clanked down the steps. He called for Gilkins before he reached the bottom, and relayed the order to the other man. Hodges returned at Cardona's call. The detective turned to Mrs. Casslin.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"If you would prefer to go below," he began, "it will be all right."

Mrs. Casslin shook her head bravely.

"Let me stay here," she pleaded. "I know that something has happened – if it has happened, it would be better for me to be here"

Gilkins was coming up the steps. The servant had a large fire ax. Cardona moved Mrs. Casslin and Hodges a short way down the steps and remained with them while he ordered Gilkins to attack the door.

With husky strokes, the servant demolished the barrier. As a huge piece of wood splintered away from the long metal hinge that reinforced it, Gilkins uttered a cry of horror, and stepped back against the wall.

Cardona leaped up the steps, revolver in hand. He jammed his shoulder through the opening, and sprang into the strong room. Swiftly, boldly, he looked about him to see that the three windows were closed. His eyes fell to the floor beside the inner wall.

There lay the body of Rutherford Casslin. A gaping wound showed that the millionaire had been shot in the back! Sprawled upon the floor, with arms outstretched, Rutherford Casslin exhibited empty hands with spread fingers that rested almost against the base of the wall, just below the closed door of the safe.

Detective Joe Cardona was dumfounded. This tragedy was stunning, through the very circumstances that surrounded it. Rutherford Casslin's empty hands spoke words of their own.

Here, within a tightly locked room, behind slitlike windows braced with crossbars, with a steel door locked below and the key in the pocket of a trusted servant, Rutherford Casslin had been slain.

Empty hands told the motive of this mysterious murder. There was reason for the death of the millionaire. Somehow, in this isolated place, a prize had been plucked from a dead man's hand.

The Bishenpur diamond had been stolen!

CHAPTER V. THE SHADOW SEES

AMAZING though events had been at the home of Rutherford Casslin, the time element had been quite short. The living-room clock had been chiming nine when Doctor Dubrong had left. That same clock marked thirty-eight minutes past the hour when Joe Cardona reassembled the guests in the living room, following his finding of Rutherford Casslin's body.

In the space of less than forty minutes, Casslin had exhibited the Bishenpur diamond, Hubert had been slain, Hodges had killed a murderous Hindu, and Casslin's dead body had been found under circumstances which seemed incredible.

The bodies of Hubert and the Hindu still lay where they had fallen. Casslin's body was upstairs in the tower room. The steel door was closed and locked; the key was in Cardona's pocket. The detective, ever alert, was standing at the rear door of the living room. From this position, he could see all within the room, and also keep an eye on the steel door in the hallway.

Word had been sent to Inspector Timothy Klein. The grizzled police officer was coming hither with detectives. In the meantime, Cardona, a lone investigator, was analyzing the strange situation that existed.

THE CRIME CLINIC

The guests were seated about the room. Gilkins and Hodges were standing within the doorway. Mrs. Casslin, alone, seemed on the verge of collapse. She had not seen her husband's body, but she knew that death had struck.

Cardona was in a quandary. He was solicitous for Mrs. Casslin, yet he knew the importance of obtaining statements and proceeding with an investigation. He spoke to Stephen Gloucester.

"Is everyone here?" he questioned.

"Yes," returned Gloucester. "All except Doctor Lysander Dubrong. He left, however, before Mr. Casslin brought the diamond from the strong room."

"Doctor Dubrong," mused Cardona. "He is the man who has the East Side clinic?"

"I believe so."

An interruption came from Gilkins who was standing by the wall.

"Pardon, sir," said the servant, "I believe I heard the doorbell. Shall I answer it?"

"No, stay here," ordered Cardona. "Would you" – he turned again to Gloucester – "mind answering the door."

"Not at all," returned Gloucester.

The dignified gentleman went from the living room. A few minutes later, rapid footsteps sounded. Into the room strode Doctor Lysander Dubrong, with Stephen Gloucester behind him. The physician went at once to Mrs. Casslin. The bereaved woman sighed.

"This is Doctor Dubrong" said Gloucester, in an undertone, to Cardona.

Dubrong himself spoke to Cardona a moment later. Standing beside the chair where Mrs. Casslin was resting, the physician made a professional pronouncement.

"Mr. Gloucester has told me what occurred," he said. "We must take Mrs. Casslin to her room at once."

"All right," agreed Cardona. "Mr. Gloucester will aid you."

"There are two maids in the kitchen, sir," volunteered Gilkins. "I do not believe that they know what has happened. You can summon them from his telephone here, sir."

"Call them," ordered Cardona, while Gloucester and Dubrong were aiding Mrs. Casslin from the room. "Tell them to go to Mrs. Casslin's room."

Gilkins went to the telephone. Cardona, half in the hallway, kept throwing occasional glances toward the steel door. Tension seemed to be relaxing.

Yvonne Lydell was seated beside Bart Melken. Unconsciously, the girl found her eyes going toward the window at the front of the room. She suppressed a gasp; Bart's fingers immediately clutched her arm.

THE CRIME CLINIC

For an instant, the girl had fancied that she had caught the gleam of eyes beyond that window. Then the illusion was dispelled. She regained her calm. She heard Bart whisper for her to remain quiet.

Straining her eyes, Yvonne could see the balcony rail beyond the window. The rail seemed to emerge from a haze of darkness, as though a blanketing cloud of black had been removed. Yet Yvonne decided that it could not be a living form.

IN this decision, the girl was wrong. There was someone upon the balcony. Eyes had actually viewed the scene within the room. Yet they were not the eyes that Yvonne had seen before.

Earlier, she had actually observed the peering Hindu. This time, she had caught a momentary glimpse of the eyes of The Shadow!

A tall shape was moving along the balcony. Like a creature of darkness, The Shadow had arrived from the void. He had not started for Five Towers as early as had Joe Cardona. Like the detective, The Shadow had gained his evening's destination only to find that death had already fallen.

A window opened softly in the room that adjoined the living room. A creature of stealth, the black-garbed phantom entered. His footsteps were noiseless; even the swish of his black cloak was not apparent as The Shadow crossed the floor.

The Shadow went by the side entrance of the living room. No one even glimpsed his gliding shape. He arrived at the far end of the hallway. There his gleaming eyes saw the very sight which Joe Cardona was so carefully observing.

Hubert's body on the floor; beyond the dead servant, the form of the dead Hindu, whom The Shadow knew was Tippu. The steel door also came within The Shadow's notice. Then, his cloak blanketing him like a shroud, The Shadow moved away.

Doctor Lysander Dubrong and Stephen Gloucester returned into the living room via the side door. They took chairs, and looked toward Joe Cardona. Neither had noted a gliding shape that had followed them. Beyond the curtained doorway, The Shadow was looking in upon the quiz that was to come.

"Mrs. Casslin?" queried Cardona.

"Resting," replied Dubrong suavely. "I gave her an opiate. The maids are in attendance."

"All right," decided Cardona. "I shall ask you, Mr. Gloucester, to repeat the brief statement which you gave me on arrival. After that, we shall have the testimony of the others present."

Cardona made notes as Gloucester began. The other persons gave their versions all were corroborations of what Gloucester said. It was Yvonne Lydell who added the only testimony that was remarkable.

As the girl began to speak, Bart Melken's hand grip tightened on her wrist. Nevertheless, the girl kept on. Bart relaxed his hold, and chewed his lips.

"I saw someone on the balcony," stated Yvonne. "Just as Mr. Casslin left to go back to the tower, I happened to glance in that direction. I saw a dark face and gleaming eyes."

"A Hindu?" asked Cardona quickly.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"I think so," said the girl.

"Why didn't you say something then?" quizzed Cardona.

Bart Melken's grip again tightened on Yvonne's wrist. The detective did not observe the action. Bart was on the other side of the girl. Doctor Lysander Dubrong, however, detected the movement. Nor were his eyes the only ones that made the observation. Peering from the curtain, just beyond the spot where Dubrong was seated, The Shadow also saw.

"I intended to tell Mr. Casslin," announced Yvonne frankly. "However, he had already left the room. I intended to speak to him when he returned, for he had mentioned that a Hindu in Bombay was anxious to obtain his diamond. Then all the excitement happened."

Cardona stared at the girl. He saw no reason to doubt Yvonne's testimony. It had been voluntary. There was a naivete in Yvonne's expression that added to her simple beauty. Cardona, as he jotted down the point that Yvonne had mentioned, felt that he had gained a valuable bit of evidence, one that would be useful later on.

"Did anyone else see a prowler by the window?" questioned the detective.

There was no reply. Bart Melken did not speak. When Yvonne made no further comment, the young man was relieved. He had not wanted Yvonne to mention that she had seen someone outside the window. However, the girl had omitted the one point that worried Bart the most: the fact that she had spoken to him of the face she had seen.

WHEN his turn for testimony came, Bart merely stated facts which others had mentioned. He gave his own reactions to the hubbub in the hallway. When the statement taking was completed, no mention had been made of anything that constituted suspicious actions on the part of Bart Melken.

Nevertheless, Cardona had been seemingly thorough in his questioning; and he had barely finished before Gilkins again announced that he had heard the doorbell. Stephen Gloucester volunteered to answer the ring. When he returned, Gloucester was accompanied by Inspector Timothy Klein, a trio of detectives, and a police surgeon.

Arrangements were quickly made. Two detectives were dispatched to make a thorough search of the ground surrounding Five Towers. One was left in charge of the living room, with the guests. Klein, Cardona, and the police surgeon prepared to visit the tower.

It was then that Doctor Dubrong advanced and stated that he would like to view the body of Rutherford Casslin. Inspector Klein stated that he could accompany the group. They began by examining the bodies of Hubert and the Hindu. Then Joe Cardona unlocked the steel door that led to the tower.

Strange it was that in this house, where death had fallen, a hidden being should be stalking almost within reach of the investigators. The Shadow had moved into a darkened room upon the arrival of Klein and the detectives.

After the two sleuths had been sent out to examine the grounds, he had moved to the far entrance of the hallway, where the bodies lay. Before Cardona had decided to unlock the steel door, The Shadow had departed.

His phantom presence manifested itself outside the castle. A fleeting patch of blackness against cold, gray walls. The Shadow circled the huge building, unseen by the detectives who were inspecting the dry ground

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with flashlights.

The rear of Casslin's castle was almost black in the gloom of night. The tall turret that housed the dead millionaire's strong room showed as a massive cylinder with ivied walls. At intervals appeared gloomy rectangles of light, the slitlike windows of the stairway and the three openings in the turret itself. The bars showed plainly against the dim glow.

Within the tower, Joe Cardona was leading the advance up the spiral steps. At each window, the detective stopped to unfasten the ironbound glass frame. Every crossbar came under his careful inspection.

During the ascent within the tower, another climb was taking place outside. The Shadow, blackened against the stones of the tower, was scaling the wall like a human fly. He was not trusting to the ivy; that was not thick enough to support more than twenty pounds of weight. Instead, The Shadow was relying upon flat disks that were pressed to his hands and feet.

Soft, squidgy sounds marked The Shadow's upward progress. Those disks were concave circles of rubber that affixed themselves under pressure. A twist of hand or foot made each disk yield and come free while the others served as supports.

THE SHADOW'S climb was a steady one. When the black-garbed investigator reached the uppermost windows of the tower, his peering eyes saw that Cardona and the others had not yet arrived. Casslin's body still lay alone upon the floor, with arms outstretched toward the wall below the safe.

The Shadow was clinging to the wall like a mammoth bat. His head moved away from the window as the broken door of the tower room opened, and Cardona came into view.

The detective's first action was to open each one of the three windows, and try the crossbars. In performing this action, Cardona came within a foot of The Shadow's head. He did not, however, notice the phantom shape without. The Shadow was motionless upon the wall.

As Cardona went over to Casslin's body, where the police surgeon and Doctor Dubrong were making their examination, The Shadow's head appeared at the lowest point of the central window. The frame was still open; Cardona had left it that way. Words as well as actions were plain to The Shadow.

"What about the windows?" Inspector Klein was inquiring.

"The same as those on the stairs," replied Cardona, in a laconic tone. "The frames are nothing – anyone could jimmy them open and shut them again. But what good would it do?"

The Shadow saw Cardona make a gesture with his hands, to indicate a measurement.

"No one could squeeze through a space that wide," declared the detective. "Those bars are just as solid as if they were part of the wall. That makes a square about six inches each way. This place is like a vault, so far as entering it is concerned."

"What about the diamond?" questioned Klein.

"It's gone," assured Cardona, "unless Casslin put it back in the safe. That's locked –"

"Are you sure?" interposed Doctor Dubrong, looking up from Casslin's body. "I don't see why Casslin would have locked it up while the diamond was out."

THE CRIME CLINIC

Cardona walked over to the safe and tugged at the handle. The door refused to budge.

"Turn the handle farther," suggested Dubrong.

Cardona complied. The firm twist succeeded. The combination knobs had not been turned. The safe came open. The small strong box was quite empty.

"That proves that the diamond is gone," declared Cardona grimly.

The detective stepped to the window. The Shadow's head wavered away from view. Cardona uttered a shrill whistle. An answering call came from one of the detectives below.

"See anything there?" shouted Cardona.

"Nothing," came the answer.

"All right," ordered Cardona. "Meet us inside."

With Inspector Klein, Cardona completed the examination of Rutherford Casslin's stronghold. Accompanied by the two physicians, the investigators started below.

THE room was again empty, save for Casslin's body. The Shadow's right hand appeared upon the central bar of the window. White fingers emerged from a glove. The Shadow touched the central bar – one which Cardona had so recently tested

There was no firmness in The Shadow's grip. Cardona's examination had shown that the bar was firm. It was with fingers only that The Shadow acted. His light touch moved along the bar, which was roughened with rust, except at the center, where the fingers encountered smoothness.

The same fingers moved along each of the other bars. With gleaming eyes, The Shadow stared through the opened slit, directly at the back of Rutherford Casslin's prone body, a dozen feet away.

Then the descent began. Slowly, steadily, The Shadow moved downward. The ground detectives had gone within the house. At certain points, a tiny flashlight glimmered, its disk of illumination no larger than a silver dollar.

One hand was free; this, perhaps, accounted partly for The Shadow's slow descent. Rubber suction cups paused in their squidge; occasionally, bits of ivy vine rustled under The Shadow's touch. Once a twig broke free with a snap.

At the bottom of the tower, The Shadow became a thing of night. His flashlight no longer glimmered as his weirdly blackened shape again circled the house. The only sign of The Shadow's presence was a murmured laugh that came in whispered tones.

The eerie sound faded. Silence lay about Five Towers, the castle of death. The Shadow had again entered the house where murder had struck.

The Shadow had seen all that others had seen. The Shadow had learned more. From the outside of the tower, he had peered in to gain a clew to the death of Rutherford Casslin.

CHAPTER VI. CARDONA'S THEORY

THE clock in the Casslin living room was chiming twelve. This midnight hour found a group of four men seated in tense conference. Of the guests who had been present while death had struck thrice, only one remained.

This was Stephen Gloucester. The dignified banking official had volunteered to stay. The other guests had been dismissed following the checking of their testimony.

With Gloucester were Inspector Timothy Klein and Detective Joe Cardona. The fourth member of the group was a new arrival, none other than Police Commissioner Ralph Weston.

A man of dynamic personality, a powerful driver, who forced his subordinates hard along the trail of crime, the police commissioner took an active interest in all cases where mystery lay thick. He had been reached by telephone. He had come here to learn facts.

Joe Cardona, in a careful but monotonous tone, was reading the testimony of all who had been present. Stephen Gloucester was nodding his accord with every statement. When Cardona completed his reading, he laid his sheets aside and looked at the police commissioner.

"Is that all?" snapped Weston.

"All," returned Cardona.

There was a pause. Cardona arose and paced the floor. His footsteps carried him to the hallway at the rear of the living room. He swung back, hands in pockets, and faced the police commissioner.

"I have accounted for everyone," he declared. "You heard the statements, commissioner. I double-checked them, and they fitted. At the time when Rutherford Casslin left this room to go up to his tower, every guest was here."

"What about the servants?" asked Weston.

"Hubert and Hodges accompanied Casslin to the tower door," explained Cardona. "While Hubert was locking it after Casslin had entered, Hodges came back here."

Another pause. Cardona offered no theory. He was leaving that to Commissioner Weston. The ace detective had an inferiority complex so far as the commissioner was concerned. He preferred to let Weston speak first, and then offer suggestions. Whenever Cardona began with a theory, Weston was sure to shoot holes in it.

While the group was silent, a footstep sounded at the side door of the living room. Doctor Lysander Dubrong, suave of manner and frail of build, entered to join the group.

"Mrs. Casslin is resting well," he announced, in a mild tone. "Very well, indeed."

He drew a pipe from his pocket, filled it with tobacco from a pouch, and applied a match. The heavy aroma of perique became apparent as the physician puffed the strong mixture. Dubrong sat down and looked from one person to another with an almost inquiring air.

COMMISSIONER WESTON, puzzled by the problem which confronted him, swung to the physician and advanced a query. Cardona listened intently.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"You were not here, Doctor Dubrong?" asked Weston.

"At the time of the murder?" returned the physician. "No. I left here shortly after nine o'clock. I had started home, but before I reached Manhattan, I called my apartment. They told me that I was wanted back here. I made good time on the return ride. I called my apartment house from close by the bridge, so I had very little traffic to impede me."

A slight flicker of keen interest showed on Cardona's swarthy face. The detective made no comment, however. He had not obtained this statement from Doctor Dubrong. The physician's exactitude of speaking impressed him.

"It was after your departure, then," observed Weston, "that a few of the guests accompanied Casslin when he went to the tower to obtain the diamond."

"I presume so," smiled Dubrong. "Not having been here, commissioner, I am unable to state what happened."

"How many persons" – Weston turned to Cardona – "accompanied Casslin on that trip?"

"When he went up to get the diamond?" asked the detective. "Five, I think" – Cardona paused to refer to his notations – "yes, five."

"And the last time," reflected Weston, "Casslin went up alone. Hm–m–m. What puzzles me is this. The Hindu was after that diamond. He didn't have it on his person, however. He was armed only with a knife."

"May I offer a theory?" inquired Doctor Dubrong.

"Certainly," agreed Weston.

"I have seen a few Hindus in New York," asserted the physician. "Perhaps you have heard of my East Side Clinic, where I give free medical attention to characters whom others might regard as hopeless. Hindus have come there."

"Was the dead Hindu ever in your clinic?"

"I do not believe so. I have, however, noticed this fact regarding Hindus who live in New York. Being far from their native land, and few in number, they invariably travel in pairs. Therefore, I suppose that on an enterprise so important as the theft of a valuable diamond, two would work together."

"Remarkable!" exclaimed the commissioner. "What is your opinion on this point, Cardona?"

"I have none, commissioner," admitted the detective. "The Hindus that I have seen, keep away from crime. If they are anything like the Chinese –"

"They are entirely different from the Chinese," interposed Doctor Dubrong, in an authoritative tone. "As I have just mentioned, they travel in pairs. Every time a Hindu has come to my clinic, he has been accompanied by a friend."

"This is a characteristic of the Hindu race – particularly among those who are murderously inclined. I have studied the history of the Thugs of India. With them, murder was a religion; and there were always two – or more – involved."

THE CRIME CLINIC

"But in this case," began the commissioner, "there could not well have been two. Unless one managed to escape while his companion was scuffling with Hubert, the servant."

"That is not my theory at all," returned Dubrong. The physician puffed furiously at his pipe; then laid it on a table, while he leaned forward to impress his point. "I believe there were two but that only one entered the tower. How he passed Hubert is only a matter of conjecture. But let us consider it as follows.

"Two Hindus. One was doubly armed, with revolver as well as knife. Another was peering through the window of this room. Miss Lydell, I understand, caught a glimpse of his face. The first Hindu was somewhere in the house. He managed to follow Casslin into the tower. The other dropped from the balcony and circled the castle.

"The Hindu who slipped by Hubert shot Casslin in the tower room. He took the box that contained the diamond. He tossed it, and his revolver also, through one of the slitted windows, to his companion below."

"Why the revolver?" asked Commissioner Weston.

"You mean why did he rid himself of the revolver as well as the diamond?" Dubrong smiled. "Because the revolver was the instrument of murder. He did not want to have it on his person. Moreover, he knew that it would be unwise to use it below, where the sound of a shot could be heard."

"Logical," decided Weston.

"Then came the attempt at escape," proceeded Dubrong. "The Hindu came down the stairs. He knocked at the door. Hubert opened it. The Hindu leaped upon him, with the knife. He killed Hubert, but Hodges arrived in time to end the assassin's life.

"Thus, Mr. Commissioner, we have the answer. Hindus were seeking the Bishenpur diamond. Hindus were unable to buy it from Rutherford Casslin. Hindus plotted, and Hindus gained the diamond."

As Dubrong arose and picked up his pipe, Commissioner Weston arose also. He extended his hand in congratulation. Doctor Dubrong received it with a smile.

"I congratulate you, doctor," assured the commissioner. "Your theory is an excellent one. We shall send out a flyer to apprehend all Hindus in New York. Perhaps we shall be able to capture the man who has the Bishenpur diamond."

Doctor Dubrong bowed. His thin lips wore a faint smile. Joe Cardona alone detected the expression. Dubrong prepared to leave. Cardona watched him. After the physician had departed, the ace detective settled back into his chair.

COMMISSIONER WESTON seemed elated. He began to expound upon Dubrong's theory. Klein and Gloucester received his words with nods. Cardona, alone, remained obdurate. The detective was referring to his notes.

"Well, Cardona," said Weston suddenly, "it looks as though we are on a real trail. Doctor Dubrong has acquainted us with some very valuable facts."

Cardona smiled grimly. This was the chance he had been awaiting. His own theory, vague, a few minutes ago, had become strengthened. Placing his notes in his pocket, the detective arose and strode across the room. He pointed to the front window.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"This," he affirmed, "is where Miss Lydell saw the face. I have examined this balcony, commissioner. It opens into an adjoining room. I believe, to begin with, that the Hindu who was looking in from here was the same one who entered the hallway by the steel door."

"A minor point," objected Commissioner Weston.

"Not at all," asserted Cardona briskly, "when we follow a theory that only one Hindu was concerned in the affair. Let us go into the rear hallway, commissioner."

As Cardona strode past the entrance at the side of the living room, he failed to notice a pair of gleaming eyes that watched his progress. The Shadow, stationed in the adjacent gloom, was still upon the scene.

As Cardona walked through the door at the rear of the living room, Weston, Klein, and Gloucester followed with one accord. Hardly had they gone, before a motion occurred at the side door. A shaft of darkness seemed to project itself into the living room. Uncannily, it assumed a living shape.

The Shadow became visible. Clad in his cloak of black, his face concealed by the brim of his slouch hat, the tall master of mystery advanced across the room until he reached the doorway through which the others had gone.

There, with steady gaze, he peered toward the group in the hallway. Joe Cardona and the others were standing beside the steel door that formed the entrance to the tower. Cardona's words were plain as he pointed out significant facts.

"Hubert admitted Casslin to the tower," he explained. "Then Hubert was struck down. Hodges arrived in time to kill the Hindu."

"Exactly what Doctor Dubrong suggested," remarked Weston.

"No," objected Cardona. "Doctor Dubrong omitted a very important point. I have notations here. Mr. Gloucester can support them. Considering every element involved – the face at the window; the locked door, the key in Hubert's pocket – there is only one inference to draw."

"Which is"

"That the Hindu did not come from the tower. He was trying to enter the tower, in pursuit of Rutherford Casslin."

Cardona's voice rang with triumph. Stephen Gloucester nodded in accordance. The police commissioner appeared perplexed. Cardona followed up his point.

"There were two men here," he asserted. "Hubert and Hodges. Both were trusted servants. Hubert fought the Hindu and died. Hodges killed the Hindu. The honesty of both servants cannot be questioned."

"How could the Hindu have followed Casslin? Remember, Hodges was here when Hubert closed the door. No! The Hindu was there" – Cardona was pointing down the hallway – "and as soon as Hodges walked away, he rushed forward to attack Hubert!"

The explanation came like a thunderbolt. Joe Cardona had scored a triumph. He could see Commissioner Weston nodding in reluctant agreement.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"The Hindu wanted the key." Dramatically, Cardona was gesturing to depict the struggle at the door. "That is why he attacked. He stabbed Hubert as they grappled. One more point, commissioner. Hubert had closed the door. He was naturally facing it. That gave the Hindu the chance to spring at him."

IN simple, emphatic words, Joe Cardona had completely shattered the theory advanced by Doctor Dubrong. There was, however, one point which the detective had not mentioned. Weston was quick to seize upon it.

"Then who," demanded the commissioner, "was the man that killed Rutherford Casslin?"

"Someone in the tower," returned Cardona.

"But how did he get there?" asked Weston.

"Beforehand," smiled Joe Cardona. "Some guests went upstairs with Casslin. No one remembers just how many were in the crowd. Let us suppose that one person managed to remain within the tower, to await Casslin's return. It is gloomy in that tower. He would not have been noticed."

"Then afterward —"

"He must have managed to escape, gun, diamond, and all. He couldn't have gone out through one of the windows in the tower; he must have managed to come through this door. But the point is this, commissioner. The Hindu was never in the tower. Casslin was killed in the tower. So someone else must have been in the tower."

Weston considered. He turned and strolled slowly back toward the living room, the others pacing with him. Within the living room, The Shadow suddenly moved away with remarkable swiftness. He had glided through the side door before the others entered the room from the rear.

"Cardona," said the commissioner solemnly, "I accept your theory. There is a murderer at large. The Hindu still may have been his accomplice; or possibly the Hindu was working on his own. However, the murderer – the thief – is the man that you must capture."

"I am counting upon you to learn his identity. We must not form opinions too hastily, but it is probable that he is a man of high intelligence, one who could pass himself unobtrusively in good company. Get him, Cardona."

This was Weston's final statement. The commissioner left, accompanied by Stephen Gloucester, whose car had gone into New York. Joe Cardona stood alone with Inspector Timothy Klein.

"Joe," said the inspector warmly, "you put it across great tonight. You're on the right track. The only question is – who are you after?"

Cardona wheeled as he was crossing the living room. He spoke emphatically as he tuned to Klein.

"I'll tell you the guy I'm after," he asserted bluntly. "I'm after The Jackdaw!"

"You didn't say that to the commissioner –"

"Of course not. I'll bring that up later. But The Jackdaw pulled this job tonight, and The Jackdaw is the guy I'm going to get. He's keen enough to cover up his tracks. I'm good enough to uncover them."

THE CRIME CLINIC

From his pocket, Joe Cardona pulled a list of the persons who had been present here when Rutherford Casslin had died. One by one, he crossed off the names. The last on the list was that of Bart Melken. Cardona crossed it off with the others.

Then, while Klein's back was turned, Cardona wrote another name at the bottom of the column. It was the name of one who had not been here when the confusion had begun; yet one whose connection with affairs of Rutherford Casslin's might prove to be of considerable consequence.

Cardona was standing beside the curtain when he wrote the name. Inspector Klein did not see the action. Yet there were eyes that did see; eyes that peered from above Cardona's shoulder; eyes that the detective never dreamed were present. They saw the name that Cardona inscribed:

Doctor Lysander Dubrong

JOE CARDONA thrust the list into his pocket. He stepped forward to join Inspector Klein. Together, they walked through the rear door, to take a last look at the hallway and the tower.

Again, The Shadow stepped from the gloom. His tall form basked momentarily in the light of the living room. From hidden lips, lost in the folds of the cloak collar, came a soft, sinister laugh that was no more than an echoed whisper.

The Shadow had heard all. He had listened to Doctor Dubrong's theory – a statement, which, if accepted, would have diverted all suspicion from any persons other than Hindus. He had heard Joe Cardona's theory – shattering facts that broke Doctor Dubrong's findings.

Joe Cardona had learned the part that the Hindu had played. He knew that someone – The Jackdaw – had accomplished the murder of Rutherford Casslin, and had departed with the Bishenpur diamond.

Joe Cardona suspected Doctor Lysander Dubrong. He had reason. The physician's words could well have been calculated to throw the detective off the correct track.

Was Doctor Dubrong The Jackdaw? Or was that mysterious crook some other person who had kept completely from the light?

The Shadow, like Joe Cardona, was confronted with these questions. But The Shadow had gained advantages over the detective.

He – The Shadow – knew that one man here tonight had been working for The Jackdaw. He knew that Bart Melken had played a minor part in crime. Moreover, The Shadow had seen the tower room from the outside of the house.

The soft laugh whispered once again. It showed a glimmering of facts, an inkling of how Rutherford Casslin could have been slain in his tower room without the murderer being caught in his escape. It told, moreover, how the Bishenpur diamond might well have been stolen away.

The Shadow, like Joe Cardona, was on the trail of mysterious crime. The Shadow, master of the darkness, had found an insidious opponent worthy of his steel. From now on, The Shadow's quest would be to find The Jackdaw, that master crook whose subtle ways were the mark of the supercriminal.

The Shadow's laugh faded as the tall form in black merged with the gloom beyond the door of Rutherford Casslin's living room.

CHAPTER VII. THE JACKDAW'S MINIONS

EARLY the next evening, a young man sauntered forth from one of New York's uptown hotels. He hailed a taxicab and entered it. As the vehicle pulled away, a tall figure suddenly emerged from the darkened front of the building. A mysterious passenger stepped into another cab that was parked close by.

"Follow instructions," came a quiet voice from the rear seat.

The taximan looked about in amazement. He had not heard anyone entering his cab. For a moment, he hesitated; then he spied a pair of burning eyes peering at him from the darkness of the vehicle. A ten-dollar bill fluttered into the driver's hand. The argument was clinched.

The driver started his cab, and nodded as he took quiet instructions for every turn. He received no definite information that he was following the cab ahead; the weird passengers merely required that he should obey.

Twenty minutes later, the lead cab pulled up in a decrepit district of the East Side. The passenger in the rear cab gave a signal to stop. The driver obeyed. He waited, expecting further word. It did not come.

When the driver, gaining nerve, peered into the back of the cab, he found it empty. The burning eyes were gone. The unknown passenger had made a silent departure.

The young man who had come from the hotel was walking rather rapidly along a side street not far from the spot where he had left his cab. His eyes were straight ahead; but had he glanced to the rear, he would not have seen the flitting form that followed him. A streak of blackness, changing shape as it glided along the sidewalk, was the only token of an unseen presence.

The young man reached an alleyway, and stopped beneath a street lamp. His features came in view.

This visitor to a questionable neighborhood was none other than Bart Melken. The young man who had appeared as a fashion plate at Rutherford Casslin's home had chosen a much less desirable district for tonight's journey.

Melken entered the alley. Hardly had he disappeared before a blackened streak appeared beneath the glow that permeated the sidewalk. That patch of darkness was the visible sign of an invisible being. The Shadow was on Bart Melken's trail.

BART MELKEN had been crossed from Joe Cardona's list. The ace detective had not held a single guest for complicity in Rutherford Casslin's murder.

But The Shadow had seen Bart Melken's actions when the young man had urged Yvonne Lydell not to say too much. Only Doctor Lysander Dubrong had also witnessed Melken's signal.

Until now, The Shadow had let Joe Cardona lead the way. That period was ended. The Shadow was working on his own. He was trusting in no subordinate tonight. He knew the worriment that was festering within Bart Melken's mind. Since last night, he had been waiting some step on the young man's part.

In the alleyway, Melken paused before an obscure door. It was the side entrance to what had once been an old hotel, but which was now an apartment building, of a sort. Bart Melken pressed an obscure bell. The door clicked. The young man entered.

THE CRIME CLINIC

The Shadow did not follow. From the other side of the alleyway, he had spotted lights on the third floor. At the rear of the dilapidated building was an old-fashioned fire escape with hanging ladder that was up. A long stick could have reached that pivoted ladder. The Shadow, however, did not resort to so simple a measure.

Pressed against the surface of the wall, he moved his long, supple body upward. The suction cups were not needed for this climb; The Shadow made the ascent by digging into the cracked spaces between the crumpling bricks. His gloved hands gained the fire escape.

The first manifestation of The Shadow as an actual form occurred when his tall figure appeared in the dim light of a third-floor hall. A closing door betokened the fact that Bart Melken had entered an apartment. The Shadow moved silently toward that door.

After a moment's pause, The Shadow moved to the next door. This place had obviously been a hotel once; changed to an apartment, each room of the suite had its own opening on the hallway. A blackened instrument of steel appeared in The Shadow's gloved hand. Keen eyes directed the probing tool. The door unlocked with a muffled click. The Shadow stepped into a dark room.

The adjoining door was open. The sound of voices came from that direction. The Shadow glided to the spot; ensconced in darkness, he could see, as well as hear, what happened in the other room.

BART MELKEN was sitting in an easy-chair. Opposite him was another man. Their faces formed a contrast. Bart Melken, handsome of physiognomy, but worried in expression, formed an antithesis of the man before him. The other was a tough-faced, sullen fellow, whose ugly countenance registered nothing but self-confidence.

The sitting room which the two occupied was luxuriously furnished; an odd arrangement in this neighborhood where poverty seemed rampant. The man with the ugly face was one whose identity was well known in the underworld. He was "Bing" Claver, a gang gorilla who had gone into retirement.

Unwanted by the police, unconnected with any racket, Bing Claver, well supplied with cash that he had saved, was the last man whom anyone would regard as a present menace to the law.

Such a character might well have been pleased to receive a visitor of Bart Melken's appearance. This was not the case, however. Bing Claver's growls showed that the hard-boiled gorilla was quite annoyed because Bart Melken had come to his apartment. Bing was expressing himself in this fashion.

"What's the idea?" he was questioning. "There's no use in you coming down here, Melken. You didn't get no orders to show up, did you?"

"I'm worried, Claver," protested the young man, in a troubled tone. "I – I've got to get out of it. That's all. I'm telling you that I've got to quit."

"Telling me?" Bing Claver snorted. "Tell The Jackdaw. That's who you'd better tell."

"I'd tell him," returned Melken nervously, "if I could find him. I've got to see The Jackdaw. That's why I've come to you. I want to know who he is."

"The Jackdaw?" Bing Claver was scoffing. "Say – do you think I know who he is? Find The Jackdaw! Say – you'll be asking me to find The Shadow next!"

"I'm losing my nerve, Bing."

THE CRIME CLINIC

"Pipe down! Guys that go yellow get lead poisoning. I'm one of the guys that doses out the lead pills, too."

"But I can't go any further –"

"Easy!" Bing Claver's growl was steady. "The bulls ain't after you, Melken. What've you got to worry about?"

Bart Melken was a picture of dejection. He licked his lips and stared pleadingly at his ugly tormentor. At last he seemed to gain control of his emotions.

"Here's the trouble, Bing," he stated. "I had to work for The Jackdaw. I was hard up after the gambling houses swindled me. I stole some bonds; how The Jackdaw learned it is more than I know. You were the man who got hold of me, and told me that I would have to work for The Jackdaw, or be exposed.

"I thought I could go through with it. All I had to do was play a minor part; work on the inside at the homes of wealthy friends. There were times in between when I thought those jobs had ended. But always there were new instructions from The Jackdaw; more jobs to do. I stood it until last night.

"I didn't care if Rutherford Casslin lost his diamond. He could afford it. But when murder crept in, I lost my nerve. I didn't think, when I gave those signals with my cigarette lighter, that The Jackdaw intended to kill Casslin."

"Yeah?" There was no sympathy in Bing's growl. "Well, you might have expected some guy would get the bump sooner or later. You've got to stick with The Jackdaw now."

"Who is The Jackdaw?" demanded Melken.

"I told you I don't know," retorted Bing. "I get word from him like you do – over the telephone. He needs me once in a while, too. I'm telling you, Melken, if you go yellow, you'll get yours. If you expect to marry that ritzy jane you're engaged to, you'd better stick with The Jackdaw's racket."

The reference to Yvonne Lydell brought a troubled look to Bart Melken's face. The young society man knew that Bing Claver had made a definite threat.

"I'll – I'll try to go through with it," stammered Melken. "But I'm telling you, Bing – if you have a chance to tell it to The Jackdaw – that I'm likely to lose my nerve on the next job. This Casslin affair was something for which I didn't bargain."

Bing Claver snorted contemptuously. He looked at Bart Melken to make sure that the young man had meant what he said. Bing saw that Bart had spoken the truth.

"All right," growled the gang leader. "I'll put The Jackdaw wise when I hear from him. It won't be so hot for you, though, if you try to slide out of your job. I guess you're getting worried on account of the girl."

"I am," admitted Melken. "She may have suspected something – last night she –"

"What if she did? Who'll she tell?"

"I don't think she will say anything. Her father – Garforth Lydell – is in Florida at present. He is the only one in whom she would confide."

"Don't worry, then."

THE CRIME CLINIC

Bart Melken bobbed in startled fashion as he heard a bell ring. Bing Claver laughed at this sign of nerves. He arose and pressed a button alongside the wall.

"Who is it?" queried Melken anxiously.

"Just Limps Silvey," answered Bing. Claver. "He's harmless. A guy that's been hanging around here. Tells me a little about what's going on outside. I don't go out except when I have to."

BING opened the door to the hall. A few moments later, dragging footsteps were heard. A pitiful figure appeared at the door of the room.

A man with a twisted form, frail of build, and faltering of step, hobbled into the room with the aid of a cane. He turned a brownish, leering face toward Bing Claver; then looked with sharp eyes at Bart Melken.

"Just a friend of mine," explained Bing. "That's all, Limps. A guy I've known for a while. Sit down."

"Limps" dropped into a chair.

"Anything new?" growled Bing.

"Nah," rejoined the cripple. "Tings are quiet out on de street, Bing. Some of de guys are talkin' about dat diamond dat a smart bird stole."

"Yeah? Who do they think did it?"

"Dey don't have no idea. But I got one, Bing."

"Who?"

"I'll put you wise later."

"Don't mind this guy," returned Bing, with a nudge toward Bart Melken. "Tell me – what do you know about that job at Casslin's?"

"It ain't nothin' that I know, Bing. It's what I've figured. Dere's only one guy smart enough to get away wid somethin' like dat. De guy I'm thinkin' of is De Jackdaw."

A smart grin spread over Limps Silvey's dirty face. Bing Claver smiled slightly.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"Nothin', Bing," responded Limps.

"Scram, then," ordered Bing.

The cripple arose from his chair and shuffled from the room. Bing Claver looked at Bart Melken.

"This guy Limps don't know much," he said in an undertone. "Sometimes I think, though, that he figures I work for The Jackdaw. It don't hurt if he does. He keeps mum."

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The gang leader paused to make a new study of Bart Melken's anxious face. Then, in a gruff manner, he arose and snarled as he made a final statement.

"Keep away from here after this," he ordered. "You got your job; I got mine. See? Just because I hooked you up with The Jackdaw don't mean nothing. I don't know who the guy is. He pays me for what I do – like he paid you. But I'll tell you this" – Bing's voice was harsh – "and you can take it or leave it. Any guy that crosses The Jackdaw don't live long. When you think about this Casslin bird, think about yourself. Maybe The Jackdaw will give you what he gave Casslin. He can do it."

Bart Melken nodded. He recognized the wisdom of the gang leader's words. He detested this ex-gorilla; he had come here only in hope of reaching the unknown master whom both he and Bing Claver served. Realizing, now, that he could learn nothing from the other minion, Bart Melken arose and walked from the room.

AS soon as his visitor was gone, Bing Claver strode back across the well-furnished room to the door beyond which The Shadow had been standing. He was too late, however, to spy that sinister figure which had hovered in the next room.

As though foreseeing Bing Claver's move, The Shadow had chosen a new and quick method of departure. His fingers had raised the half opened sash of the window; his figure had swung clear of the sill. Silently, The Shadow was lowering his tall, lithe form into the blackness of the alleyway.

He was not departing directly downward; instead, he had shifted to the side. Hence Bing Claver, peering into darkness, did not see his mysteriously descending form. Bing was watching for a sign of Bart Melken. It came. A slight flicker of light denoted the opening and the closing of the door below. Bing could hear Melken's footsteps clicking on the stone paving of the alley below.

Bart Melken, however, was not alone as he strode from that darkened area. Behind him, unseen in the gloom, stalked the figure of The Shadow. As Bart reached the entrance of the alleyway, the tall figure lingered. Keen eyes peered through darkness, as though watching for the appearance of another person.

A full minute elapsed. Melken had turned the nearest corner. Then, from the darkness across the street, came a slinking human form. Soft feet took up a shuffling gait. Limps Silvey had been waiting to make sure that Bart Melken had left Bing Claver's.

The Shadow followed. The shuffler was moving at a rapid pace. Evidently he had capped his cane with a rubber tip, for it made no sound as he tapped it against the sidewalk. Limps was not on Melken's trail; he had remained only to assure himself of the young man's departure from the neighborhood.

Indeed, Limps moved so swiftly that his shifty form seemed to elude detection. The Shadow's trailing was a marvelous achievement. Through streets and alleys, he kept on the track of Limps Silvey, until the course ended abruptly in a cul-de-sac where walls were on three sides. There were doorways here; none showed a trace of Limps Silvey's entrance. The frail hobbler had made a rapid dive into some hide-out.

The Shadow glided from the darkened blind alley. His laugh whispered softly as he reached the street. He had, at least, learned the exact neighborhood where Limps belonged, and the sights that he marked along the street outside the blind alley seemed to give The Shadow an inkling of the shuffler's whereabouts.

WHEN The Shadow again appeared, he was back at the improvised apartment house where Bing Claver lived. This time he made his progress upward from the darkness of the alley; the rubber cups squirmed as his climbing form neared the opened window of the apartment.

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There was a light in the room where The Shadow had been before. A telephone bell was ringing. The Shadow could hear Bing Claver's low growl. Peering from beyond the window, the master investigator saw the gang leader at the telephone.

"Yeah..." Bing's voice was emphatic. "He came here... Like I thought he would... Sure, he's yellow... You're going to use him just the same?... I get you... All right... I'll be ready for the job when you want me..."

The receiver clicked. Bing turned away from the telephone. He did not see the eyes of The Shadow. Those burning optics had disappeared. Once more, the mysterious phantom of darkness was descending into the darkness of the night.

Later, a shuddering burst of chilling laughter occurred in the darkness of a deserted street. It died as quickly as it had come, but its eerie echoes seemed to cling to darkened walls. A policeman on the street stopped short as he caught the reverberation. He turned and stared to seek the author of the uncanny mockery. He saw no one.

That was the laugh of The Shadow. Departing from his mission to the bad lands, it was the weird investigator's challenge to the hordes of evil. Tonight, The Shadow had scored a point in the battle which he now was warring.

He had seen the minions of The Jackdaw. Through them, The Shadow would gain the clew to the murderer himself. He had heard Bing Claver receiving instructions from the chief; had heard the gang leader report the yellowness of Bart Melken.

More crime was in the wind. When it arrived, The Shadow would have his say.

CHAPTER VIII. AT THE CLINIC

THE SHADOW, in his trailing of Bart Melken, had followed a lead which he had gained at Rutherford Casslin's home. He had picked up a definite angle of the case which Detective Joe Cardona had failed to observe.

Yet Cardona's negligence was excusable. The sleuth had found a track of his own, and was determined to follow it with precision. Emphatically, Joe Cardona felt that through Doctor Lysander Dubrong, some answer could be learned regarding Casslin's death.

Casslin had died on a Monday night. The Shadow had trailed Bart Melken on Tuesday evening. Wednesday afternoon found Joe Cardona ready for action. In his office at headquarters, the ace detective was considering his important move.

The Jackdaw had returned. Of that, Joe Cardona was convinced. Despite his natural egotism, Cardona was not blind to his failures. He was positive that there had been an important prelude to the murder of Rutherford Casslin: namely, the deaths of Scoffy and Bennie Lizzit.

Had either of those two been living now, Cardona would have been able to find a direct lead to The Jackdaw. But with Scoffy and Bennie dead, the detective had a more difficult task. Pondering, Cardona was forced to admit that he had played his cards wrong when he had made that visit to Scoffy's hide-out. Joe realized that he must have been recognized by someone in the bad lands.

The Jackdaw was in back of the trouble. He had eyes in the underworld. Cardona must avoid them. He had failed to escape recognition by night; he knew that he would certainly be spotted by day. Yet the mission

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which he had in mind was one that could not be entrusted to a stool pigeon.

Smiling grimly, Cardona opened a desk drawer and drew out a package. It was a large bundle; one that completely filled the drawer. Donning his hat and coat, Cardona took the package with him and left the office. Outside of headquarters, he hailed a taxicab and rode for some twenty blocks.

He reached an old house, entered the front door, and ascended to the third floor. In a little room at the rear, he opened the package and drew out an old jacket, a pair of baggy trousers, and a mass of grayish hair, together with a weather-beaten hat.

Within a few minutes, Cardona had donned these garments. He looked at his reflection in a mirror, and uttered a chuckle. To all intents, Joe Cardona had become a decrepit old man with gray hair and gray beard – a derelict who would pass unnoticed along the East Side.

It was seldom that Cardona resorted to this disguise. He kept the articles at headquarters so that he could don them if emergency demanded such action. To make doubly sure today, he had come to this secluded room, there to put on the garments.

This room was, in a sense, a hideout, a place to which Cardona came on rare occasions when he wanted to remain unnoticed in Manhattan. The room was serving him well at present, for here he had plenty of opportunity to make his disguise effective.

Weather was chilly. Cardona needed an overcoat. He brought one from the closet. It was an old, frayed coat that Cardona had outworn during the previous winter. It was all that the detective needed to complete the part that he intended to play.

Thus, instead of Detective Joe Cardona, a heavy but stoop-shouldered old man came from the obscure house. This odd-looking individual made his way to an elevated station, rode for some distance, and finally alighted in a tawdry district. Joe Cardona was again invading the territory where he had gone to see Scoffy, the stool pigeon.

SHAMBLING beneath the superstructure of the "L," Cardona crossed the thoroughfare and turned into a side street. The buildings here were mournful. One, alone, showed signs of rehabilitation. Above it hung a sign:

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Cardona, peering along the street, saw another man coming from the opposite direction. A frail, twisted figure that hobbled with the aid of a cane, the approaching individual attracted Cardona's immediate interest.

This was Limps Silvey. Cardona did not know the man's identity, but he stared suspiciously at Silvey's brownish, evil face, as they met outside the entrance to the clinic. Limps was a few steps ahead. Cardona let him enter first.

Inside the door, Cardona found a large waiting room. Sprawled on chairs about the place were men and women of all the types that might be found in this district.

Sullen, dejected bums; cripples more hopeless than Limps; women who stared solemnly at the bare walls – these formed the crowd who awaited consultation with Doctor Lysander Dubrong.

Joe Cardona had heard of this clinic. Doctor Dubrong had gained high credit through its institution. Three days every week – sometimes at more frequent intervals – the eminent physician devoted his time to the

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riffraff of New York.

People had spoken of the work as a noble, philanthropic enterprise. Joe Cardona had considered it in this light until two nights ago. Then, his sudden suspicions of Doctor Dubrong had caused him to gain doubts.

A middle-aged woman was seated at a table in the corner. She was evidently Dubrong's secretary. She saw Joe Cardona as he slid into a chair, and beckoned to him. Carefully feigning his part as an old man, the detective approached.

"You wish an appointment with Doctor Dubrong?" asked the secretary.

Cardona nodded.

"Your name?"

"Michael Gaston."

The woman made a notation.

"You will have to await your turn," she said. "Some of these people have appointments from two days ago. Others are already registered to see Doctor Dubrong."

Cardona nodded dully and resumed his seat. A moment later, the door opened, and another East Sider entered. This was a rheumatic blind man, his body almost doubled. He wore black glasses, and he leaned heavily on a weather-beaten cane. He seemed to sense where he should go, for he tapped his way to the corner, and mumbled a name to the secretary. He was told to take a chair, which he managed to find after tapping his way along the row of waiting patients.

A clock struck eleven. The secretary arose and went to the front door. She latched it, so that no new patients could enter. Then, referring to her list, she singled out Limps Silvey. The cripple, evidently one who had an appointment from Monday, arose and hobbled to a door which the woman opened. Cardona caught a glimpse of a gloomy anteroom with a door beyond. Then the opening closed behind Limps Silvey.

Cardona heard a voice beside him. One patient was talking to another. The words were informative.

"Dat was Limps Silvey," the speaker growled. "Foist on de list. Wisht I was foist. Gets my goat sittin' around dis joint."

Cardona remembered the name. Limps Silvey. Probably the cripple was a regular patient at Doctor Dubrong's clinic. There was something about Limps Silvey's shrewd stare that Cardona had not liked.

THE first patient had been ushered in at the stroke of eleven. Ten minutes later, a buzzer sounded. Evidently Limps had been sent out through another door, for the woman secretary picked another patient from the list. Fifteen minutes elapsed. The buzzer sounded again.

Thus proceeded the affairs of the East Side Clinic. Patient after patient was ushered through the little anteroom to see Doctor Lysander Dubrong. At last only Joe Cardona and the blind man remained. While they were waiting, the clock struck one.

"I am sorry," said the secretary. "The clinic hours are ended. You two will be the first appointments on Friday. That is, unless Doctor Dubrong is willing to remain a while longer – a practice which he seldom

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follows."

At that moment, the buzzer sounded twice. With a gesture that indicated the patients should remain, the secretary went through the anteroom. She returned a minute later.

"Doctor Dubrong will see one of you," she announced. "It is your turn, Mr. Gaston."

Joe Cardona arose and moved toward the anteroom. He entered, and the door closed behind him. The blind man remained seated in his chair. The secretary approached him.

"I am sorry," she said, "you will have to return on Friday. You must leave now."

The blind man gripped his cane. He arose and stood in his bent attitude.

"All right, lady," he said. "I can come back Friday. Never mind the door; I can open it. I find my way very well."

As he spoke, the blind man edged toward the door. Seeing that he had found the knob, the secretary turned and went toward her desk. There was a door in the corner just beyond the desk. The woman opened it and stepped into a small closet to obtain her hat and coat. She heard the outer door open and bang shut. She thought the blind man had gone.

In this surmise, the secretary was wrong. The moment that she had turned, the blind man had gazed after her. He had opened the door, and let it shut at just the psychological moment. In fact, while the door was automatically closing, the blind man had moved with surprising swiftness.

Across the waiting room, with long, noiseless stride, he had reached the door to the anteroom. There, his ways had been those of stealth. Silently, he had gained that gloomy entrance to Doctor Dubrong's consultation room.

He stood within a widened chamber that was lighted by a single bulb in the ceiling. Stretching his form to an amazing height, he thrust a long-fingered hand toward the incandescent. The light went out as he twisted it. The windowless anteroom was in darkness.

Simultaneously, the blind man slid his large, gogglelike black glasses to his forehead. His eyes, previously hidden, seemed to blaze in the darkness. Edging toward the inner door, this remarkable intruder softly turned the knob. He opened the door the fraction of an inch. Peering through the space, he could see the interior of the consultation room.

Doctor Lysander Dubrong was seated at a desk. Opposite him was the bearded old man who had entered as the final patient. Doctor Dubrong was speaking; the bearded patient was listening attentively.

Neither man sensed the presence of a watching eye. The pretended blind man in the anteroom was peering unobserved. His keen eyes glistened; his sharp ears heard.

Joe Cardona was not the only surreptitious visitor to Doctor Dubrong's East Side Clinic. The detective, as well as the physician, was under observation at this moment.

The fake blind man who had gained secret access to the anteroom was also in disguise. He was The Shadow. By day, as well as night, The Shadow could move unrecognized!

CHAPTER IX. THE CONSULTATION

JOE CARDONA was sitting away from the light. In this procedure, the detective was acting with method. He was confident that he looked the part that he was playing; that Doctor Dubrong could suspect nothing if he did not have the opportunity to observe his consultant too closely.

The physician had asked Cardona's name. He was writing down the one which Cardona gave him: Michael Gaston. Meanwhile, the detective was noting the set-up of the consultation room. It looked like a well-equipped office. Three small, but strongly locked lockers formed a rather odd feature, inasmuch as they were firmly fixed to the corner in which they were located. Cardona, however, gave them no more than a passing notice.

"What is your trouble?"

Dubrong's brusque question made Joe Cardona immediately alert. The detective had an answer.

"No trouble of mine, doctor," he grumbled. "It's my brother. He is very sick."

"Why didn't you bring him here?"

"Too sick. My brother Howard. He is in bed; he cannot move his arms. I wanted a doctor to come and see him. He said 'no.' I came to ask you what to do."

"This does not come within the range of my clinic," declared Doctor Dubrong. "I can recommend a physician; in fact, I can arrange for one to visit your brother, if that would be satisfactory."

"Tell me what doctor to see," urged Cardona. "I will go to see him. My brother Howard is very sick."

"Obviously," remarked Dubrong, staring hard at Cardona, "a paralytic patient could not well come to this clinic. I try to take care of all deserving patients. Sometimes I am able to give advice which, if followed, will clear up the difficulty without the necessity of a physician's visit."

"You mean my brother Howard –"

"I mean that his case can be handled to perfect satisfaction if you will merely follow the advice that I shall give you now. After that, you will not worry about him any longer."

Joe Cardona was puzzled. He had expected Dubrong to recommend a visiting physician for the mythical brother; this odd statement that indicated an immediate cure for paralysis was something that the detective could not understand.

Doctor Dubrong had risen from his chair. He was pacing back and forth on the other side of the desk. His hands were behind his back. His eyes wore a distant gaze; his lips a thin, suave smile.

"The trouble in this case," decided Doctor Dubrong, "is a very peculiar one. I can define it in a single word." He paused; then added: "Whiskers."

Cardona was staring as the physician gazed in his direction. Dubrong's smile persisted. His eyes were glittering shrewdly.

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"Whiskers," he repeated. "They are very uncomfortable, particularly to those who are unaccustomed to wearing them. More than that, they can be responsible for strange mental delusions. They can make a normal man imagine that he has a paralytic brother. Do you agree with me, Mr. Cardona?"

THE end of the statement came so suavely that Joe Cardona was caught almost unaware of it. His own name, as uttered by Dubrong, seemed to re-echo in his mind. While the detective sat stolidly in his chair, Dubrong offered a suggestion.

"You came here for a consultation," he declared. "I made a special effort to give you one. I would prefer, however, that we conduct our talk face to face. Unless, Cardona, you would prefer that I also put on some masquerading make-up."

Realizing that he was discovered, Cardona's first impulse was to bluff it through. Then he realized that such a plan would be folly. Dubrong had unquestionably recognized his visitor's true identity. Sullenly, Joe Cardona removed his hat, his wig, and his false beard to reveal his own swarthy visage.

"That is better," commented Dubrong, resuming his chair. "Now, Cardona, we are in a position to discuss the purpose of your unexpected visit."

There was a tinge of sarcasm in the physician's voice. Before Cardona could make a response, Dubrong continued, resuming his ironical tone.

"I make a study of human beings," declared Dubrong. "Many types come into this consulting room. I have been approached by thieves, by murderers, by gangsters; but never before by a disguised detective."

"A man possessed of less penetration than myself might well be annoyed by such a visit. We met two nights ago, upon a scene where murder had fallen. At that time, I provided you with an excellent theory regarding the death of Rutherford Casslin. I notice that the newspapers have emphasized the murderous qualities of the Hindu whom I picked as the killer.

"To have you come here now would indicate doubt on your part – at least it would indicate such to a suspicious-minded person. But to me, Cardona, the truth is apparent. Realizing that I must have been observant in my clinic, you chose it as a spot to make some observations of your own.

"I quite admire your friendliness in not informing me that you intended to make this visit. It shows consideration on your part. You thought, probably, that I might not like to have you here. On the contrary, you are quite welcome. If that beard is not troublesome to you, I would suggest that you wear it and come here regularly. If you are interested in underworld types, you will find a parade of them in my waiting room, and I doubt that any will be keen enough to penetrate your really excellent disguise.

"Indeed, it nearly baffled me. As you sat there, however, I noticed it and realized who you must be. I saw that you intended to remove the beard and reveal yourself, although you were hesitating for fear I might misunderstand your motive in coming here. That is why I suggested, myself, that you should unmask."

Joe Cardona clenched his fists. He would have liked to throttle this suave man who talked in such artful, purring tones of veiled sarcasm. Not content with merely unmasking Cardona, Dubrong had also saved the detective the trouble of making an excuse. Dubrong was gloating over his ability at detecting Cardona's ruse.

The physician had ceased speaking. His eyes were inquiring now.

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CARDONA felt his partially formed suspicions crystallizing into a definite opinion. He realized that he was no match at wits with Doctor Lysander Dubrong.

"Well," he growled, "I thought maybe one of those Hindu mugs might be coming in here. I was a little worried about you, doctor. That was all. Guess I shouldn't have been. You probably look out for yourself down here."

"Of course," smiled the physician. He opened a desk drawer and brought out a stub-nosed revolver. "I always have this with me. Would you like to see the license?"

"No," returned Cardona. "I figured you might carry a gun, doctor. Thought I'd better make sure, though, that things were all right. I didn't like to come brashin' in here just out of a clear sky. Maybe some of your patients would have lit out if they saw a detective."

"Another token of your consideration," commended Dubrong, with a wan smile. "Well, Cardona, if there is any way in which I can be of service to you, be sure and advise me. How are you progressing with the Casslin case?"

"No results yet," said Cardona. "We found out that the dead Hindu is named Tippu, but we haven't located anybody who seems to know much about him."

"I shall bear that name in mind," returned Dubrong sagely. "There are many persons in the underworld who may make remarks to a physician that they would not make to a detective. Well" – Dubrong was glancing at his watch – "I must be leaving. I would suggest that you resume your effective disguise, and allow me to usher you out as I would any other patient."

With a sour smile, Cardona picked up his false beard and donned it, together with wig and hat. Doctor Dubrong nodded approvingly, but still maintained his sophisticated smile. The physician arose and accompanied the detective to a doorway at the rear of the office. They went through a little entry, and came to another door, through which Cardona passed alone. Doctor Dubrong locked the door after the detective had gone.

Returning to his office, the physician locked the door of the entry, and began to chuckle. He seemed highly pleased with his unmasking of Joe Cardona. He did not reckon, however, that he, in turn, was unmasking himself. The peering eyes of The Shadow had never moved from beyond the anteroom door.

Seated at his desk, the physician remained a while in thought. His face showed peculiar changes; yet it was impossible to gain an exact trail of his thoughts through the flickering expressions. At last, under sudden impulse, Dubrong ended his reverie. He arose and came directly to the anteroom.

The Shadow edged into the deep side of the little room. When Doctor Dubrong opened the door from the consulting room, a shaft of light came through, but it did not reveal the silent, motionless form that was against the wall.

Even in his guise of a pretended blind man, The Shadow had donned his habitual color: black. Somber as ever, he had taken the guise of darkness as easily as a chameleon gains the color of its surroundings.

Moreover, Dubrong noticed something which engaged his entire attention. He saw that the light was out. He chuckled as he stared toward the ceiling, and mechanically opened the door beyond. He thought that this had simply been a ruse on Cardona's part, while the detective was in the entry. Dubrong clicked the wall switch. The light did not come on. Finding that he could not quite reach the extinguished bulb, the physician

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continued through to the waiting room.

The Shadow moved swiftly then. He gained the consulting room, and looked about him. He could hear Dubrong returning with a chair, to tighten the light. The Shadow noted the lockers in the corner. He moved in that direction.

Crouched in the corner, he softly tried each locker. Two were open; the third was closed. Its lock was strong and of the most modern pattern. The light, flicking from the anteroom, was a signal that Doctor Dubrong had readjusted the turned-out bulb. The Shadow arose and crossed the consulting room. He could hear the physician carrying the chair to the waiting room.

THERE were two doors at the back of the consulting room. Cardona had gone through the one at left. The Shadow slipped to the one at the right. It opened into a large closet, where coats were hanging. The Shadow moved to the rear and remained there, his tall form hidden by the garments.

A few minutes later, Doctor Dubrong arrived. The physician took one of the coats, lifted a hat from a hook at the side of the closet, and closed the door. The dull slam of the other rear door announced his departure from his consulting room.

Shortly afterward, The Shadow reappeared. The removal of his heavy glasses showed a hawklike countenance that was dulled by puffy, masklike cheeks, which even the closest scrutiny would not have shown as artificial. He went back to the closed locker, but made no attempt now to pick its ponderous lock.

Instead, The Shadow produced a tiny flashlight. Stooping, he turned its beams upward through the overhanging slits that marked the front of the locker. His keen eyes saw within. A soft laugh came from motionless lips.

The flashlight went out. The Shadow returned to the closet. Beyond the coats, he made another inspection, which, like the visit to the locker, brought a soft laugh in whispered tones. Pressing his fingers along the edge, he was rewarded by a clicking sound. The rear of the closet slid away. The Shadow entered a smaller closet. He smoothly opened the door beyond. The sliding panel closed behind him.

In his character of a bespectacled blind man, The Shadow now stood in the small ground-floor parlor of a deserted house. On his right was a doorway to the street. It was locked, but it opened easily to the pick which The Shadow applied. A short pause; then the stooped-shouldered blind man emerged upon the sidewalk. He fumbled as he locked the door behind him. He moved away, tapping lightly with his cane as he advanced.

From the lips beneath the black spectacles came a soft, barely audible laugh; the third which The Shadow had uttered since his arrival in Doctor Dubrong's East Side Clinic. There was significance in that laugh. It was caused by The Shadow's present surroundings.

The spot where the pretended blind man had emerged was not upon a side thoroughfare. It was in a blind alley; one which The Shadow, by day, recognized as a place that he had visited by night.

The secret exit from Doctor Dubrong's consulting room had brought The Shadow into the very cul-de-sac where Limps Silvey had disappeared upon the previous night!

CHAPTER X. MELKEN FINDS A FRIEND

EVENING had come to Manhattan. Bart Melken, seated at a desk in the corner of his sumptuous hotel room, was staring dully from the window. The twinkling lights of the great city; the distant glow of the Rialto; these were discouraging rather than alluring to the young man who served as The Jackdaw's minion.

Since his protest to Bing Claver, Melken had been despondent. He had made the appeal to the gang leader, hoping that it might reach The Jackdaw. He was sure, now, that if it had, there would be small comfort in the fact.

Bart Melken knew that he was deep in The Jackdaw's toils. There was no retreating; but he felt the need of aid. The murder of Rutherford Casslin had brought him face to face with desperate facts.

Crime was not distasteful to Bart Melken; the penalty was what he feared. Capable though The Jackdaw might be, there was always chance of a slip. When that time arrived, Bart felt sure, he, and not The Jackdaw, would be the scapegoat.

The telephone bell rang. It was only a few feet from the spot where Melken sat. The ringing startled the young man. With trembling hand, he lifted the receiver of the telephone. He feared that this might be a message from The Jackdaw – a stern order giving him another task to perform for the crook who dealt in subtle theft, with murder as a side line. Bart knew The Jackdaw's voice, a strained, far-away method of talking. He sighed in relief as he recognized other tones.

"Hello, Bart," a friendly voice was saying. "How have you been since I saw you last."

"Who is calling?" stammered Bart Melken.

"Farrell Sarborn," came the reply. "Just landed back in New York yesterday. Called you last night – there was no answer."

"Farrell Sarborn!" The exclamation came from Melken with a note of alleviation. "Where are you, Farrell? Stopping here in town?"

"Apartment up on Seventy-eighth Street," returned the speaker at the other end. "Come up and see the place. I picked up a few oddities when I was in South America."

Bart Melken repeated the address as Sarborn gave it to him. He agreed to come and see his friend at once. Leaving the apartment, Melken went down to the lobby, arrived on the street, and hailed a taxicab.

ONCE again, the young man was followed. It was not The Shadow who trailed him tonight, however. A young man, seated in the lobby, had strolled out to a coupe immediately after Melken's departure. He drove in pursuit of the taxi which Melken had hailed.

This young man was Harry Vincent, an agent of The Shadow. Just as Cliff Marsland served as watchdog in the underworld, so did Harry Vincent take up trails in the fashionable districts. Each of these subordinates served The Shadow well. Since The Shadow had trailed Melken to his meeting with Bing Claver, other duties had concerned The Shadow. To Harry Vincent remained the work of keeping The Shadow posted on Melken's future actions.

The taxicab stopped at a small apartment building on Seventy-eighth Street. Bart Melken alighted, paid the driver, and entered the lobby. He found a bell which was beside the card bearing Farrell Sarborn's name. The

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door clicked. Bart Melken entered.

Immediately afterward, Harry Vincent stepped into the same lobby. He saw the depressed button, not yet released by a closing door. He knew the apartment to which Bart Melken had gone. He went away to report his finding to The Shadow.

On the third floor, Bart Melken spied an opened door. Framed there was the figure of Farrell Sarborn. Tall and thin in his shirt sleeves, Sarborn was smiling a friendly greeting as he extended his hand to Melken.

A few minutes later, the two men were seated in Sarborn's living room, and a squatly, greasy-faced servant was bringing them drinks upon a tray. Sarborn indicated the fellow with a nudge of his thumb.

"This is Jalon," he said. "Brought him along from Caracas. Needed a servant, and he speaks English. Used to work in the States. Wanted to come back."

Bart Melken nodded. He was accustomed to Farrell Sarborn's brisk, phraselike way of speaking. Melken was not a man with many friends, although he had numerous acquaintances. He was accustomed, however, to consider Farrell Sarborn as a real friend.

Although Sarborn was not of the elite, he could take his place in any company. The man had money, and was a traveler. A few months ago, he had started out for South America. His return had been quite unexpected. To Bart Melken, it was a most propitious event.

For though Bart had never said a word to anyone regarding the hold which The Jackdaw held over him, he had always felt that if the crisis came, he could confide in Farrell Sarborn.

The traveler was truly a man of the world; his keen, poker face showed that trait. He was at least a dozen years older than Bart Melken; that, too, gave Bart a greater reliance in his friend's judgment.

Bart Melken felt that a crisis was impending now. He did not intend to speak of it in detail, even to Farrell Sarborn, but he saw in the traveler's presence an opportunity to gain a companion who might serve him well when trouble arrived.

"What have you been doing?" questioned Sarborn, in a friendly tone. "You aren't married yet?"

"Not yet," returned Bart. "I've just been hanging around New York. I see Yvonne quite often, of course. Tonight happens to be an exception."

"A wonderful girl, Yvonne," observed Sarborn. "You're very lucky to be marrying her. I hope you've been keeping out of mischief."

"I have," said Bart dully.

Sarborn's eyes became keen. The traveler sipped from a glass, and stared at his companion. Bart Melken felt a bit uneasy. He tried to curb his restlessness.

"What have you been doing, Farrell?" he questioned, when his friend made no comment. "Seeing much of South America?"

Sarborn chuckled.

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"South America," he declared, "is responsible for my being in this apartment. If I hadn't been there, I probably would be living at the Ritz. As it is, I have to keep a place where my pets can stay."

"Your pets?"

"Yes." Sarborn arose and beckoned. Melken followed him into an unfurnished room. There, in a long, wide cage, Melken observed a dozen green plumaged birds that were sitting solemnly on perches.

"Parakeets," remarked Sarborn. "I made quite a study of them, and brought these along with me."

"Do they chatter much?" asked Melken.

"Not these," returned Sarborn, "but there's the baby that does – when he feels in the mood."

Melken turned toward the corner of the room. There, perched upon a metal bar set in the front of a deep window sill, was one of the most beautiful birds that he had ever seen. Its plumage was of a vivid red; the size of the bird was also remarkable. It measured nearly three feet from head to tail.

"A great scarlet macaw," explained Sarborn. "A rare species for one to find in captivity. This bird is worth more than the whole cageload of parakeets."

"Does the macaw talk?"

"Yes. When coaxed. I have trained him."

SARBORN approached the bird. He reached up and scratched the macaw's head. The big bird began to ruffle its throat feathers and open its bill, but no sound came. Sarborn continued the treatment. He nodded to Melken, and motioned him toward the door.

"Bustle up toward the bird," he ordered. "Make out that you are threatening it. Stop short, though, before you arrive too close."

The macaw was watching Melken as it moved its bill. The young man followed Sarborn's instructions. As he made a fierce advance, a shrill warning came from the scarlet macaw.

"Keep away! Keep away!"

Melken stopped suddenly as he heard the high falsetto cry. Sarborn, still scratching the macaw's head, laughed at his friend's surprise. He gave another order.

"Be more affable," he said. "Then stroll away and pretend that you are going out the door."

Melken followed instructions. As he hesitated at the door, another call came from the macaw's trembling beak.

"Come back!" shrilled the bird. "Come back!"

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Melken, as the cry died. "The bird seems to have almost human intelligence."

"It is observant," admitted Sarborn. "More than that, it has an aptitude for remembering things that it hears. It only chooses words that appeal to it, however. Try some."

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"New York," suggested Melken.

"Repeat it," ordered Sarborn. "Emphasize the name."

"New York – New York –"

"New York!" screamed the macaw. "New York!"

Melken laughed. Sarborn ceased stroking the bird's head. The macaw kept ruffling its throat, but gave no further cry. Melken approached, scratched the bird's head; there was no response.

"It will only take its cues from me," explained Sarborn. "Speaking of birds – here are some interesting eggs. I brought a small collection with me from South America."

Sarborn pointed to a glass case in the corner. There, Melken saw a variety of eggs of different sizes. He remarked upon a large, blotched egg that was about three inches in length.

"What species of egg is that?" he questioned.

"A condor's egg," replied Sarborn. "The condor is one of the largest of all birds. They can fly to greater altitudes than the eagle."

"It must be difficult obtain their eggs."

"No. They have no marked nesting habits. The eggs are found upon rocks, in the mountains. Such eggs are not particularly rare."

A slight sound came from a covered box in the corner. Melken looked in that direction. Sarborn reached over and raised the lid of the box. A small monkey poked its head into view.

"Are you raising monkeys, too?" laughed Melken, as he saw the little creature scramble up to Sarborn's arms.

"No," replied Sarborn. "I started to, but gave it up. I'm going to get rid of this little beast later on. Affectionate, but a nuisance. Just a common species. South American monkey. Called a sapajou."

The monkey had seized Sarborn's necktie. It was starting to climb up it, hand over hand. Sarborn wrested the sapajou free, and dropped it back into the box. He closed the lid and strolled back to the living room.

"Well," he remarked, "you've seen the menagerie. Wouldn't do at the Ritz. Better here. Guess I'll get rid of the whole shebang. All except the macaw."

"How long are you going to be in town?" questioned Melken anxiously.

AGAIN, Sarborn looked quizzically at his friend. He seemed to sense the worriment that was present in Melken's mind.

"Quite a while," said Sarborn. "Why?"

"Thought we might get together occasionally," returned Melken. "I've been nervous during the past few days."

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"Why?"

"The trouble out at Casslin's house. You must have read about it in the newspapers."

"The murder of the millionaire?"

"Yes."

"You were there?"

"Yes."

"Hm—m—m." Sarborn was shaking his head. "Very mysterious affair. Read about it in the newspapers. None of the guests were implicated, were they?"

"No," answered Melken, "but I'm worried just the same. Farrell, there were some other robberies a few months ago — robberies that took place at houses where I had been. This was the first one where a murder occurred."

"You think —"

"I don't know what to think. I'm worried. If there's one crook in back of all these robberies, there's no telling what may happen next."

"Why should it concern you?" Sarborn asked.

"Here's why." Melken's tone became serious. "It's going to look as though someone might be on the inside of some of these crimes. It's also going to be tough for anyone who might observe too much."

"You mean something might be planted on you?"

"Not on me," broke in Melken hastily. "That is — not necessarily on me. On someone, though, and I might be the person."

"Or," added Sarborn calmly, "someone might decide that you knew too much and give the orders to bump you off?"

"I don't know," responded Melken. "I only know that I've been terribly worried since Casslin was killed. I've had a feeling that there is a menace hanging over me. We're old friends, Farrell. You're the only man to whom I can talk about this."

Sarborn arose and clapped his friend on the shoulder. His action seemed to give Melken encouragement. There was a firmness in Sarborn's manner that aroused confidence.

"Don't worry, old top," volunteered Sarborn. "If you have any idea whatever that trouble is brewing, let me know. If you're uneasy, maybe you can arrange for me to be with you. I've faced everything. Anacondas to orangutans. I like trouble."

Bart Melken nodded. Under this persuasion, he was ready to talk further.

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"At Casslin's," he said seriously, "Yvonne saw a face at the window. She told me about it. That was just before the murder. She told the police afterward; but I didn't say that she had spoken to me when she saw the face.

"That's what has me worried, Farrell. I'll be looking for danger signs from now on. I won't be able to keep myself from doing so. If – if I begin to look like I'm – well, a menace to some crooks – they may decide to put me on the spot."

"Don't worry, Bart," reassured Sarborn. "This hunch of yours is interesting. I think we'd better stick around together a bit."

Bart Melken shook hands warmly. He felt the value of this friendship. When he left Sarborn's apartment, a while later, he decided that he had accomplished something.

Melken, like Cardona and The Shadow, was out to learn the identity of The Jackdaw. His purpose was not guided by any dislike of crime; it was merely inspired by a desire for self-preservation; to escape a bargain that was proving one-sided.

Wrapped in thought as he departed, Bart Melken did not notice the peering eyes that watched him as he crossed the street in front of Farrell Sarborn's apartment. He did not know that once again he was under the surveillance of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XI. THE JACKDAW ORDERS

Two days had passed since Bart Melken's visit to his friend, Farrell Sarborn. Those two days had been anxious ones for Melken. The Jackdaw's minion knew well that he would soon receive another order to play his part in crime.

There were hours, in the late afternoon, when Melken made it a practice to remain alone in his hotel room. That was part of The Jackdaw's bargain. Today, with afternoon waning, Melken was in the room. Today, more than ever before, he sensed impending orders from his chief.

Accounts in the newspapers had given no new findings on the murder of Rutherford Casslin. That, at least, was satisfactory to Bart Melken. He was sure that Joe Cardona was making no progress that would lead him to The Jackdaw.

The position was a singular one. Bart was anxious that no one else would learn The Jackdaw's identity. He was anxious, also, that he could learn it. His scheme was simply to meet The Jackdaw on an equal basis, for the first time, and thus be able to make terms that would result in his own freedom.

To date, Bart had gained no inkling whatever regarding The Jackdaw's identity. That fact, as much as any other, made him dread the power of his task-making chief. With Farrell Sarborn as an ally, there was some chance that Bart Melken might gain a helpful clew.

As for The Shadow, Bart Melken had no idea whatever that his mysterious presence had appeared. He figured only himself, the police, and The Jackdaw. Yet The Shadow's part, so far as Bart was concerned, was more important than that of any other.

This very room in which Bart Melken sat had been fitted, during his absence, with a dictograph. In an adjoining hotel room, a young man was on duty. Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, was not only watching for any who might visit Bart Melken; he was also keeping tabs on Bart's end of telephone conversations.

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The telephone bell rang while Bart was deep in thought. Yvonne Lydell was on the wire. Bart was relieved to hear her voice. He conducted a leisurely conversation.

"Tonight?" he questioned. "Certainly. I can meet you at Winchendon's... Yes, about half past nine is the time I expect to arrive there. I can take you home afterward. Very well. Has your father returned from Florida?... Ah, next week... That is later than he expected... Very well, Yvonne. I shall met you at Winchendon's."

Melken hung up the telephone. He strolled back and forth across the room. The bell began to ring again. Bart hesitated; then answered the summons. He paled as he heard the voice over the wire.

It was The Jackdaw.

THERE was an effect about The Jackdaw's voice that had always placed Melken on the defensive. The Jackdaw seldom asked questions. He dealt in statements, and gave his orders. He seemed to have plans for crime already mapped. Moreover, his direct way of talking invariably gave Melken the impression that The Jackdaw knew much about him.

"Tonight," came The Jackdaw's oddly pitched voice, "you are going to an affair at the home of Silas Winchendon."

"Yes," stammered Melken. "I'll be at Winchendon's."

"The signal will be required," ordered, The Jackdaw. "Wait until all the guests are assembled in Winchendon's living room. Signal near the French doors at the side. Retire, and act as the other guests."

"What time?" queried Melken.

"Any time after ten o'clock," came The Jackdaw's final command.

"But – but wait a moment," began Melken. "I'm not – not sure about tonight. If –"

A click came over the wire. The Jackdaw had ended the conversation. Melken knew the answer. He would have to go through with the game or take the consequences.

Melken paced the room. He was muttering to himself, but his words had no meaning.

Harry Vincent, in the other room, had noted down the few facts that he had gleaned from Melken's talk with The Jackdaw. They were sufficient only to reveal that Melken had some important duty to perform at Winchendon's this night.

Minutes passed; Melken, with a sigh of resignation, went to the telephone. His hand was trembling as it lifted the receiver. The Jackdaw's minion was losing his nerve; he was afraid that he would fail in the task placed before him.

Melken was choosing the only way out; he was reverting to his half-formed plan of counting on his friend, Farrell Sarborn, as a protector. He gave the operator the number of Sarborn's apartment.

When he heard his friend's easy, cheery voice, Melken felt a return of confidence. He began a conversation that kept Harry Vincent busy recording it.

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"This is Bart Melken," began The Jackdaw's minion. "Listen, Farrell, I'm still feeling nervous. More so than ever. I have to go out tonight – to a party at Silas Winchendon's home. I – I'd like to get out of it."

Sarborn's reply was to the effect that such should be an easy matter. Melken quickly changed his tack.

"The trouble, Farrell," he said, "is that Yvonne will be there. She'll wonder why I didn't come. I've promised to take her home, afterward. I – I tell you what I'd like to do. I'd like to take you along. I might be able to arrange it by calling Mrs. Winchendon. But there would have to be some good reason."

Sarborn put a question over the wire. It was a query regarding the type of party that was to be held.

"A swanky affair," explained Melken, "but a very quiet one. The Winchendons like to have interesting people. They always invite guests who offer something unusual by way of diversion."

As Bart Melken paused, he heard Farrell Sarborn offer a suggestion. The idea caused a gleam to appear upon Bart's pallid face.

"Great!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, that would be just the ticket! If you could give them a short talk on the bird life of South America, and bring the big macaw with you, they'd fall for it to perfection. You will be the lion of the evening, Farrell!"

A pause; then Melken added:

"Certainly! I'll call Mrs. Winchendon at once. Unless you hear from me to the contrary, you'll know that it has been arranged. I'll stop for you in a cab. This is important to me, Farrell" – Melken's tone became sober – "and you'll never regret helping me out. I'll tell you more about the situation later on. Thanks, old fellow."

Melken hung up; then made another call, to the home of Silas Winchendon. As he had anticipated, the young man had no difficulty in arranging for Farrell Sarborn to appear as an invited guest. His description of the remarkable scarlet macaw aroused Mrs. Winchendon's interest to such an extent that it appeared that she was inviting the bird rather than its master.

A CURIOUS elation governed Bart Melken when he had completed his arrangements. He knew that trouble was in the air. No specified orders had been given by The Jackdaw other than a necessary signal. What the shrewd crook plotted was more than Bart could decide.

The presence of Farrell Sarborn, however, would be of vital value. That was the cause of Melken's elation. He felt that with his friend there, he would be able to show nerve enough to either give the signal or completely ignore it. All that he needed was surety that would enable him to make a decision one way or the other.

At heart, Bart Melken was a weakling. Susceptible to persons of stronger will, he had hitherto followed The Jackdaw like an unprotesting lamb. Now, with the sense that he could depend upon the strong personality of Farrell Sarborn, Bart had gained synthetic courage. He had lost his fear of consequences whether he might continue his unliked work or whether he might choose to defy The Jackdaw's orders.

As Bart Melken rested in an easy-chair, he never once supposed that through his telephone calls he had paved the way to startling consequences. The words that he had uttered had been recorded. Already, Harry Vincent, seated in the adjoining room, was completing an exact report to The Shadow.

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It was nearly five o'clock – Melken's last call had been completed shortly before the hour – when Harry Vincent appeared in the lobby of Melken's hotel. The Shadow's agent hailed a cab, and rolled to a huge skyscraper – the Badger Building. He rode by elevator to a high floor, and entered an office which bore the legend:

RUTLEDGE MANN INVESTMENTS

In an inner room, Harry came face to face with a lethargic, chubby-faced individual, who was seated at a desk beside the window. This was Rutledge Mann, who served as a contact man and special investigator for The Shadow. Harry gave Mann the sealed envelope which contained his report. He left the office shortly afterward.

Ten minutes later, Mann left the Badger Building, and rode by cab to Twenty-third Street. Here, he entered a dilapidated building, and ascended a flight of dingy stairs. He stopped in front of an office which bore a name upon its central panel of unwashed glass:

B. JONAS

Mann dropped the envelope through the mail chute. He stared a few moments at the door, with its frosted front that made it impossible to see within. Every sign told of desertion. Cobwebs were apparent on the glass panel. To all appearances, no one had been in that office for many months.

Yet Mann knew that the letter which he had dropped would be delivered; for this mail chute was the collection box where The Shadow received such messages as the one which Mann had brought.

No one approached that door after Mann had left. Yet the message in the mail chute was gained by the recipient for whom it was intended. The proof of this took place in a silent, mysterious room, somewhere in the maze that is Manhattan.

A CLICK resounded amid total blackness. A bluish light came on; its rays were concentrated by an opaque shade so they spread uncanny illumination upon the polished surface of a corner table.

Appearing beneath the light were two white hands that moved like detached creatures creeping into life from oblivion. Between them, they held the envelope which had come from Harry Vincent through the agency of Rutledge Mann.

The hands of The Shadow! One token told of their identity. This was a gleaming gem that flashed mysteriously from the long third finger of the left hand. That jewel, unmatched in all the world, was The Shadow's girasol – a fire opal of shimmering splendor. The strange stone emitted sparks that seemed to come from a living coal.

Harry Vincent's report tumbled from the envelope. It was written in ink; it was prepared in simple code. To The Shadow, its wording was plain. Thus did the master learn all that Bart Melken had said over the telephone that afternoon.

Strangely, the blue-inked words began to fade as promptly as The Shadow read them. An invisible hand seemed to be obliterating them from view. That was due to the special type of ink that The Shadow and his agents used in their private correspondence. Writing disappeared shortly after it contacted with the open air.

Melken's conversations had been somewhat obscure in certain details – particularly the one which he had conducted with The Jackdaw. To The Shadow, however, the gaps were easy ones to fill. The report gave the

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super sleuth the vital facts that he wished to know.

Crime was due to strike tonight, at the home of Silas Winchendon. Bart Melken, nervous and disturbed, had called upon a friend to be close at hand – without revealing facts to that friend. Orders had come from Melken's superior – and The Shadow knew the name under which that hidden crook masqueraded.

The Jackdaw planned to follow his success at Rutherford Casslin's with another well-laid scheme of crime. Although his purpose was not mentioned, The Shadow seemed to sense the type of robbery that the crook had planned.

The whispered laugh that echoed from the darkness revealed The Shadow's hidden thoughts. The black-garbed master was already formulating a method of offsetting The Jackdaw's efforts.

Tonight, The Jackdaw's cleverness would be met by The Shadow's skill. The meeting ground would be the home of Silas Winchendon. A mighty struggle was in the making; what its outcome would be, only The Shadow could foresee.

The light clicked out. A weird, chilling laugh broke the silence of the gloom. Reverberations died. Silence returned.

The Shadow had departed from that room of blackness. He had left his mysterious sanctum to issue forth in battle against crime.

CHAPTER XII. CARDONA PERSISTS

WHILE The Shadow, in his sanctum, was studying reports that were bringing him closer to The Jackdaw's trail, Joe Cardona, in his office at headquarters, was gloomily considering the situation that he faced.

Ever since he had been forced to take Doctor Lysander Dubrong's bitter gibes, Cardona had been seeking a comeback. He had realized fully that Dubrong was too clever for him. In that realization, however, Joe had reached a definite and startling conclusion.

The detective was sure that someone had spotted him while he had been in Doctor Dubrong's waiting room; that the physician had known the identity of his bewhiskered patient all during the clinic hours.

In proof of this, Cardona cited to himself the fact that Dubrong had departed from usual procedure by letting a patient into the consulting room after the one-o'clock deadline. Cardona, therefore, had tried to figure who had tipped off Dubrong to the fact that a detective was close by.

In his two-hour waiting period at the clinic, Cardona had studied the patients there. One, only, had aroused his keen suspicion. That was the man whom he had encountered at the outer door, the shuffling cripple called Limps Silvey.

Was there collusion between Limps and Dubrong? Cardona had determined to find that out. He had, accordingly, put stool pigeons watching Limps. So far, their findings had been meager.

Limps had appeared only at intervals. He had revisited the East Side Clinic; he had been seen wandering about the streets at night. He had also shown a proclivity for passing out of sight in a hurry.

With another evening arriving, Joe Cardona was angry at this lack of action. He wanted to get close on Limps Silvey's trail. He was positive that the frail, twisted man served Dubrong in some important capacity.

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The telephone began to ring. Cardona picked up the instrument. He recognized the voice of one of his stool pigeons. The words came in an eager, whining tone.

"I'm wise to this guy Limps," the stool was saying. "He's been duckin' us cute until just now. I'll tell you where he is – he's sneakin' in an' out from Bing Claver's joint. He's there now, an' I think he's goin' to stay a while."

"O.K.," ordered Cardona briskly. "Stick there until I show up."

DUSK had settled. Cardona scorned disguise. He felt that he could trail Limps Silvey under cover of night.

He started out from headquarters. A while later, he appeared by the decadent alley where the side entrance to Bing Claver's apartment was located.

It was darkening; the stool pigeons sneaked out and whispered as they saw the detective. Joe heard their words. Apparently, Limps Silvey had suddenly dropped his usual crafty tactics. Off his guard, the stools had trailed him. Joe dismissed the stools and took up watch alone.

Usually stolid, Joe Cardona was anxious tonight. He had cause to be. The blind lead on the Casslin murder – nothing had developed from the Hindu theory – had brought criticism from Police Commissioner Weston.

Cardona had been forced to keep silent on the point concerning The Jackdaw. Had he brought in the idea of an anonymous crook, a masquerader in the underworld, Weston would have been enraged. The commissioner branded all such unknown characters as myths.

Yet Cardona was sure that The Jackdaw existed. He had a real hunch that the king of thieves had slain Rutherford Casslin. Clews had failed at the millionaire's mansion. The dead body in the tower was still an unexplained mystery. The answer lay in uncovering The Jackdaw himself.

Cardona was relying upon one basic fact. Scoffy had told him that The Jackdaw had henchmen among gangsters. One of these, Bennie Lizzit, had been slain with Scoffy himself. Where gunmen were employed, there was usually a leader. Now, for the first time, Cardona had an inkling of who the gang chief might be: Bing Claver.

This was a real achievement. Bing Claver, a dominating gorilla who had apparently retired from crime, was just the type of gangster whom The Jackdaw might choose to command his crew of torpedoes. Limps Silvey would also be an excellent go-between. Cardona saw the link he wanted: a possible hook-up between Doctor Lysander Dubrong and Bing Claver.

Long minutes passed while Cardona waited in reflection. Suddenly, the detective became alert. He saw a shaft of light in the alleyway; then a slinking figure coming in his direction. He recognized Limps, and eased back into the cover of a deserted doorway, as he watched the shuffling man approach.

Apparently, Limps had no idea that anyone was watching him. The frail hobbler turned along the street, and Cardona took up his trail. The detective, his overcoat up around his neck, was watching closely every time that Limps threw a sidelong glance.

So concerned was Cardona in watching the man ahead that he never thought to look in back. Thus he had no idea that he, too, was being followed. It would have gained Cardona nothing, however, to have glanced backward. He would not have caught even a glimpse of the one who was on his trail.

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For the third member of this trio that was advancing along a dilapidated street was one who moved with the silence of the growing night itself. No sign of his form was visible; only an occasional patch of sidewalk blackness betokened his strange presence.

The Shadow, fresh from his sanctum, had come to this section of the underworld. Unseen, unsuspected, he was watching the pursuit ahead: Joe Cardona on the trail of Limps Silvey.

SHUFFLING down another thoroughfare, Limps stopped in front of a dilapidated store. He looked craftily about him. Joe Cardona was almost caught flat-footed; but he leaned back against a wall. Limps must have missed him; for the cripple showed no concern. He hobbled into the store.

Joe Cardona approached and looked through a grimy window. He crouched against the wall, and suppressed a chuckle. He was in luck. He had seen Limps Silvey.

The shuffler had gone into the store to telephone; and the coin box, although secluded in the store itself, was within three feet of the window. Moreover, a pane was broken from the window and Joe, as he listened, could hear the clicking of the dial as Limps rang up a number.

As before, Cardona was intent upon his objective. He gave no thought to anything else about him. He did not sense the presence of The Shadow, as the black-garbed follower came closer. Stationed but a few feet away, pressed beside a projection of the building, The Shadow, like Cardona, was listening in on Limps Silvey.

The cripple's voice was a husky one; although lowered, it could plainly be heard. Limps had obtained his number. He was talking.

"All gettin' ready for tonight," Limps was saying. "I'm goin' to duck out of town, see?... Yeah – after I look over the lay... An' if it's all right, I'm just goin' to lose myself. But if it ain't all right, I'll give you the tip... I'll tell you where I'll be... Yeah, out in Corona... When it comes ten o'clock, I'll be hangin' out at the Derry Cafe, near the "L" station... Ring up there, when you're ready to go... You can tell me what you're plannin' then – which job you're goin' to grab tonight... O.K. – here's the number" – Limps paused to consult a crumpled sheet of paper – "Seabright 0664... Got it? O.K..."

Limps shuffled away from the telephone. He came from the store, and headed for the corner after a glance in both directions. Cardona paused; then started in pursuit.

At the corner, he glimpsed Limps beneath a street lamp, halfway down the block. The twisted man was hobbling away with remarkable swiftness.

For a moment, Cardona was tempted to halt his quarry. His fist tightened on his pocket revolver. At that moment, Limps slid into an alleyway. Cardona started forward at a quick pace. He reached the spot where the man had disappeared.

Peering down the alleyway, Joe could see no sign of Limps. The narrow path ran between houses to another street. There were lights above, in house windows. To his chagrin, Cardona realized that Limps had given him the slip.

Standing on the sidewalk, Cardona considered what to do next. He thought of going back to Bing Claver's. He paused as he contemplated.

It would be a mistake to talk to Bing. If the gang leader planned an expedition tonight, particularly one in The Jackdaw's service, a challenging visit from a detective would amount to nothing more than a warning.

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It was obvious that mobsters planned a foray; their destination was not known, but it would be mentioned to Limps Silvey over the telephone at the number in Corona. That was the place to be stationed. Cardona saw opportunities ahead.

Nevertheless, he was wise enough to figure on more than one trail. Nearly half an hour had elapsed since he had left the alleyway by Bing's apartment. Cardona decided it would be worth while to take another look back there.

SWINGING on his heel, the detective headed back the way that he had come. This time there was no sinister presence bringing up the rear. The Shadow had disappeared with the same promptitude as Limps Silvey.

When Cardona reached Bing Claver's alley, he noted that the side of the rickety apartment building was black. The upstairs lights – Cardona had observed them previously – had been extinguished.

A stool pigeon shuffled out of the darkness. The man whined a message in a low voice as he stood beside Cardona. The detective grunted as he heard it.

"Seen Bing Claver," informed the stool. "He come out just after Limps scrambled. Don't know where he went, though. Kinda afraid to follow Bing, I was."

"All right," growled Cardona. "Beat it. Call me up if you spot either one of them."

Joe Cardona, as he stalked away, still found himself wondering what had become of Limps Silvey. The detective decided that no one, no matter how clever, could have trailed that quick-moving hobbler. In this surmise, Cardona was in error.

Limps Silvey was being trailed, by one who moved with silence as well as swiftness. At that moment, Limps, heading for the darkness of a blind alley, did not realize that anyone was close at hand. Even Limps, clever though he was, did not spy the obscure form of The Shadow.

With noiseless cane, Limps slipped into the darkness. Keen eyes followed him; keen ears heard the soft closing of a door. A whispered laugh followed. The Shadow was standing by the entrance to the cul-de-sac where he had trailed Limps before. This time he had spotted the door which Limps had used. The cripple had entered through the secret way to Doctor Lysander Dubrong's consulting room.

Swiftly, The Shadow glided from the spot. His silent strides carried him on a roundabout course beyond the alley where Bing Claver lived. Suddenly, The Shadow stopped; under the projecting top of a battered brick wall, he peered keenly as he heard footsteps on the other side of the street.

Through the gloom loomed Joe Cardona. The detective was pounding his way back to headquarters. His steady gait, his bent shoulders, both were tokens of his lack of success. The Shadow knew that Joe Cardona had learned nothing more.

Yet Joe Cardona was not defeated. Out of this evening's effort, he had gained one thing which might prove vital to the plans that lay ahead. He had learned the number where Limps Silvey would be expecting a telephone call. It was one bet that the detective could play

That Cardona would stake much on that chance was certain. The Shadow knew Cardona's only possible plan. As the detective's footsteps faded, a soft laugh began to rise; clipped abruptly during its crescendo, it dwindled to a sobbing sigh of merriment that was suppressed beneath the overhanging wall.

THE CRIME CLINIC

There was a presagement in The Shadow's laugh; a foreknowledge of the events that were to come. The Shadow knew the part that Limps Silvey was playing in the approaching drama.

He had made a study of The Jackdaw's minions. All were scheduled for work this night. The Shadow's challenge, however, reached beyond the underlings. The Jackdaw himself was the game The Shadow sought.

CHAPTER XIII. AT WINCHENDON'S

IT was after nine o'clock when Bart Melken and Farrell Sarborn arrived by taxicab at Silas Winchendon's Long Island home. Both men entered, dressed in faultless evening clothes. Mrs. Winchendon, a plump, middle-aged woman, greeted them.

One of the servants had received a tall, cylindrical package at the door. Mrs. Winchendon indicated it with an interested gesture.

"The macaw's cage?" she questioned.

"Yes," smiled Melken. "The bird is in there. Mr. Sarborn will bring him out when you are ready."

The servant took the cage into a small room. Mrs. Winchendon led the two guests to the living room. She stopped a moment, just outside the door.

"We have another treat tonight," she remarked. "Mr. Cranston – Lamont Cranston, the famous globe-trotter. He has been telling us of his experiences in the Orient. It was so fortunate – he just chanced to call up Mr. Winchendon –"

Mrs. Winchendon ceased speaking. They were already at the door of the living room.

Bart Melken spied Yvonne Lydell among the guests who were listening to a quiet, convincing-toned speaker who was standing near the end of the living room.

Lamont Cranston was a man of whom Bart Melken had heard. Farrell Sarborn had known of him also, and the two studied the speaker with interest. Tall, impressive in his well-tailored evening clothes, Cranston had the appearance of a man who knew the world.

His face seemed immobile in expression. His chiseled features were almost masklike. His aquiline nose gave him a hawkish look, which was accentuated by a pair of keen, penetrating eyes.

Cranston, as everyone knew, was a multimillionaire who traveled when and where he chose. He maintained a large mansion in New Jersey. He had a habit of setting forth at most unexpected times on journeys that included the most distant places.

From the vastnesses of Siberia, to the depths of darkest Africa, Lamont Cranston had traveled. His ways carried him to bypaths that ordinary travelers dreaded. His present discourse on his journey to India concerned the little-known summits of the Himalaya Mountains.

CRANSTON concluded speaking a few minutes after Melken and Sarborn entered. A murmur of admiration came from the listeners who had heard his remarkable discourse. Mrs. Winchendon drew Farrell Sarborn and Bart Melken forward. She introduced Sarborn first.

"Mr. Sarborn is a traveler also," she said to Cranston. "He has just returned from a trip to South America."

THE CRIME CLINIC

"I am scarcely a traveler," put forth Sarborn, as he shook hands with Cranston. "My journeys have been trivial compared with yours. I can merely claim some slight distinction as a student of certain districts where I have been."

"That is much to your credit," observed Cranston. "I, myself, have often neglected interesting surroundings due to my desire to arrive at another destination. It is a fault, I assure you – a fault which I must commend you for not possessing."

There was no flattery in the millionaire's tone; his words were given with the quite positiveness of a simple statement. This was pleasing to Farrell Sarborn. It seemed to place the new guest at his ease.

Bart Melken was looking about him. He was studying the people in the living room. He had come to a prompt realization that in this throng alone was sufficient pelf to arouse The Jackdaw's cupidity.

Mrs. Winchendon was adorned with large and expensive gems. So were other of the guests. Indeed, when viewed from the standpoint of personal ornamentation, the living room was fairly glittering.

Melken noticed the French doors on the opposite side of the room. He also noted several curtained doorways.

It was possible that one of these might lead to a hidden spot where The Jackdaw intended to make a foray, but Bart could not imagine any haul that would exceed that of the jewelry. The Jackdaw, Bart knew well, had a penchant for precious stones.

"I regret," Sarborn was saying to Cranston, "that I failed to hear your talk on India. I have often intended to travel there."

"I shall be pleased to discuss India at any time," returned Cranston. "In the meantime, I am anxious to hear your observations on South America."

As the men parted, Cranston's keen eyes turned in the direction of Bart Melken. The pale-faced young man had crossed the living room to join Yvonne Lydell. Cranston saw his gaze go again to the French windows.

There was a contrast between the man and the girl. Melken now had no claim to handsomeness. His pallor, his furtive expression, were damaging to his appearance. Yvonne Lydell, tall and slender, was a perfect blonde, whose beautiful face showed a vivacity that made her fiancee's gloominess more noticeable.

Mrs. Winchendon was introducing Sarborn to the other guests. Melken's friend was well received. Silas Winchendon, a big, heavy man, seemed pleased to meet another visitor who had a reputation as a traveler.

It was quite a while before the arrangements were finished for Sarborn to speak to the gathering. At last, Sarborn beckoned to a servant. The covered cage was brought into the room. Sarborn smiled as he heard buzzing conversation end.

"IT is my pleasure," announced Sarborn, "to discuss the avifauna of South America. I must admit that my knowledge of the birds of that continent is somewhat restricted. I have been more interested in the birds themselves than in a study of the various species."

"In South America, I obtained one bird that is rarely brought to the United States. I refer to the great scarlet macaw. I was fortunate enough to acquire an excellent specimen; and the bird has shown a remarkable response to its captivity."

THE CRIME CLINIC

Removing the top of the cage, Sarborn dipped his arm within and brought out the three-foot macaw on his hand. He carried the bird to a chair back, and let it perch there.

Exclamations of admiration greeted the appearance of the macaw. The brilliant plumage was something that few of the guests had ever seen before.

The macaw, blinking in the light, kept moving its beak and ruffling its throat feathers so furiously that all the observers laughed. Lamont Cranston, lighting a cigarette beside the nearer of the French windows, looked up and studied the bird curiously.

"I have trained the macaw to speak," explained Sarborn, "but he is as wise as an owl, and requires considerable coaxing. Let me demonstrate."

He scratched the macaw's head. The bird kept up its beak motion. Suddenly, it spoke in high falsetto:

"Hello! Hello, there!"

Everyone laughed at the shrill sound. Sarborn, his head bent close toward the bird, looked up and smiled. He raised his hand for silence.

"This bird," he said, "has a remarkable proclivity for remembering words that it hears. For instance, suppose someone is introduced to it —"

Mrs. Winchendon stepped forward.

"This is Mrs. Winchendon," said Sarborn, to the macaw. "Mrs. Winchendon. Would you remember her?"

He was scratching the bird's head and looking toward it as he spoke. The macaw's trembling beak became more furious.

"Winchendon!" shrilled the scarlet bird. "Winchendon!"

Sarborn began some new experiments, much like those he had shown to Melken. To further demonstrate the bird's intelligence, he stepped away and stood at arm's length, while he made a noise like a kitten mewing.

"Cats! Cats!" screamed the bird.

"It is odd," remarked Sarborn, when the macaw had become silent, "how this bird has managed to actually associate sounds with words that it has heard concerning them. The reference to cats was a surprising accomplishment. On the boat, coming up from South America, we had a joke of pointing out other ships and saying, 'Pirates.' In the harbor of Port-au-Prince, the macaw fairly screamed 'Pirates! Pirates!' every time we had it on deck and it saw the shipping of the harbor."

"Pirates!" shrilled the macaw.

A clock was chiming ten. Bart Melken, who had been standing across the room, strolled near a French window and began to fumble with his cigarette lighter. Only Lamont Cranston observed the action.

CRANSTON'S position was so taken that he could see from the other French window, although he did not appear to glance in that direction. While Sarborn was still coaxing the macaw, Cranston's keen eye again turned toward the darkness outside.

THE CRIME CLINIC

A tiny speck of light glimmered beyond. It went out. It reappeared. That was all. Cranston strolled toward the spot where Farrell Sarborn had the macaw.

"Can the bird tell my name?" he asked. "I think it heard you give it."

"We'll try," replied Sarborn. He scratched the macaw's head, then shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid you have stepped too close to it," he said. "Just step back a few paces, Mr. Cranston."

"Cranston!" screamed the macaw, the moment the millionaire obeyed.

"It heard your name again, then," laughed Sarborn. "I did not realize that I was mentioning it."

Cranston had joined in the general laughter. He was retiring toward one of the curtained doorways. As Sarborn again turned his attention to the macaw, all eyes were on the bird. Cranston's keen gaze observed that fact.

With a slight sidewise motion, the millionaire eased through the curtained doorway, so unobtrusively that not a single person witnessed his departure. In the darkness of a hallway he lifted folded garments from beneath a chair.

Cloth rustled over shoulders. A black slouch hat settled upon the millionaire's head. With swift, silent motion, Lamont Cranston gained a window at the end of the hallway. The sash rose noiselessly. A dark form passed over the sill.

Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow.

CHAPTER XIV. THE CALL

TEN o'clock had been the time that Bart Melken was awaiting. There was another man who was watchful for that hour. Joe Cardona, huddled in a corner of the Derry Cafe, in Corona, was hoping that Limps Silvey would appear.

Outside, Joe had a squad of men in readiness. They were far enough away not to attract attention. They had two cars; they were anxious for the word to go. Joe had told them that important work might be afoot tonight.

Where was Limps Silvey? Joe Cardona began to wonder if he was the victim of a stall. Had the crafty hobbler seen him in the darkness, and made a fake call? Joe did not know. He had nothing to do but wait.

The telephone bell began to ring. The coin box was situated in an obscure corner of the restaurant, not far from the spot where Cardona was located. Joe waited, then realized that it might be the call for Limps.

Under sudden impulse, Cardona arose and approached the telephone. He raised the receiver. He heard an unfamiliar voice. It asked a single question.

"That you, Limps?"

"Yeah," responded Joe, in an attempt to imitate Limps Silvey's husky tones.

"Scram, then," came the voice over the wire. "We've picked our lay. It's O.K. We're on the ground now. Bing decided to go ahead with the Winchendon job."

THE CRIME CLINIC

"Which one?" inquired Cardona huskily.

"I didn't say which one," came the voice. "I said Winchendon. You know – the place you looked over. Old Silas Winchendon's house. We're busting in there. That's why you'd better scram. It's only a few miles from where you are now."

"O.K."

Joe Cardona hung up the receiver. He had the dope he wanted. He had been studying society news in an effort to pick places which might lure The Jackdaw. He had seen a mention of a party at Winchendon's; he had paid little attention to it, because it had not appeared to be more than a mere formal gathering.

Cardona did know, however, that the Winchendons lived in Copperwood, near Long Island Sound. It was not far there from Corona; but the speaker on the telephone had mentioned that the gang was already there.

Joe considered quickly. He realized that a rapid swoop would be more effective than a delayed telephone call. He hurried out to the street.

"Stay here to grab Limps Silvey," ordered Joe. "We're hopping out to stop a job."

Rounding a corner close by, Joe leaped into the first of two parked cars. The automobiles were filled with detectives. Joe gave his next order.

"Head for Copperwood," he barked. "The Winchendon house. I can locate it when we get there."

The motor thrummed. The first car shot away. The second followed. Joe Cardona gave instructions as they rode along. It was a mad chase; a broad, good road lay ahead. It was not until they made a turn at Cardona's order that trouble was encountered.

JOE knew the way to Copperwood. He had picked a good short cut. Barring signs blocked it, half a mile from the spot that they had left the main road. There was no passing. The signs marked a fallen bridge.

Joe Cardona fumed as he gave the order to turn around. The cars headed back to the main road. Five good minutes had been lost through this misadventure. More would be gone because the longer route must be taken. Joe Cardona regretted that he had not called Silas Winchendon by telephone.

It was too late to do so now. The only hope was to make all speed. Crime lay ahead. Word had been gained through a fortunate break. Now, mischance seemed destined to ruin Cardona's opportunity to meet The Jackdaw's hordes.

Meanwhile, Silas Winchendon's mansion lay silent amid the grounds that surrounded it. Cars were parked in the driveway; others were on the sloping street that ran by the side of the house more than fifty yards away.

IT was in one of these cars – a coupe – that a young man was seated. Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, was peering into darkness. He had been here long, had Harry. He had been watching the lights in the French windows that indicated Silas Winchendon's living room.

He had noticed something else. Creeping figures had shown dimly beyond the low hedge that lined the sidewalk. Mumbled voices had come to Harry's ears. In response, he had flicked the dashlight twice. That sudden glimmer, on and off, on and off, had been a signal to The Shadow.

THE CRIME CLINIC

Harry was sure that it had not been observed. The men in the darkness were under cover of the hedge. Now, however, since they had advanced farther across the lawn, Harry had become worried. Had The Shadow seen the signal?

Yielding to an impulse, Harry Vincent repeated the signal. On went the light; off again. On; then off. Twice in quick succession. Harry knew that The Shadow was alert; indeed, he had seen tokens of miraculous ability on the part of his mysterious chief. In the tenseness of the moment, however, Harry was overanxious to play his part.

Harry had been ordered here by instructions received from Burbank. Harry knew, from his own report, that The Shadow must have picked the Winchendon home as a danger spot tonight. It had been Harry's duty to remain huddled in his own car, lined with others that were presumably empty.

The mobsters, rather than attract attention, had not made a close inspection of these vehicles. Harry had locked his doors from the inside; with windows up, he had been protected. At the first sign of figures beyond the hedge, he had lowered the windows. Thus he had also heard the invaders, as they spoke in low whispers.

Harry felt more at ease after he had given the second pair of light signals. The men who were approaching the house had evidently reached the flat, stone veranda by the French windows. Their forms were lost beyond patches of shrubbery. Harry could not hear a sound.

He had warned The Shadow. He awaited only a definite sign that would either send him on his way, or bring him to some new duty. It was while Harry counted on such a result — an expected ending to his night's work — that the unexpected happened.

A SLIGHT sound came from the left side of the car. As Harry turned in that direction, the jab of cold steel came suddenly against the side of his neck. A flashlight glimmered, its glare lowered toward the floor of the coupe. A voice growled an order.

"Shut up and don't budge," came the command. "It'll be curtains for you, bimbo. Put up them dukes."

Harry raised his arms. It was too late to reach for his automatic, which was ready in a side pocket of the car. An ugly snarl came from the man who had surprised him.

"Blinking your light, eh?" questioned the mobster, as he extinguished his flashlight. "Well, I'm wise to you. Don't think you can get away with something now you're in the dark. I'm watching. What are you — a dick or something?"

Harry made no reply. His situation was a serious one. Fear, however, was not the emotion that swept The Shadow's agent. Harry was chagrined because he had shown stupidity; he was alarmed because he had caused a slip-up in The Shadow's plans.

The mobster who now controlled him had evidently caught the glimmer of the second signal, and had doubled back around the hedge. He had trapped Harry Vincent with neither sound nor trouble. Yet Harry still possessed a temporary safety. He knew that this man would not dare to fire while his companions were still waiting for the attack.

A critical stage, however, might be approaching. If gun play burst loose around the Winchendon mansion, the gangster's logical course would be to shoot his prisoner. In anticipation of this danger, Harry let his right hand creep over toward the pocket in the door. It was a desperate chance; yet he wanted to have his automatic ready if the mobster should choose to fire at him.

THE CRIME CLINIC

Harry's left shoulder hunched unconsciously. The gangster growled; he flashed his light simultaneously. The glare, confined entirely to the car, revealed Harry's hand; it also showed the butt of the automatic. The muzzle of the gangster's revolver jabbed more firmly. Harry could imagine the finger trembling on the trigger.

"One inch, bimbo," came the snarl, "and it'll be curtains. Make a grab for that rod if you want – I'm going to snuff you out anyway in a minute. This is where you –"

The sentence ended abruptly. A gargling gasp coughed from the gangster's lips. His body slumped. The revolver barrel flopped away from Harry's neck. The flashlight tumbled to the floor of the coupe. Harry reached down and extinguished it.

Staring through the window, Harry saw nothing but blackness where the mobster had been. Yet in the back of his head, he held the impression of a dull, thudding sound that he had heard. Solid blackness seemed to move before Harry's eyes. He realized then that a living presence was outside the window.

The Shadow had come to the coupe. He must have seen the second signal as well as the first that Harry Vincent had given. Rising like a specter from the darkness, the black-garbed master of the night had struck down the gangster who had held Harry Vincent in his power.

CHAPTER XV. THE SHADOW RETURNS

THE tones of a whispered voice came to Harry Vincent's ears. From the darkness, The Shadow was issuing a command.

"Let the car roll," were the monotonous words, "as soon as trouble begins inside the house. Start the motor at the bottom of the slope."

"Right," whispered Harry.

He saw The Shadow's purpose. It would be a mistake for Harry to slide away now. The other mobsters thought that their companion had taken care of him.

What if they should investigate? Perhaps another gangster would come from the crew. Harry could visualize The Shadow disposing of such investigators one by one. He realized, a moment later, that The Shadow could not depend upon such a plan. Trouble was due within the house. The Shadow must return to prevent it.

Something was going on in the darkness. Straining his eyes, Harry could see a figure moving on the street. A grayish cloth seemed to be coming up over arms and shoulders.

Harry suddenly knew what it meant. The Shadow was peeling a sweater from the stunned gangster's body.

The sweater seemed to move away. Harry caught a flash of what appeared to be a checkered cap. Staring through the rear window, he saw cap and sweater settling into place. It dawned on him that The Shadow had taken off his hat; that over his cloak he had drawn the mobster's sweater; that on his head he wore the stunned man's cap!

Harry could see a crouching figure hurrying across the lawn. It disappeared beyond the shrubbery. The Shadow had taken the place of the growling gangster!

That was the last that Harry Vincent saw. Up by the house, however, there were those who noted the arrival of the sweatered figure. Bing Claver, crouched on the stones beside the veranda, hissed a warning.

THE CRIME CLINIC

"Did you get him?"

"Knocked him cold." The growl was a perfect imitation of the stunned gangster. "But he may come to. I didn't want to plug him. I'm going back."

"All right, Cady," agreed Bing. "Give him the works as soon as we pile into the place. Then come up with us."

THE sweatered form moved away. It took a circuitous path alongside the house. That was natural, for the opening in the hedge was farther back. Thus did The Shadow come into the midst of Bing Claver and his mobsters, to lull them into thinking that Cady, the stunned gangster, had fulfilled his mission.

Bing Claver and his mob were in readiness. Scattered, they would have been a difficult problem for The Shadow at this moment. The master fighter preferred to meet them in a massed attack. Behind a bush, he doffed the sweater and the cap. His black hat settled on his head.

Silently, The Shadow crept to the opened window of the little hallway. He glided over the ledge – inward as easily as he came outward.

One minute after The Shadow's return, Lamont Cranston appeared just beyond the curtains. His form was still unseen within the living room. His sharp eyes, however, could spy what was going on. The macaw was still giving its performance under Farrell Sarborn's supervision,

Over by the farther French window was Bart Melken. The young man who served The Jackdaw was still fidgeting with his cigarette lighter. He flipped it; the flame appeared, and went out an instant later, as Melken dropped the cap upon it. Then, with twitching lips, Melken suddenly moved away to the shelter of the wall.

There was a moment's pause. One of the French doors seemed to tremble. It hesitated. The macaw, its eyes staring across the room, uttered a shrill and unexpected cry.

"Robbers!" shrieked the bird. "Robbers!"

Some of Winchendon's guests began to laugh. They stopped short as they saw Farrell Sarborn's startled face. The man who owned the macaw was staring in the same direction as the bird. His lips seemed to phrase a silent warning; his arms suddenly spread.

People turned toward the outer side of the room. At that instant, the French doors crashed. In from the outer darkness sprang Bing Claver, two mobsters at his heels. All wore caps and handkerchiefs over their eyes.

"Up with your dukes!" came Bing Claver's shout.

Guests obeyed spontaneously. The flash of revolvers dimmed the shine of jewels. This entire throng was at the mercy of the invaders from the underworld. The Jackdaw's minions had arrived tonight. Unaccompanied by their chief, they were springing a massed attack.

Bing Claver advanced. His gun arm lowered. The presence of two henchmen at his heels was sufficient. As he gestured with his revolver, guests backed up against the wall. Women were too frightened to scream.

Bing Claver sneered. He had nearly reached the center of the clearing room. A straight path lay between the curtained doorway and the French windows, where two mobsters stood in readiness. Bing was midway on that path. Not one of the helpless guests intervened.

THE CRIME CLINIC

As his eyes swept around the room, Bing stopped and stared at the farther curtain. He saw it tremble. Up came his revolver.

The motion was too late. A terrific roar re-echoed from the curtain. Bing Claver staggered and sprawled headlong.

THE SHADOW'S shot had been delivered with a purpose. The Shadow had foreseen the way that Bing would work. He had waited until the room had cleared. He had fired at Bing in action. His deed had attracted the attention of the gangsters by the windows.

Up came their revolvers. While they were rising, The Shadow's automatics spoke again. Two massive weapons, looming through the curtains, unloosed a burst of lead. One gangster tumbled into the living room. The other, screaming, staggered to the veranda.

The other pair of French windows burst inward. With the crash of glass came the roar of The Shadow's weapons. The guests were dropping for cover as revolvers were firing back their answer to The Shadow's message. Hasty mobsmen, behind their fellows, were shooting wildly at the only targets they could see – bursting shafts of flame from the curtains.

Bullets zimmed against the walls, all close by the doorway. One whistled through the upper section of the curtain; The Shadow's guns were roaring from a point lower down. The Shadow was attracting fire as well as giving it. The guests were safe throughout this conflict.

Five mobsmen had fallen in the skirmish, Bing Claver in that number. The Shadow, his form vague behind the curtain, had given the leaden hail to the ones in advance. Now, overwhelmed by the onslaught, the others of the tribe were leaping away for safety. The French windows were cleared quickly of mobsmen.

While guests were trembling, Farrell Sarborn jumped into action. He dashed to the nearest window and grabbed a gun that was lying on the floor. He fired a deluge of shots wildly in the air. Other emboldened guests joined him. At the same time, shots barked from the little window of the hallway.

Then came volleys from the lawn. Shouts arose; the sounds of a fierce conflict were breaking loose. Guests staggered in from the doors, wondering what new danger had arisen.

The sounds of police whistles gave the answer. Joe Cardona and his detectives had arrived.

Farrell Sarborn, striding back across the room, stopped short as he saw Bing Claver rising to his knees. The gang leader, critically wounded, was uttering oaths as he reached for his revolver, which had fallen beneath his body.

Sarborn held an empty gun – one that he had plucked from a dead gangster. He flung it at Bing's head and missed. Bing did not see the weapon. He was swinging his revolver, ready to shoot anyone. Sarborn leaped for the chair where the macaw was perched. He sent the scarlet bird flapping wildly as he used the chair as a club to meet Bing Claver.

A shot came from beyond the curtain. Bing's arm dropped. The gang leader wavered. That bullet marked his finish. As Bing was on the verge of toppling, the chair came hurtling from Sarborn's hands. It crashed against the gang leader's head and shoulders. Bing Claver collapsed upon the floor.

This was the dramatic finish to the wild invasion. It left Farrell Sarborn standing in the center of the room, with Bing Claver's inert form stretched at his feet. It brought all attention there for a long instant of suspense.

THE CRIME CLINIC

Then came a shout from the French windows. Into the living room entered a swarthy man, his coat thrown back to show his badge, his right hand gripping a smoking revolver. Detective Joe Cardona had arrived with his squad of underlings.

ORDER returned where chaos had held sway. Guests began to congratulate each other. Farrell Sarborn, because of his timely actions, was surrounded by a handshaking throng. Among them was Lamont Cranston. The millionaire, calmer even than Sarborn, was convincing in his congratulations.

The detectives had wiped out the fleeing mobsters. One dick was wounded; none of the others had been touched. The remnants of Bing Claver's gang had rushed directly into the arms of the men who represented the law.

Calming guests began to tell their stories. All, apparently, had been in the living room when the attack had occurred. All recalled that shots had come from beyond the curtain. Recollections were vague; the sight of falling mobsters had attracted most attention. No one seemed to have any idea of how the counterattack had been launched against the invading mobsters.

So far as Winchendon and his guests were concerned, the police could have the credit, along with the cool hands who had acted well – when Farrell Sarborn had shown the way.

But to Joe Cardona, as he viewed the dead and riddled body of Bing Claver, this affair was filled with mystery. The detective was convinced that Bing was the chief of The Jackdaw's minions; that the supercrook had ordered this attack.

The Jackdaw himself was missing, and so was the mysterious fighter who had driven back the evil horde. This, to Joe Cardona, was proof of a new and startling conflict that was in the making. He knew that another and more powerful hand had entered in the game.

He, Joe Cardona, was but an outsider in the clash. The Jackdaw – whoever he might be – was opposed by an enemy whose skill had proven greater than the crook's.

The fight lay between The Jackdaw and The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVI. CARDONA LEARNS

DAYS had passed since the affray at Silas Winchendon's. Newspapers and tabloids alike had told their tale of gangland's invasion of the four hundred. Sensational incidents had seized the news. Among them, the scarlet macaw's scream of "Robbers! Robbers!" had commanded interest.

Yet to Joe Cardona, ace detective, all angles of the case were trivial excepting one. Cardona knew what others did not know. Behind the frustrated assault at Winchendon's lay a menace that had not yet been uncovered: the menace of The Jackdaw.

Heralded as the ace who had brought destruction to hordes of the underworld, Cardona basked in a glory of publicity that offset his failure to uncover the murderer of Rutherford Casslin. Joe had met gangland's latest thrust. That fact had crowded out his previous failure.

Cardona knew, however, that the menace had not been ended. The most important enemy who had died at Winchendon's was Bing Claver. To all appearances, the ex-gorilla had been inspired to higher efforts in the field of crime – and had failed. Joe Cardona appreciated, nevertheless, that Bing had been nothing more than a mere underling.

THE CRIME CLINIC

The ace detective realized that a new combat was afoot. The Jackdaw would surely know that the police had not arrived in time to obstruct the mobsters whom he had launched on a drive of wholesale robbery. The Jackdaw, if he intended to persist with his baffling ways of crime, must manage to evade The Shadow.

Oddly, the defeat of The Jackdaw's gangsters had broken the chain which Cardona had been following. Bing Claver was dead. He, alone of the rowdies who had fallen, could have told Cardona facts that the ace detective wanted. Those of Bing's outfit who still lived, persistently stated that they were working for Bing. They denied all connection with any other master.

Had this defeat ended The Jackdaw's power? Had the unknown crook scampered for cover?

These were questions that Joe Cardona sought to answer; and he realized their importance. The hunch that Joe held was that the threat of The Jackdaw still remained.

IN studying past crimes which he attributed to The Jackdaw, Cardona saw that the crook was rising to his zenith. The theft of the Bishenpur diamond had been a master stroke of crime. The huge gem was still missing. The Jackdaw had simply failed to add to the collection of valuables of which the diamond was evidently intended as a nucleus.

Previous robberies, from The Jackdaw's former activities, totaled a large amount, as Cardona summed them up. Yet it was obvious that until now The Jackdaw had operated only in a small way. His murder of Rutherford Casslin appeared to be the beginning of a new and greater era in his mad career.

Stealth at Casslin's – a lone hand working startling crime. Violence at Winchendon's – a mob attack launched under a lieutenant's command. These events showed The Jackdaw's versatility. Gangless, he now had but two choices. One was to retire; the other was to resort to craft once more. Cardona decided that The Jackdaw would choose the latter course.

It was imperative that Joe should flag The Jackdaw. The detective was determined to end the crook's mad career; he wanted also to solve the murder of Rutherford Casslin and regain the Bishenpur diamond. But Joe found himself balked.

Limps Silvey had disappeared. Stools had thought that they had seen him once or twice. They had not managed to follow him. This brought Cardona back to a consideration of Doctor Lysander Dubrong. He decided to match wits with the physician.

Joe's first step was to visit the neighborhood of the East Side Clinic. He went there on a night when he had made certain that Dubrong was at his Park Avenue residence. He found that the house directly in back of the clinic was vacant.

On the second floor, Joe made a discovery. The floor here – so Joe figured – was lower than the ceiling of Dubrong's consulting room. The wall was crumbling. It offered opportunity. Joe put a competent man to work. A hole was drilled through to Dubrong's consulting room.

A perfect job, Joe was positive that the physician would not observe this well-made peephole. To make certain, the detective sent a stool pigeon into Dubrong's clinic. The stool got by with the visit. He reported to Cardona that the hole could not be seen.

It was then that Cardona decided to visit Doctor Dubrong and pave the way to the result he wanted. One evening found the detective at the large apartment house on Park Avenue where the physician lived. Cardona inquired for Dubrong. He was sent upstairs to the doctor's apartment.

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DUBRONG'S sumptuous abode proved a striking contrast to the plainness of his East Side Clinic. Joe Cardona was impressed by the extravagance of the furnishings. He knew that Dubrong was a wealthy man; but thick rugs, paneled walls, and magnificent furniture proved more than the detective had expected.

Dubrong received Cardona in his study. The suave physician seemed pleased to see the detective.

"Congratulations, Cardona!" he exclaimed. "Your handling of that affair at Winchendon's was excellent. How are you making out with the Casslin case?"

"No results," returned Cardona.

"Indeed." Dubrong's tone seemed disappointed. "I thought that you might have gained some results. Ah, well – I am afraid that you have let the bird escape. I am still convinced that the Hindu dropped the stolen diamond from the window."

"To another Hindu?"

"Of course. Cardona, I doubt that the Bishenpur diamond will ever be reclaimed."

"I'm not so sure of that." Cardona stared squarely at the physician. "I've learned something, Doctor Dubrong – something that may surprise you. There is a supercrook at work. These gangsters who were killed at Winchendon's were unquestionably in his employ."

"Ah! That is remarkable!"

"Besides that, I have a hunch that the same crook was in back of Casslin's murder."

"You do?" Dubrong arched his eyebrows. "Have you any idea as to his identity?"

"Not as yet. I have stool pigeons in the underworld. They have brought me unusual reports. They are talking about a crook whom they call The Jackdaw."

"A jewel thief?"

"Yes. Wherever gangsters meet, this talk of The Jackdaw has begun to buzz. Whenever a mob is wiped out – as we cleaned up Bing Claver's outfit – other gangsters begin to look into the matter. They want to know who the big shots are; they want to find out if there was any double-crossing."

"This case seemed to have them buffaloed, until – well, I received my first detailed report today – somebody wised up to a big boy in back of the jewel-stealing game. The Jackdaw – that's what they call him – and I'm going to find out who he is."

"Could I be of aid to you?"

"Yes," replied Cardona. "That is why I have come to see you. Did you ever have, among your patients at the clinic, a man called Limps Silvey?"

"Let me see," mused Dubrong. "The name sounds familiar. I should have to look him up in my records."

"Limps Silvey," declared Cardona, "had some minor connection with Bing Claver. In fact, by intercepting a message for Limps, I learned of the trouble impending at Winchendon's. There was only one unfortunate

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consequence. Limps disappeared after that."

"Naturally," laughed Dubrong.

"Hardly," returned Cardona. "After all, I had nothing on the fellow. I did not intend to arrest him. I expect him to be back in town."

"You will arrest him then?"

"No. I shall leave him entirely alone. I want to watch him; but I don't intend to put stools on the job. I am pretty sure, from what I have heard, that Limps Silvey was one of your patients. He is apt to show up at your clinic. If he does, you can aid me by questioning him."

"I am not a police official," protested Dubrong. "I am willing to give you advice – to tell you what I may chance to learn – but to aid in an arrest –"

"I am not asking you that."

"It would defeat the purpose of my clinic. You must understand that."

"Get me straight, doctor." Cardona's tone was earnest. "I don't want to arrest Limps Silvey. I give you my word that he will be entirely immune. The Jackdaw is the man that I am after. I think Limps may know who he is."

"Ah!" An idea came to Dubrong. "You want to use this Limps Silvey as a stool pigeon?"

"If I can get him. Fellows of his type are easily gained. Perhaps, through overtures on your part –"

"Leave that to me." Dubrong smiled wisely as he interrupted. "If this man Silvey was one of my patients – and I believe he was – he will come back. If he is afraid to show himself at the clinic, he may call up for advice. I have had men do that on various pretexts. I can let him come to my clinic, then, with a guaranty of no trouble for him?"

"No trouble."

"And if he appears to be worried, I can advise him to see you, promising him that he will be immune from arrest?"

"That's right."

"I shall bear this in mind, Cardona."

The detective smiled grimly as he left the physician's apartment. Cardona felt that he had scored a triumph. By dealing cagily with Dubrong, Cardona had paved a way to immediate results.

CARDONA was positive that Limps Silvey was hiding out somewhere in Manhattan. He was also sure that the cripple was connected with Dubrong. Cardona's subtle statement – purely fictitious – that the underworld was buzzing with talk of The Jackdaw, was calculated to arouse Dubrong's interest in what was happening in the bad lands.

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To cap this, Cardona had followed with talk of his policy concerning Limps Silvey. His statement that he wanted the cripple as a stool was the climax of the plan.

As matters now stood, Dubrong would consider it imperative for Limps to visit underworld hang-outs, to learn what was being said there. Moreover, it would be safe for Limps to visit Dubrong at any time.

Hunches were Joe Cardona's specialty. He had one now. He was positive that if he remained constantly at the peephole which he had prepared above Doctor Dubrong's consulting room, he would eventually overhear an interview between Limps Silvey and Dubrong. What was more, Cardona had another hunch that the meeting might take place this very night.

Accordingly, the sleuth made his plans. After an hour's stay at headquarters, he wended his way to the neighborhood of the East Side Clinic. Muffled, he entered the house in the cul-de-sac. He went upstairs and sprawled out, his head beside the peephole.

Two hours went by. Joe Cardona waited patiently. He was determined in his vigil. Then came a glimmer of light. Joe quickly raised his head and peered into the room below. It was empty. Joe wondered how the light had been turned on.

A door opened. It was the door of the closet. The detective realized that the light switch must have been sprung in there. Out from the closet stepped the figure of Limps Silvey.

Lysander Dubrong must be coming here. Joe Cardona stared, wondering when and how the physician would arrive. The shades of the consulting room were lowered. Limps Silvey was staring about him, grinning. Suddenly his expression seemed to change. He placed his cane beside the closed locker in the corner. Standing upright, he rubbed his hands across his face, then seized a towel and began to mop his countenance.

Joe Cardona suppressed a gasp as the man chanced to turn so that the light fully revealed his face. No longer a cripple, no longer a sordid denizen of the underworld. Out of that mopping was coming another face that Joe Cardona recognized.

Limps Silvey had needed no hide-out. Limps Silvey was a myth; a clever character created by a cunning brain. His make-up off, his real identity was revealed.

The man who had worn the disguise of Limps Silvey was Doctor Lysander Dubrong. The physician and his satellite were one and the same!

Clothes, cane, and make-up were going in the locker. The transformation was completed. Suave and debonair, a smile upon his thin lips, Doctor Dubrong strolled through the rear exit of his consulting room, turning out the light as he departed.

IN darkness, Joe Cardona smiled to himself. There was no need for action now. It was merely a case of waiting and watching. The scene had shifted from the East Side to Park Avenue. The job was to trail Doctor Dubrong himself.

Bing Claver had served The Jackdaw. Limps Silvey had been connected with Bing Claver. Limps Silvey, Joe had suspected, was working for Doctor Lysander Dubrong. The subtlety of it all now came to the detective.

The Jackdaw's mob was wiped out. The Jackdaw's next action, so Joe had believed, could be traced only through Limps Silvey, for the detective had considered Doctor Dubrong was too wise to offer a trail of his own.

But now, as matters stood, Dubrong had become the single bet. Joe Cardona's task was simplified. Once more, the detective had a hunch – one that he regarded as a surety.

Traveling the underworld as Limps Silvey, Doctor Dubrong had tonight learned that The Jackdaw rumors were lacking. That would give him confidence. Another thrust would soon be delivered by The Jackdaw. Once again, Joe Cardona would be present.

The detective intended, from now on, to keep close tabs on Doctor Lysander Dubrong, the man who played the part of his own accomplice!

CHAPTER XVII. THE NEXT NIGHT

ON the evening following Joe Cardona's detection of the double part played by Lysander Dubrong, Farrell Sarborn was seated in his apartment, reading the afternoon newspaper. It was early; Sarborn had just dined.

Someone rang the outside bell. Sarborn motioned his servant Jalon to answer it. The greasy-faced fellow talked through the little telephone that connected with the lobby.

"It is Mr. Melken," he reported to his master.

"Tell him to come up," ordered Sarborn.

A few minutes later, Bart Melken arrived. He shook hands with his friend, then sprawled himself in a large chair and stared unsteadily. Sarborn did not seem to notice Melken's uneasiness.

"I see," remarked Sarborn, tapping the newspaper, "that your prospective father-in-law has returned to New York."

"Yes," blurted Melken. "Garforth Lydell is back."

"You don't appear to be pleased about it," decided Sarborn, looking at his friend. "What's the matter, Bart? You look pale tonight."

"I don't feel well."

"Talk to the macaw," laughed Sarborn. He arose and opened the door of the next room. "Maybe he can cheer you up."

He brought out the scarlet bird and perched it on the back of the chair. The macaw ruffled its throat, but made no utterance. It looked about wisely.

"Don't be trivial, Farrell," pleaded Melken. "I've got to go up to Lydell's house. I promised Yvonne I'd be there tonight. I don't want to go."

"Why not? Has all this publicity about old Lydell's big banking deals given you stage fright?"

"I'm worried, Farrell –"

Melken's pleading tones ended as the bell rang. Sarborn, on his feet, answered the summons himself. He spoke in a pleased manner, clicked the button to let the visitor enter, and turned to Melken.

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"Lamont Cranston," said Sarborn. "He dropped up here twice. I thought he might be in tonight. A wonderful chap – and very interesting."

"He was dumb enough out at Winchendon's," retorted Melken. "As near as I can figure it, no one ever found out just which sofa he dived behind when the mob came in."

"You weren't so brisk yourself," returned Sarborn. "I didn't do much, either, until somebody plugged a few of those rowdies. Cranston is a retiring sort of a chap, but he's had plenty of adventures. Even at that, with all his travels, he was quite impressed with my small collection of eggs."

Sarborn opened the door. A few moments later, Cranston appeared within the room. He shook hands with Sarborn and Melken.

"We have a visitor, I see," remarked Cranston, indicating the macaw.

Sarborn nodded as he picked up the bird and took it into the other room. Cranston followed him. Sarborn put the macaw on the window perch. Cranston had stopped beside the box which contained the little monkey.

"Cute fellow," he remarked. "Can I look at him?"

"Certainly," returned Sarborn.

Cranston brought the sapajou from its crate. He carried the monkey in his arms as he strolled toward the window. The little creature was staring all about it. Cranston made a movement with his gold watch chain. The monkey seized it.

BEFORE Cranston could grab the sapajou, it leaped from his arms and tried to pull away the watch chain. Cranston broke the beast's hold; the sapajou jumped up the side of the wall toward the macaw's perch. Sarborn grabbed it.

"If those two get together," he exclaimed, "there'll be a battle. This little beast is a nuisance. Cute, but troublesome. I'm going to get rid of him."

He dropped the monkey back into its box. Cranston lighted a cigarette. His gaze fell admiringly upon the glass case, with its collection of eggs. Chancing to look back toward the macaw, he observed that the bird was fluttering furiously. Sarborn noted it also. He took the scarlet bird from its perch.

"You wouldn't think a macaw had nerves," he laughed, "but I believe this one has. It was scared when the monkey came after it. I'll take it out into the other room with us."

Cranston preceded Sarborn into the living room. Sarborn closed the door of the room where he kept his pets. He perched the macaw on the back of a chair. He picked up the newspaper that he had been reading, and placed it on a table.

Lamont Cranston's keen eyes observed a one-column portrait that adorned the page. It was a photograph of Garforth Lydell, who had just returned to New York. Headlines spoke of large banking transactions which would proceed now that Lydell had come back to the city.

Cranston chatted a while with Sarborn and Melken. He arranged a later appointment with Sarborn, on some evening when they could study a series of remarkable photographs of India, which Cranston had brought back with him. Mentioning that he was going to the Cobalt Club, Cranston added:

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"If you intend to be about after midnight, Sarborn, perhaps we can get together then. I intend to call my home from the club. I can instruct Stanley, my chauffeur, to bring in the photographs. It is possible that I might be able to drop in here prior to midnight."

"Very well," agreed Sarborn. "I intend to be about. I shall expect to hear from you later tonight."

Sarborn walked to the elevator with his guest. He came back to his apartment while the automatic lift was descending. He found Bart Melken pacing nervously.

"What's the matter, Bart?" inquired Sarborn.

"I'm worrying about tonight," confessed Melken. "I'm going up to Lydell's – and I'm afraid of the consequences."

"What consequences?"

Melken gulped at Sarborn's question. He faced the other man squarely.

"Suppose, Farrell," he said, "that I should tell you something startling – almost incriminating –"

"Regarding whom?"

"I don't know. Except that it concerns me. Would you preserve silence regarding the matter?"

"Certainly," returned Sarborn, "if it would prove of any aid to you, Bart."

"All right." Melken was pondering. He was trying to veil the truth, yet tell enough to convey the situation to Sarborn. "I'll talk to you, Farrell. It's about a telephone call that I received this afternoon."

"Where?"

"At my hotel."

"From whom?"

"I don't know."

Sarborn smiled. He was scratching the macaw's head. He shrugged his shoulders in deprecatory fashion.

"Anonymous messages," he declared, "should never be taken seriously."

"But this one" – Melken caught himself. He had been about to say that it was not the first – "this one was serious, Farrell. It was from – well, from a man who means business."

"Sit down," urged Sarborn. "Light a cigarette, calm yourself, and talk to me. Something is worrying you, that's certain. Let's get at the root of it."

As though to insure privacy, Farrell Sarborn went to the hall door and opened it. He glanced along the corridor. He saw no one. He closed the door and returned.

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IT was then that a figure appeared in the hallway. From the gloom at the head of a flight of stairs, the form of The Shadow appeared. Evidently the black-garbed investigator had been expecting some action such as this. He knew now that the door would not be reopened immediately. He glided along the hall.

Stopped by the door, The Shadow drew a disk-like object from his pocket and placed it firmly against the door. Two tubes projected from the plate, like the connections of a stethoscope. These passed beneath the slouch hat which The Shadow wore. Equipped with this device that magnified sound, The Shadow could overhear the conversation within Sarborn's apartment.

Beyond the door, Bart Melken was starting the plea that he had promised. He was telling Farrell Sarborn the burdens that were on his mind.

"A phone call this afternoon," he declared. "It came from – from someone who called himself The Jackdaw. He – he threatened me unless I promised to do his bidding."

"Threatened you with what?"

"With death, if necessary. Specifically, though, he threatened to load me with false accusations – to name me as responsible, in part, for certain crimes."

"Which were?"

"The murder of Rutherford Casslin and the attempted raid at Silas Winchendon's home."

"You should not worry about such futile threats."

"They are serious, Farrell. Do you remember that mob leader who was killed at Winchendon's? Well, I knew him – I met him some time ago, when I was in what looked like a jam. Bing Claver helped me out of it.

"Since then – well, crimes have hit at places where I have been. I have been afraid that I would be implicated" – Melken paused – "falsely implicated."

As he made the hasty addition, Melken looked hastily at Sarborn to see if his friend had noted it. Sarborn's expression was entirely sympathetic. Melken was encouraged.

"I had feared," he said, "that I might some day be called upon to commit crime. After Bing was killed, I thought that I might be safe. I knew that Bing served a big shot whom he called The Jackdaw. I heard from the man himself today."

"What did he demand?"

"Cooperation in a crime."

"When?"

"Tonight."

"Where?"

"At Lydell's."

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"You mean he wants you to aid him there?"

"Yes. To rob Lydell."

"To rob Lydell!"

As he made this exclamation, Farrell Sarborn showed intense surprise. He ceased scratching the macaw's head. A puzzled look came upon his face as he stared at Melken.

"You read the newspaper," declared Melken soberly.

"About Lydell?"

"Yes. That he has arranged banking negotiations."

"What has that to do with robbery?"

"Plenty. Lydell arrived in town today. This is a Saturday; tomorrow is Sunday; Monday happens to be a holiday. Yet a large banking transaction has been promised – immediately."

"Yes, I read that."

"Garforth Lydell's methods are well known. He works quickly and effectively. It is obvious to anyone who understands his ways that Lydell must have hundreds of thousands of dollars in negotiable securities tucked away in his vault at home. That is where he does business. He will probably talk with bankers between now and Tuesday."

"And you think The Jackdaw knows?"

"The Jackdaw does know. That is where I figure. I am to open the door of Lydell's vault, so that The Jackdaw may enter."

Farrell Sarborn stared in astonishment. Bart Melken hastened with a specific explanation.

"THERE are two doors to the vault room," he said. "One opens into Lydell's library, the other, into a disused hallway. The Jackdaw's orders are that I shall open the door from the library; in the vault room, I can unbar the other door, which is kept barred on the inside."

"It should be simple for me to do this. Lydell keeps his keys in his desk. I may be able to obtain them. Once I have opened the door from the library, I can unbar the other door, then go out the way I came, and lock the library door behind me. That will leave the opening that The Jackdaw wants. He will have all the time in the world to crack the vault. It is an old contrivance with steel doors guarding its room; Lydell considers it sufficiently protected, however."

"Suppose," said Sarborn reflectively, "that you should pretend inability to go through with this?"

"It would not suffice," responded Melken. "The Jackdaw will not take excuses."

Nervously, the young man glanced at his watch. He shook his head as he noted the hour.

"I'm due there now, Farrell!" he exclaimed. "Due there at once! I've got to go through with this job."

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"Stay here —"

"I can't!" Melken's tone was excited. "I've told you this, Farrell, so you can help me later. When this job is done, I'll be free of The Jackdaw. He told me so, today, when he talked to me over the telephone. I'm going through with it, Farrell. I only want to know that I can count on you if trouble comes. I want to come back here when this is finished."

"Take me along with you," Sarborn asked, pleadingly.

"Impossible! Yvonne and her father expect me alone. I must manage to deceive them. I'll be away before the loss is discovered. After that, I can talk about an alibi —"

Melken was turning toward the door. Sarborn threw out an arm to restrain him. The delay was only momentary, but in that interval, The Shadow, beyond the barrier, glided away, the listening disk clutched in his black-gloved hand.

When Bart Melken broke free from Farrell Sarborn in the hallway, The Shadow was no longer in sight. He was watching, though, from the stairway. He saw Melken stride toward the elevator. Farrell Sarborn, shaking his head solemnly, stepped back into the apartment.

THE elevator door opened; Melken entered, closed the door, and descended. The Shadow crept forward. At the door of the apartment, he again employed his sound-detecting disk.

Within the apartment, Farrell Sarborn had lighted a cigarette. He was pacing slowly back and forth. He glanced at his watch, then called his servant, Jalon.

"Bring my hat and coat," he ordered. "I am going out."

While the servant followed the command, Sarborn opened a table drawer. From it, he brought forth a loaded revolver, which he dropped in his side pocket. Jalon returned with the outer garments. Sarborn donned hat and overcoat.

"If anyone calls," he said to Jalon; "tell them that I am busy. You understand? Do not let them come up here" – he paused – "unless Mr. Cranston should call. I do not expect him, however, until nearly midnight. You can admit Mr. Cranston – no one else, however."

Jalon grunted his understanding of the instructions. Farrell Sarborn strode to the door. Simultaneously, The Shadow glided away from his listening post.

When Farrell Sarborn strode out into the hallway, The Shadow was already on the stairs. His tall form was descending; he would arrive at the bottom by the time Sarborn had reached the first floor in the elevator.

The Shadow had divined Farrell Sarborn's destination. Sarborn, like Melken, had chosen one definite place: the home of Garforth Lydell. Sarborn had realized, more fully than Melken had supposed, the power which The Jackdaw wielded over his friend.

Sarborn had openly accompanied Melken to Winchendon's; that had been when Melken had volunteered no specific facts. Now, with Melken's fullest fears asserted, Sarborn was secretly on his way to join the young man at Garforth Lydell's.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE INTERLUDE

WHEN Farrell Sarborn strode from the elevator, the eyes of The Shadow were upon him. Sequestered in the darkness of the stairway, the keen-visioned observer watched Bart Melken's friend make his departure.

The Shadow made no motion for a short while. Then, like a spectral shape, he glided forth from his spot of hiding, and moved easily toward the door. His form seemed to shroud the light; it cast a long splotch through the narrow glass panels, upon the tiled floor of the lobby.

The Shadow's gloved hand rested on the knob of the door. It paused there as the outer door swung open, and a man entered the lobby. In the dim light, The Shadow recognized the new arrival. It was Doctor Lysander Dubrong.

The physician's face seemed sallow in the yellow light. Dubrong was wearing a serious, worried expression. His suave smile was absent. The Shadow watched him run his finger along the line of push buttons to the one which The Shadow knew belonged to Farrell Sarborn.

Dubrong was holding the little receiver to his ear. His eyes were upon the mouthpiece by the name board.

The Shadow was not only observant, his keen ears could hear the conversation which Dubrong was conducting with Jalon, in the apartment above.

"Hello... Mr. Sarborn..." Dubrong paused. "I want to talk with Mr. Sarborn... What's that? Who am I?... Let me talk to Mr. Sarborn... What? Am I Mr. Cranston?" The flicker of the suave smile returned to Dubrong's thin lips. "Yes... I am Mr. Cranston... I must see Mr. Sarborn..."

The Shadow sidled into darkness as the door began to click. Dubrong with surprising agility, leaped from the name board and pushed open the door. He strode directly past the spot where The Shadow was standing. The door came directly in front of the black-cloaked watcher.

While the door was closing, The Shadow spied a new entrant into the lobby. A squatly man had arrived there just as Dubrong sprang past the door. The way was blocked to him.

The Shadow, peering from the edge of the door, again recognized a face. This man was a second-class detective from headquarters; he had evidently been detailed to watch the movements of Doctor Dubrong.

The dick looked at the name board. He saw the pressed button, with the name of Farrell Sarborn. He paused for a few moments, then turned and hurried from the lobby. A soft laugh came from The Shadow. He knew that the trailer was hastening to report to Joe Cardona.

DUBRON had gone above, using the elevator which was waiting when he entered. The Shadow followed on his trail, using the stairway. As he neared the top, he heard the sound of excited voices. Doctor Dubrong was arguing with Jalon.

"Get out of my way!" ordered the physician. "I want to see your master – not you."

"He is not here," returned Jalon, blocking the door to the apartment.

"Where is Bart Melken?" demanded Dubrong.

"He is not here," retorted Jalon.

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"He came here – from his hotel," was Dubrong's savage response. "I learned that when I called there. Where is he?"

"He has left."

"I'm going to find out – from your master."

"He has left, also."

Dubrong shot a vicious punch into the servant's body. As Jalon doubled up, The Shadow saw Dubrong stride past his blocker. He could hear angry shouts as Jalon followed. The two men came staggering forth, locked in a furious grasp.

It appeared an unequal struggle, the frail physician against the squatly, thick-formed South American servant. Dubrong, however, showed marked skill in combat. He twisted free, delivered another punch, and sent the squatly man staggering. He headed for the elevator this time. He had evidently assured himself that neither Sarborn nor Melken was in the apartment.

Jalon, however, was not satisfied. Like a tiger, the servant sprang after the departing physician. A knife blade flashed as Jalon leaped toward the open door of the elevator.

The Shadow sprang suddenly forth from his spot of obscurity. Dubrong did not see him; the physician was in the elevator. Jalon did not see him; the servant was intent upon stopping Dubrong.

As The Shadow made his swift approach, a shot resounded. It came from the elevator. Jalon, already pounding into the car to grapple with the man who appeared an enemy to his master, collapsed with suddenness.

Dubrong must have pulled a revolver and delivered a quick but certain shot. The elevator door clanged shut. The car began its descent as The Shadow reached the closed door.

Doctor Dubrong was making a get away. His shot had mortally wounded Farrell Sarborn's servant. There was no need for The Shadow's presence here. Swiftly, the black-clad intervener swung toward the stairway.

The elevator stopped at the ground floor before The Shadow had sufficient time to make the descent. Its door slid open, and Doctor Dubrong leaped forth with the wild fury of a madman. He dashed from the apartment building, pocketing his revolver as he ran. He had used the weapon that he had shown Joe Cardona, that day in the consulting room at the clinic.

A MOTOR sounded as The Shadow arrived at the bottom of the stairs. When the tall pursuer had reached the street, the tail light of Dubrong's car was rounding the corner. The Shadow paused just beyond the sphere of light outside of the apartment. He turned quickly as he sidled back into darkness.

A stocky man was striding up the street. It was Joe Cardona.

Whatever thought The Shadow might have held regarding a pursuit of Doctor Dubrong was ended at the sight of the detective. As Cardona entered the lobby, The Shadow moved across the street to the side of a parked coupe. There, he flung his cloak and hat into the car. Visible now, he returned, a figure in evening clothes. His face came into light as he opened the outer door of the lobby. The Shadow bore the features of Lamont Cranston.

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Joe Cardona, studying the name plates on the board, swung around as Cranston entered. The detective recognized the arrival. Not only did he remember Cranston, from the affray at Winchendon's, he knew also that the millionaire was a friend of the police commissioner's.

"Mr. Cranston!" exclaimed the detective. "How do you happen to be here?"

"Dropping in to see a friend of mine," remarked Cranston quietly. "Farrell Sarborn – perhaps you remember him at Winchendon's. He was the man who owned the macaw."

"Say!" Cardona pointed to the name on the board. "That's the place I'm going, too. I want to find doc – a fellow who came here to Sarborn's place for no good reason. I don't want to ring Sarborn's bell. Do you know anyone else here?"

Cranston shook his head. Cardona seemed perplexed. The millionaire made a slight smile.

"Why not," he suggested, "break the glass panel in the door?"

"I couldn't wedge through there," returned Cardona.

"You could reach in and turn the knob," remarked Cranston.

Joe Cardona grunted. The plan was simple enough. The detective pulled a revolver from his pocket, and delivered a stroke with the butt. He shattered the glass, reached through, and turned the knob.

"Coming up?" he questioned.

"Very well," returned Cranston.

WHEN the pair stepped from the elevator on the third floor, Cardona uttered a surprised exclamation. Bathed in light from the doorway of Sarborn's apartment lay the dead form of Jalon, the servant. The man had managed to crawl that far before he died.

Joe gripped his revolver. He heard Lamont Cranston remark that the dead man was Sarborn's servant. Joe nodded and motioned to Cranston to accompany him. They entered the apartment. They saw at once that the place was empty.

"I know the man who got this fellow!" exclaimed Cardona. "I'll tell you who it was. Doctor Lysander Dubrong – the man who has the East Side Clinic. He came up here ten minutes ago."

"Doctor Dubrong!" uttered Cranston, in a tone of incredulity. "That must be impossible! He is a man of high reputation."

"I know him for what he is," growled Cardona. "The question now is where he's gone. He's made a get-away."

"Maybe the macaw knows," suggested Cranston.

"The macaw?" asked Cardona.

"Yes," returned Cranston, "the scarlet bird, there on the chair."

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Cardona stared at the macaw. The bird was perched as calmly as ever, the only challenge in its bearing being the motion of its beak.

"At Winchendon's," remarked Cranston, "the macaw had a remarkable ability to utter names that it had heard. Perhaps Sarborn, before he left, stated where he was going. Perhaps Dubrong has followed him there."

"How do you make the bird talk?" asked Cardona.

Cranston was lighting a cigarette. Holding it between his lips, he approached and scratched the macaw's head. The bird ruffed its throat feathers and wagged its beak. Suddenly, its shrill cry sounded.

"Lydell!" screamed the macaw. "Lydell! Lydell!"

Cranston removed the cigarette from his lips as he stepped away from the chair.

"That sounded plain enough," he told Cardona. "It was a name, all right."

"Lydell," repeated Cardona.

"Lydell!" shrilled the scarlet macaw.

Cranston had spied the newspaper on the table. He picked it up and pointed to the news paragraph beside the picture.

"Look at that," he said.

"Garforth Lydell!" exclaimed Cardona. "Say" – he was reading the paragraph – "he lives less than a dozen blocks from here. That's where I'm going – to Lydell's."

Cardona leaped to the telephone. He turned to Cranston before raising the receiver.

"I'm calling police headquarters before I start," he informed the millionaire. "I don't want to lose any time. I've got a man outside, Mr. Cranston. Detective Sergeant Markham. You'll do me a favor if you'll go down and tell him to come up. I'm hopping for Lydell's. You can stay here –"

Cranston was nodding as Cardona spoke. With no further delay, the millionaire turned and strode from the apartment. He took the elevator to the ground floor. At the outer door, he stood and made a beckoning gesture with his arms. Detective Sergeant Markham came hurrying from a car parked down the street. Like Cardona, Markham also remembered Lamont Cranston.

"Cardona wants you up at Sarborn's apartment," informed Cranston. "Right away, Markham. Third floor. Tell him I shall return here shortly. I have an appointment at the Cobalt Club which I must keep."

Markham nodded. There was no mention of murder up above. He went into the apartment building as Cranston departed. Markham saw no reason why the millionaire should remain.

Cranston reached his coupe. There, he quickly donned his masking cloak and hat. It was The Shadow who drove away from the front of the apartment house. His hands, as they were manipulating the wheel, were drawing on their black gloves.

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Bart Melken had gone to Garforth Lydell's. Farrell Sarborn had followed him. Doctor Lysander Dubrong had taken up the trail. Detective Joe Cardona was on his way. Besides these, there was another who would arrive before Cardona.

The Shadow, too, was traveling to the focal point where crime was due to strike. The Shadow's laugh was echoing as the coupe turned uptown at the nearest avenue.

Tonight, The Shadow would meet The Jackdaw. The elusive bird of crime would come face to face with the avenger who had crossed his path before. The Shadow knew.

He was out to snare The Jackdaw in the act of crime.

CHAPTER XIX. THE JACKDAW ARRIVES

GARFORTH LYDELL'S home was an old-fashioned brownstone mansion in the Nineties. The house had a central hall; on the right, as one entered, was a living room. Connected to it was a smaller room, Garforth Lydell's study.

On the left of the hallway lay the library. At the rear of this room was a steel door that led to the vault. An old pantry had been transformed into the vault room, and its other side was blocked with another door of steel. This second door was the one which was permanently barred on the inside.

Two men were seated in the study, the room most remote from the vault.

One was Bart Melken; the other was Garforth Lydell himself. The banker was a man of fifty years. His iron-gray hair alone betrayed his age. Physically, he was in the pink of condition.

Bart Melken, nervous and pale-faced, seemed a weakling compared to his intended father-in-law. Garforth Lydell, although not a large man, showed action and power in every mood or gesture.

The two were talking about Lydell's trip. Melken was questioning Lydell about conditions in Florida. The banker made an open-handed gesture.

"Don't ask me about Florida," he said. "I was only there part of the time that I was away."

"Where else were you?" queried Melken in surprise.

"Cuba," returned Lydell. "The Bahamas. Even Puerto Rico."

"On business?"

"Pleasure. I was incognito." Lydell smiled. "In fact, I came north – well, let us say a few days ago – in order to attend to a few matters here. I didn't want to appear in New York as returned from Florida until I was ready to swing the big deal that I intend to handle over the week-end."

"It involves a large sum?"

"Millions, Bart. Actual securities will be handled to the extent of half a million. They are in my vault – here at the house."

"Do you think they are safe in your vault?"

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"Perfectly. I would trust them there even if they were my own. It happens, however, that they belong to other people."

"You are responsible for them, though."

"Yes, in a sense. I should not like to have them stolen. Nevertheless, they were fairly thrust upon me. I am keeping them at the risk of the owners."

"That seems unbelievable."

"Not in the affairs of the large corporations involved. To them, securities – to a certain amount of course – are merely certificates. It is surprising how lax some people are about handling them."

"Tonight, Bart" – Lydell was chuckling as he spoke – "I could rob my own vault with one-hundred-per-cent profit. I mentioned that to Yvonne at dinner. She was horrified."

"Where is Yvonne?" asked Bart. "I expected to find her downstairs when I arrived."

"She had a slight headache," declared Garforth Lydell. "She told me to call her when you arrived. I forgot about it, when we began to talk together. I shall call her now."

The banker arose and clapped his prospective son-in-law on the shoulder. He seemed to have a fatherly interest in Bart Melken.

"You'll have to entertain yourself for fifteen or twenty minutes," said Lydell. "I'm going upstairs to unpack a trunk. After that, I'll call Yvonne. I think it is best not to disturb her for a little while."

Garforth Lydell was smiling as he left the study. Bart Melken stared after him. This was one of the first real talks he had ever had with Lydell. The banker had always been cordial, but rather formal in the past.

NOW, as Bart reviewed the year that he had been engaged to Yvonne, he could see that Lydell had been watching him more closely than he had supposed. It was just after his engagement to Yvonne, Bart recalled, that he had landed in the trouble that had caused him to appeal to Bing Claver.

Thus Bart's acquaintance with Garforth Lydell had begun almost simultaneously with his term of service to The Jackdaw. The coincidence was something that Bart had never appreciated before tonight. Strained and nervous, the young man began to wonder.

Bart's mind was in that hectic state where delusions come to prominence. Thoughts flashed through his brain – thoughts that were names. Garforth Lydell – Bing Claver – The Jackdaw – the last name kept thrumming through Bart's mental activities.

The Jackdaw!

That mysterious chieftain had imposed a special task for tonight. Bart was to pave the way for an impressive theft the stealing of half a million dollars in securities. Valuables in the custody of Garforth Lydell; securities which the banker had said were not his own.

Would it hurt Lydell if these were stolen? No – the banker had stated that the loss would not be his own. The thought was a salve to Bart Melken's conscience. Mechanically, he arose from the chair in which he was seated, and took the one beyond Garforth Lydell's desk. He opened the central drawer, finding it unlocked.

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Directly before his eyes, Bart Melken saw a key. He recognized it as the key that would unlock the door in the library; the steel door to the vault. Either chance or design had favored Bart tonight. Hastily, the young man removed the key.

There were no servants in the house. Two had been on duty while Yvonne had been living here alone, during her widowed father's absence. Garforth Lydell had had the key in his possession; he had left it in this drawer, apparently through force of habit or perhaps forgetfulness.

Alone, on the ground floor of the house, Bart Melken had the opportunity he wished. It was his chance to clear the way for The Jackdaw's final haul, to relieve himself of servitude to the clever supercrook.

Key in hand, Bart Melken hurried from the study. He went across the hall, after passing through the living room. He paused momentarily at the foot of the stairs. There was no sound from above. Garforth Lydell might just as well be outside the house as here.

Bart Melken entered the library. He stopped there for a moment. As he did, a pair of eyes were focused upon him from the window. A face showed there, against the pane. Bart Melken did not see it. He would have recognized it if he had. It was the face of his friend, Farrell Sarborn.

Bart reached the steel door. He unlocked it with a trembling hand. As he did, an action occurred far behind him – at the front door of the house. That portal opened; into the hallway stepped a slender, skulking figure – Doctor Lysander Dubrong.

The physician advanced to the doorway of the library. Peering craftily, he saw Bart Melken unlocking the steel door. A suave smile registered itself upon the doctor's lips. Dubrong moved back to the front door, and slipped out into the darkness.

Farrell Sarborn's face was no longer at the side window. It had disappeared when Melken had approached the steel door. Thus neither Sarborn nor Dubrong had seen the other.

The steel door was open. Stepping down two paces, Bart Melken found himself beside the disused door that was barred on the inside. The bar grated as Bart manipulated it. It came clear. The door was free upon its hinges.

The way was open to The Jackdaw.

BART backed toward the library. He stood there trembling, ready to depart. As he turned, the sound of a footfall frightened him. He swung to face the last person whom he had expected to encounter: Yvonne Lydell.

"Bart!" The girl's word was a low and startled whisper. "Bart!"

Melken stood aghast.

"What are you doing?" Yvonne's question was breathless. "What are you doing – here in the vault?"

"It's all right, Yvonne!" Bart's words were husky. "You – you must not say anything. You – your father is –"

"Bart!" gasped Yvonne. The girl's eyes were wide. "Bart! You have opened the other door –"

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The sentence ended. Yvonne was staring beyond her fiance. Instinctively, Bart Melken turned in that direction. He saw the cause of Yvonne Lydell's horror.

The farther door had opened. Its grating hinges had attracted the girl's notice. Framed in the doorway stood a man, his face obscured by a mask. In his hand, he clutched a shining revolver.

Yvonne Lydell was speechless. She did not know the might of this arrival. Bart Melken, too, found his throat dry and incapable of utterance.

For the first time, The Jackdaw's minion was face to face with his crime-dealing chief.

The Jackdaw had arrived!

CHAPTER XX. THE SHADOW'S TASK

THE JACKDAW swung his revolver toward the man and the girl at the library door. His gesture was a potent threat. Bart Melken backed away. Yvonne Lydell, however, retained her ground. She did not fear the menace of this masked intruder.

"Yvonne!" Bart Melken gasped the girl's name. "Yvonne! Be quiet!"

The urgent words – a recognition of The Jackdaw's cold-blooded deeds – worked opposite to Melken's intention. The order for silence gave Yvonne the ray of hope that she desired. Wildly, the girl began to scream.

Bart Melken saw The Jackdaw's finger on the trigger. With the first display of courage that he had ever shown in his life, he flung himself into the path of fire. His hurtling body met The Jackdaw with full force. The two men struggled.

A burst of flame. Bart Melken staggered. His body began to sag. Yvonne, gaining action as well as words, was backing across the library. She realized that the shot had been meant for her.

As The Jackdaw's shot resounded, the unlatched front door burst open, and a stocky man dashed across the hallway to the library. The detective had heard the shot. He saw the girl. He did not look toward the windows at the side, where one was slightly open. He thought only of the menace that must lie ahead.

Drawing his revolver, Cardona flung the girl aside and stopped short at the door. His gun hand was but half raised. Before him, he saw the glistening muzzle of the revolver that The Jackdaw held.

Joe Cardona was face to face with death. He half dropped to the floor, swinging his revolver upward in a futile gesture.

Then came the second shot in this strange conflict. It came from the spot where it might be least expected. A terrific roar sounded from the partly opened window of the library. It was the cannonade of a huge automatic, that an unseen hand had thrust through the opening.

The Jackdaw saw that shot. He saw the eyes above the gun that fired it – the burning eyes of The Shadow. The black-clad warrior was framed within the window, his outline a shady shape, his black-gloved hand thrust free.

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The Shadow's bullet found its mark in The Jackdaw's shoulder. The crook's trigger finger made a clutch. The revolver fired a futile, hopeless shot. The Jackdaw's arm was sagging as his hand tried to retain its aim.

IN quick staccato came the third shot of the fray. Joe Cardona's gun had reached the level. The detective, last to fire, was the only one to repeat. Again and again he delivered bullets into The Jackdaw's crumpling frame. The crook's body sprawled riddled on the floor. The Jackdaw's pouring blood mingled with that of his fellow henchman, Bart Melken.

Cardona had killed The Jackdaw – but he had gained the opportunity only through The Shadow's intervention. Joe had not seen the mysterious fighter fire. He had merely followed the opportunity that had arrived.

It was The Shadow's shot, however, that had done the work. But for it, Joe Cardona would have been slaughtered in his tracks.

The detective stood motionless. Before he could advance, Yvonne Lydell had sprung past him. The girl was kneeling by the bodies on the floor, neglectful of the blood that spread upon the floor. It was not Bart Melken's form that she sought. Her hands were upon the shoulders of The Jackdaw.

"Father!" she moaned. "I feared this! Oh, father, I should have known tonight – when you told me – told me that you could rob yourself –"

"Your father?" The question came from Joe Cardona. The detective was stepping forward.

"My father," gasped Yvonne. "My father – Garforth Lydell!"

Joe Cardona shook his head.

"You're wrong, lady," he declared. "I'll tell you who this man is." He reached down and seized the mask that The Jackdaw wore. "This is Doctor Lysander Dubrong!"

As he spoke, Cardona plucked away the mask. His action turned The Jackdaw's head upon its side. Yvonne Lydell, staring, saw that the face was not that of her father. Joe Cardona, open-mouthed, saw that it was not Lysander Dubrong!

The face on the floor was the countenance of Farrell Sarborn. He – Farrell Sarborn – was The Jackdaw!

The echoes of a rising laugh crept through the library. A quick crescendo, those chilling tones ended in an abrupt pause, while whispered reverberations came in lulling gasps. This was The Shadow's pronouncement. He had not spoken the true name of The Jackdaw. But The Shadow knew the identity of the dead man on the floor.

Before Cardona could stare back toward the living room, a noise interrupted him from the open door through which The Jackdaw had come. A man was standing there, a man who had entered the hallway from an outside door. The newcomer was Doctor Lysander Dubrong.

A moment later, an excited voice sounded from the library. Turning in bewilderment, Joe Cardona found himself staring at Garforth Lydell. At sight of the banker, Yvonne leaped to her feet, and threw herself into her father's arms.

Then, while she sobbed, the girl turned and pointed to Bart Melken's dead form. In a choking voice, she uttered words of pity for the man who had saved her life.

"Poor Bart!" sobbed Yvonne. "Poor Bart!"

"Do not say that," came a dry-voiced tone. All turned to face Doctor Dubrong. "Say rather that Bart Melken at last deserves a word of praise. He has performed the only deed of courage in all his life."

As if in answer came a sighing whisper from the closing window of the library. The strange, vague sound was a laugh. Yet it carried no tone of mirth or mockery. It was, rather, a knell; a weird note that carried unworded corroboration of what Doctor Lysander Dubrong had said.

It was the parting token of The Shadow, the hidden fighter, who had brought an end to The Jackdaw, following Bart Melken's sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXI. THE JACKDAW'S NEST

A GROUP of men were assembled in Farrell Sarborn's apartment. Joe Cardona was there. With him had come Doctor Lysander Dubrong and Garforth Lydell. Lamont Cranston had just arrived; returning – as he said – from the Cobalt Club, he was surprised to find the trio that had arrived.

Besides these, another man had come upon the scene. Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had hurried hither in response to a call from Detective Joe Cardona.

The first man to speak was Garforth Lydell.

"Amazing!" exclaimed the banker. "To think that Bart Melken was working for this crook, who called himself the –"

"The Jackdaw," interposed Joe Cardona.

"The Jackdaw," repeated Lydell. "It was odd that my daughter should take seriously my statement that I could rob myself tonight. No wonder she thought that I lay dead and masked upon the floor of the vault!"

Joe Cardona turned to Doctor Dubrong.

"I owe you an apology," said the detective. "I suspected you –"

"No apology from you, Cardona," returned Dubrong dryly. "I am the one who must give an explanation. I must tell you why I played the part I did."

"I knew Bart Melken's father – who died years ago. Naturally, I took an interest in the young man without his knowledge. I saw, some months ago, that he was becoming restless. I also noticed that robberies had taken place where he had been."

"Through my East Side Clinic, I heard rumors of a high-class crook called The Jackdaw. To learn more, I adopted the mythical character of Limps Silvey. I toadied – in that disguise – to different gang leaders, and finally picked Bing Claver as the one who was in The Jackdaw's employ."

"Bing, like Bart, received his instructions by telephone. I had no direct fore-knowledge that Rutherford Casslin was to be murdered. The Jackdaw did that job alone. I thought that all was safe at the time I left

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Casslin's home.

"When I returned to the castle, I realized that Bart Melken was implicated in murder. I put forth the Hindu theory merely to protect him – my friend's son – while I could continue my efforts to track The Jackdaw.

"As Limps Silvey, I learned facts concerning Bing Claver's proposed attack at Winchendon's. I knew Cardona's stools were trailing me. I deliberately drew you, Cardona, on my track so that I could make that pretended telephone call. It was I who called you at the restaurant in Corona. I wanted you and your men to get to Winchendon's.

"Your tip-off came in time," acknowledged Cardona, as the physician paused. "It wasn't your fault that the road was blocked. You did your part – and fooled me into the bargain."

"I again adopted the guise of Limps Silvey," resumed Dubrong with a smile, "when you told me that there were rumors of The Jackdaw. I found out that your statement was incorrect. I began to watch Bart Melken. He seemed to be The Jackdaw's only aid.

"WHEN I read in the newspaper that Garforth Lydell had returned, I suddenly sensed where The Jackdaw might be planning to make a final stroke. I went to Melken's hotel. I learned that he had come here, to Sarborn's apartment. Both men were gone. Sarborn's servant tried to kill me. I killed him. I hurried to prevent crime at Lydell's.

"I went around the house; but I picked the wrong way. I was late arriving at the door to the hallway – too late to hurry in until you had slain The Jackdaw, Cardona."

"While I was upstairs," interposed Garforth Lydell. "Upstairs, unpacking – knowing nothing until I heard muffled shots from far below. Had I known that Yvonne had risen to go downstairs and find Bart Melken –"

"Bart did a good deed," broke in Dubrong. "I am not sorry that he died as he did. It was a worthwhile way to end a misspent life."

Commissioner Weston was staring hard. These revelations were unquestionably correct. Yet he could not yet fully accept the theory of The Jackdaw.

"What about Casslin?" he demanded. "Where is The Bishenpur diamond?"

"Perhaps I can answer that," remarked Lamont Cranston quietly.

All turned to the millionaire. His statement was unexpected. No one had figured Cranston as one with an active knowledge of these affairs.

"I do not claim to be a detective." There was a tinge of calm irony in Cranston's steady voice. "Yet I noticed, out at Winchendon's, that Farrell Sarborn was a faker."

"A faker?" questioned Weston.

"Yes," replied Cranston, "a faker. Sometimes fakers prove to be crooks. This bird of his" – the millionaire pointed to the scarlet macaw, still perched upon a chair back – "was an impossible performer.

"Macaws, first of all, have a penchant for screaming. They can never be cured of the habit. Secondly, they are poor talkers. Yet here is a phenomenal macaw: one that never screams; one that speaks with almost human

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intelligence. Both are impossible factors, especially in a scarlet macaw, one of the most difficult species to train at all."

"But this bird may be unusual," exclaimed Weston.

"It is unusual," declared Cranston, with a faint smile. "It is dumb."

"Dumb!" cried Cardona.

"Most certainly," explained Cranston. "Look at it now, Watch its moving beak, its ruffling throat. It is trying to scream – trying constantly – and it cannot do so."

"It spoke for Sarborn," protested Weston.

"Sarborn spoke for it," retorted Cranston. "He was always close beside it, scratching its head, looking toward it. The simplest possible feat of ventriloquism is to imitate the falsetto cry of a parrot. The bird's constant habit of trying to scream made Sarborn's ventriloquism even more effective. He kept the people just far enough away to make the illusion perfect."

The listeners found themselves nodding.

"Sarborn was a mimic," added Cranston. "He gave a perfect imitation of a kitten's mew at Winchendon's. I realized then that he was a ventriloquist. I saw nothing in his game outside of trickery." Cranston's knowing smile and slight sarcastic tone remained unnoticed. "Now, however, that you are seeking facts, I am able to supply them. I was at Winchendon's. Bart Melken evidently failed to give a proper signal – so Sarborn gave one instead. The macaw's cry of 'Robbers'."

"When I was playing the part of Limps," recalled Dubrong, "I remember hearing the end of a telephone call in which Bing Claver mentioned the word 'Robbers'."

"A wise guy," decided Joe Cardona. "Sarborn had no more use for Bing, once the game was up. He played the hero act at the end of the big fight. I fell for it."

"But Casslin's death!" blurted Weston. "You spoke of that, Cranston. How does the macaw explain it?"

"Just an idea," returned Cranston. "Let us see if it is correct. One pet played well for Sarborn. Maybe another was trained to do its work. I read about Casslin's odd, barred tower. I noticed something, here at Sarborn's, that has given me a potent thought."

HE led the way to the other room. He opened the crate in the corner, and brought out the little monkey. In the corner, Cranston spied a coil of string. He gave an end of the twine to the monkey.

"This," said Cranston, "is a sapajou – the most intelligent species of monkeys found in South America. Look up there – that bar over the window frame – ostensibly the macaw's perch."

Cranston released the sapajou. The little creature clambered up the wall, carrying the end of the string. It took the cord over the bar, and brought it down the wall to Cranston. The string formed a loop over the perch.

"I see it!" cried Cardona. "Sarborn was outside by Casslin's tower. When he got the signal that the diamond was downstairs, he sent the monkey up with a rope. Then he climbed up the rope himself."

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"How could he have gotten the diamond?" questioned Weston. "I see how he killed Casslin – he thrust a revolver between the bars and fired. But the diamond –"

Cranston, holding the sapajou under one arm, placed his gold watch upon the seat of a chair. He drew the monkey in back of the upright rods in the chair back. When he released his hold, the sapajou wriggled between, picked up the watch, and brought it back through the rods.

"He sent the monkey in for it!" shouted Cardona. "In for the diamond! That explains it all. I'm going to look at the ivy on that tower; at those bars. From the outside, this time."

Commissioner Weston was no longer skeptical. He thrust out his hand to Lamont Cranston.

"You'd make a good detective," he commended. "After you squander those millions of yours, come around for a job on the force. Wait – wait a moment. What about the diamond?"

"The Bishenpur diamond?" queried Cranston. "Ah, yes. There must be a clew to it. Let us see – perhaps The Jackdaw –"

His smile broadened. Everyone seemed breathless. This keen-minded investigator had made another strike.

"The Jackdaw," repeated Cranston. "The thieving bird – the bird that even steals eggs from other bird nests. The Bishenpur diamond was The Jackdaw's egg. Farrell Sarborn, strangely enough, was a collector of birds' eggs –"

He waved his hand as he spoke. All turned toward the glass case that contained Sarborn's collection of eggs. Joe Cardona, suddenly impelled, yanked out his revolver and shattered the glass.

"A condor's egg," remarked Cranston, picking out the largest ovoid in the group. "Very heavy – now that I am examining it for the first time. Look – it has a seam. It is not an egg at all. It is a thin metal container."

With a twist of his hands, he wrenched the egg apart. In one half, he exhibited a gorgeous, glittering gem, that shone with ruddy tint.

It was the Bishenpur diamond!

CARDONA was breaking open another, smaller egg. He found some gems within it. He was exulting. Here were the fruits of former robberies – the other eggs from The Jackdaw's nest!

Lamont Cranston retained his smile as more and more gems put in their appearance when new eggs were broken. The final mystery was solved; The Jackdaw's spoils had been recovered.

It was not until afterward that Joe Cardona suddenly gained a hunch. It was when the group had gone downstairs, when Cranston, at the door of the apartment building, was about to enter his coupe.

Joe Cardona stepped forward to the millionaire. He put a question as Cranston took the wheel of the car. The millionaire smiled as he heard it.

"The macaw," remarked Cardona. "You said that Sarborn talked for it. You proved it, right enough. But I just remember that when I came up to Sarborn's, it was the macaw that told me where Farrell Sarborn had gone – to Lydell's –"

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Cranston had started the motor. He became solemn as he leaned to the window of the car.

"Remarkable, wasn't it?" he questioned. "The macaw did talk once – when it had a right to talk."

The coupe rolled away. Joe Cardona stood bewildered on the curb. His hazy senses cleared. He began to build up facts. They all referred to Lamont Cranston.

The mysterious fighter out at Winchendon's – the macaw that spoke even when its master was not present – the timely bullet that had downed The Jackdaw in Garforth Lydell's vault. All went back to that significant point, the time when the macaw had spoken for Joe Cardona – when Lamont Cranston had stood beside the bird, coaxing it.

He – Cranston – had provided the macaw's falsetto. He was in the open at that time; he had been under cover during the more important episodes which Cardona now remembered.

Throughout this case, the might of a powerful fighter had manifested itself. Well did Cardona know the only one whom it could have been: The Shadow.

Joe realized now that while he, Cardona, had been following the wrong trail, doing no more than interfere with Doctor Dubrong's desperate efforts to aid the law, The Shadow had been closing a net about the real criminal – Farrell Sarborn.

It was The Shadow who had trapped The Jackdaw. It was The Shadow who, had ended the crook's career of crime. It was The Shadow who had played the part of Lamont Cranston.

As he stood on the curb, staring after the tiny tail-light of the millionaire's coupe, Joe Cardona fancied that he heard the faint echo of a weird, unearthly mirth. It was the laughter that had sounded at Garforth Lydell's. Its tones were creepier than ever now.

Echoes of the past, the sinister mockery dispelled itself with the night breeze.

Thus ended the laugh of The Shadow!

THE END