

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. ABOARD THE LIMITED

THE Eastern Limited was driving through the night. To scattered passengers, seated in the lounge of the observation car, the whistle of the locomotive came as a distant blare from far ahead. The train, though long and heavy, was maintaining its fast schedule.

Two men were chatting over newspapers. Strangers who had met aboard the train, they were discussing subjects of common interest. One news story seemed to have impressed them both.

"Well," one passenger was saying, "I can't criticize the governor of this state for pardoning those two convicts. He must have studied their cases mighty closely."

"Both men were lifers," objected the second passenger. "It seems a bit radical to put them back into circulation. They were chronic offenders –"

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"Wait a moment," put in the first man. He tapped the newspaper. "The facts are right here. These chaps only went up for short terms to begin with. Steve Zurk was in for a bank robbery" the speaker paused and referred to a column "and Jack Targon was a swindler."

"They broke jail together, didn't they?"

"Yes. That was the rub. They took to robbing more banks. Zurk was caught; he went back into the jug. Then the law landed Targon –"

"I know the details. The pair of them made another break. More crimes. They've been in now for three years and the governor has pardoned them, despite their accumulated sentences."

"Accumulated sentences. You've hit it, friend. That's the point that won the governor over. If those fellows hadn't made their first break, they'd have finished their original terms a couple of years ago."

"I didn't realize that."

"Here, read the details."

The first passenger shoved his newspaper to the second. The latter studied the columns, then began to nod slowly as he laid the journal aside.

"That makes it different," he admitted. "They were hunted men. Crime was their only course."

"Self-preservation," agreed the other passenger. "Man's first instinct."

"I guess the governor deserves credit. Those fellows will have a chance to go straight. I'm glad that they're out. I wonder where they've gone?"

"The newspapers don't know. Leastwise, they're not saying. Zurk and Targon were whisked away in an automobile after the gates of the penitentiary clanged behind them. That's all the report that's given."

Grinding brakes up ahead. The observation car jolted slightly. The limited was heading to a stop. A distant blare of the locomotive whistle.

THE chatting passengers forgot their former subject.

"Wonder what this is?" questioned one. "Sounds like a station stop. But there's none on the schedule. We're supposed to make a nonstop ninety-minute run –"

"There's a stop, though," broke in the second passenger. He was referring to a time-table. "Place called Dupaw. Time-table says to refer to note M. Here it is: 'Will stop Saturdays and Sundays only to receive through passengers for New York.' That must be it. Somebody getting on at this jerkwater station."

"Hope there's more than one," chuckled the first speaker, "It says 'passengers' not 'passenger.' Well, this is a Sunday, so it makes passengers eligible."

The train was almost to a stop. Peering from the window, the passengers saw the dingy lights of the station. Then the limited reached a full halt. A dozen seconds passed. Then came the muffled, heavy chugging of the locomotive.

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"Dupaw, all right," observed the man with the time-table, as the observation car rolled slowly past the little waiting room of the station. "See? There's the sign."

His acquaintance nodded. The two reverted to their newspapers and began a comment on the sporting news. Like the subject of the pardoned convicts, the stop at Dupaw was forgotten.

DIRECTLY across the aisle from the conversing men was another passenger. A tall, calm-faced individual, he had been seated quietly, smoking a cigarette between thin, smileless lips. His immobile countenance possessed a peculiarity hawkish expression, due to the presence of a high, aquiline nose.

Added to the stranger's appearance of dignity was the keenness of his eyes. Though placid, they carried a sharp glint that signified a powerful brain behind them.

It was evident that this listener had heard all that had passed between the other passengers, regarding the convicts and the chance stop at Dupaw. But his expression showed no interest in the conversation that he had overheard.

It was not until the hawk-faced passenger had finished his cigarette that a change came over his expression. Even then, his flicker of countenance was scarcely noticeable. A thin smile appeared upon his steady lips. The tall passenger arose and strolled from the lounge.

His smile remained fixed as he went forward from the observation car. Through clattering vestibules, through sleeping cars where aisles were walled by the green curtains of Pullman berths, the stroller kept steadily onward. He passed through a dining car where waiters were dozing at clothless tables.

He came to a Pullman that bore the name, Callao; also cards that marked it as Car G 3.

The tall passenger stopped in the smoking compartment. The porter was seated there, shining shoes. He did not observe the passenger's arrival until the tall personage spoke in a quiet tone. The porter started and looked up.

"Is my compartment made up?" came the quiet question.

"Yes, sah," returned the porter, with a nod. "I figured you were back in the obsahvation cah. All made up, sah. Sorry the conductah couldn't give you the drawing-room. I didn't know that it was reserved until he told me."

"That's quite all right. When I learned that the compartment was unoccupied, I decided that it would be preferable to the drawing-room."

"That's what I said, sah, when I came in to move your baggage. Compahment's better than the drawing-room. Plenty big enough for one person, sah, and it costs less money."

The porter was chuckling when the tall passenger left. He recalled how this gentleman had come aboard the train and taken the drawing-room of Car G 3. Then the porter had learned from the conductor that two other passengers had reserved the drawing-room passengers due to come aboard the train at Dupaw.

So the tall passenger had moved to the compartment that adjoined the drawing-room. He had been offered drawing-room accommodations in another car; but after viewing the compartment, he had agreed with the porter that it would be suitable.

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All along the trip the porter had been wondering about those passengers from Dupaw. It was the first time in his experience on this run that the limited had made that stop. It was odd the drawing-room passengers should come aboard at Dupaw; odd, at least to the porter's way of thinking.

MEANWHILE, the tall passenger had reached his compartment. Entering, he found the lower berth made up. He turned to a suitcase that was lying on the compartment chair. Still wearing his slight smile, he unlocked the bag.

From it, he produced earphones. A length of wire projected from them. Leaning into the berth, the passenger ran his fingers along the window ledge. He found the end of another wire, drew it inward and connected it with the wire from the earphones.

It was obvious that this mysterious passenger had made unusual use of his brief occupancy of the drawing room and his later removal to the compartment. He had managed to open the window of the drawing-room and let out a tiny wire, which he had later fished in from the window of the compartment.

This wire formed the vital portion of a dictograph connection.

Turning out the light in the compartment, donning the earphones in the darkness, the tall passenger was listening in on conversation that was taking place within the drawing-room.

A soft laugh in the darkness of the compartment. A scarcely audible whisper; yet that strange, suppressed mirth pronounced the identity of the scientific eavesdropper.

This personage who had taken interest in the affairs of the passengers from Dupaw was none other than The Shadow. Master hunter who investigated crime, The Shadow was aboard the Eastern Limited, seeking new knowledge that might aid him in his ceaseless quests.

CHAPTER II. BACK TO LIFE

WITHIN the drawing-room of Car G 3, two men were engaged in conversation. These men had been muffled with overcoats when they had come aboard the limited. At present they were in shirtsleeves. One was perched upon the edge of the lower berth; the other was seated on the benchlike couch.

The man on the edge of the berth was a smiling, light-complexioned chap about thirty years of age. His face was friendly, but flexible. Behind the smile lay a touch of natural shrewdness. His eyes carried a convincing sparkle.

The man on the couch was older. Forty would have been a good estimate of his age. He was dark-complexioned and his eyes showed a brooding look. His countenance, moreover, was dour at moments, almost sullen.

Circumstances had brought these two together; those same circumstances had maintained their companionship. The younger, smiling man was Jack Targon, erstwhile swindler de luxe. The older, dour chap was Steve Zurk, former bank robber.

Pardoned by the governor, the two were riding, unwatched and unattended, toward New York. For the first time since they had met within prison walls, they were unharried by the law. Two convicts had come back to life, with the prospect of a crimeless future straight ahead.

"Buck up, Steve," Targon was chuckling. "Can't you get it through your noodle? We're in the clear. Out of the

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big house. The world is ours!"

"Yours, maybe," growled Zurk. "But maybe it won't be mine. That's why I'm worrying."

"Why worry, Steve? You always said that you'd go straight if you had the chance. You've got it now. Say that governor is a prince, the way he treated us."

"He's a square-shooter, all right."

"And this fellow Delhugh, that we're going to in New York. He must be another regular. Going to stake us, fix us up with good connections. What more do you want, Steve?"

"It's not the future that worries me, Jack. It's the past. That's what you can't see."

"Nobody's going to toss it up at us."

Steve shifted uneasily and grunted from his couch. Jack watched him with troubled eyes. At last the older man leaned back. Propping himself to suit the motion of the train, he began a troubled explanation.

"You played a lone hand, Jack," he declared. "Con games, phony checks, all that smooth sort of stuff. It was in your line."

"No longer, Steve."

"I understand that, Jack. You'll go straight. It's in you. A man can chuck anything that he has a mind to."

"Which makes it easy for you, like me."

"Not quite as easy. I was a tough mug, Steve. There are a lot of my sort who traveled with me."

"Like Beak Latzo?"

"Yeah."

There was a dejected growl in Steve's tone at the mention of Latzo's name. Jack eyed his companion closely. He saw a sharp look in Steve's gaze. Then Steve closed his eyes.

"FELLOWS like Beak Latzo," he remarked, "can never get it through their domes that a man can decide to go straight. They're always looking for word from pals who get out of stir."

"So Beak will be looking for word from you?"

"Maybe. I hope not."

Another pause. Steve opened his eyes and looked squarely at Jack. He spoke in a steady, mechanical tone.

"The bulls never knew about the team-up, Jack," said Steve. "They knew I had pals; but they didn't need to find out who they were. They never picked out Beak Latzo."

"Well, if nobody knows anything about him –"

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"You know about him, Jack. You know that Beak worked with me."

"Sure I do." Targon spoke as steadily as Zurk. "You told me a lot about Beak Latzo when we were dodging posses together. But I'm mum. I've forgotten it."

"That's good, Jack. Keep it forgotten. Because it's going to be a tough trip for me. If Beak doesn't hear from me, I'll hear from him."

"He won't hear from you, will he?"

"Not by a long shot. But if I hear from him, it may look like he heard from me."

"I'm beginning to get it, Steve. That is tough. But if the bulls never knew about you and Beak –"

"I told you why they didn't know, Jack. Because they never troubled to find out. But if they started digging up the past, they would uncover it. Once they suspect a connection between me and Beak, things would be bad."

A pause, broken only by the scratch of a match as Jack Targon lighted a cigarette. He offered a smoke to Steve Zurk, who shook his head. The older man was still solemn. A blast of the engine's whistle stimulated his thoughts to words.

"The others don't count, Jack," Steve told his companion. "Beak Latzo is the only guy that's really tough. It won't be easy if he tries to needle me. But I'll handle him in my own way."

"That's why I'm mentioning it to you. Because you know what I'm up against. If Beak Latzo begins to make things sour, I'll count on you to help me out."

"Which I will, Steve. Provided –"

"Provided what?"

"Provided that you keep on the level."

An angry growl from Steve. Jack silenced it with a prompt remark, as he reached over and clapped his hand on his pal's shoulder.

"You could say the same to me, Steve," came Jack Targon's statement. "I'm all for you if you play straight. I want you to feel the same about me. We're going back into life; we've each got the chance we want. But it's up to each of us to be on the level."

"All right, Jack," grunted Steve. "But you know I've always been a square–shooter. There was no reason to suggest that I might be going to pull something phony."

"You've been square with me, Steve. But that was when both of us had to buck the world. Now we've got the world with us. It's a different slant that's all."

"I've figured that. I'm all for it. I told the governor so and I meant it. No more stick–ups and bank jobs for me. I'm out of that line, Jack."

"And I'm through with my old business. I wouldn't sell a guy a gold brick if he asked for it, Steve. Shakedown, bum checks all that stuff is forgotten. When I sign any name from now on, it will be my own."

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JACK TARGON reached up, grabbed the edge of the upper berth and hoisted himself to the shelflike bed. Propped on one elbow, he grinned down at Steve Zurk.

"Better than the night we rode this line behind baggage," he commented. "Eh, Steve? Remember the storm that night? And the shack we found to sleep in after we dropped off the limited?"

Steve nodded.

"We're in prime luck right now, Steve," went on Jack. He was propped up against the pillows, finishing his cigarette. "We both have brains enough to make the most of it. This is a great situation. The two of us clear for the first time since we met.

"I couldn't chin with you, Steve, while those deputies were bringing us over to Dupaw. I was looking forward to this chat. You've spoiled it a bit, though, acting glum the way you are. You didn't worry about Beak Latzo when we were palling around after those jail breaks."

"No need to worry about him then," snorted Steve. "I could have used him if he'd been around. But now I don't want him on my neck. Nor any of the others."

"Forget Beak Latzo. Forget all of them. Look here, Steve: I was worrying so were you when we left the big house to-day. Worrying for fear people would be looking at us. Following us, watching us.

"But it was all fixed in our favor. The car was there ready for a thirty-mile drive to Dupaw. The governor had this swell drawing-room all reserved so we could step out of sight. Not a person on this train knows who we are.

"We'll step off in New York just like the rest of the passengers. We'll report to this chap Perry Delhugh just as we would go into a business office. The warden told us to forget the past. We're going to do it."

"I hope I can," commented Steve, dryly. "What's more I will. Unless Beak Latzo tries to block me. He'll be expecting word from me, that rat will."

"May be Beak isn't in New York, Steve."

"If he isn't there, he can be reached at the same old place. He knows I know that."

"Forget it."

Jack Targon reached from the upper berth and tossed his cigarette into an ash stand. Steve Zurk arose from the couch and entered the lower berth.

"Well," he growled, "there's something in what you say, Jack. The governor gave us a break; this fellow Delhugh is going to do the same. Even the warden helped us out by letting us come into New York on this train."

"Traveling incognito," chuckled Jack. "Unannoyed by gentlemen of the press."

"That's right, Jack." Steve spoke as though he had made a discovery. "None of the news hounds got on our trail. What did the warden do? Bluff them?"

"HE talked to them," returned Jack. "So one of the deputies said. After the reporters interviewed us last night,

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the warden told them how and where we were going and made them agree to lay off."

"Like as not they'll be at the station when we hit New York."

"I don't think so. That fellow Burke was the only New York reporter there. We gave him all the interview he wanted. He won't be likely to hound us."

"That's a help. If we can dive out of sight, Jack, it's going to make it easier."

"No need to dive, Steve. We'll be real men again. With a chance ahead of us. Lost in the shuffle of New York, like all the other citizens."

A pause. Then Steve remarked from the lower berth:

"This guy Delhugh must have a lot of coin."

"I guess he does, Steve. He's a philanthropist."

"Hands out a pile of dough to charities?"

"Yes. Runs welfare committees. Gets contributions to worthy causes."

"An old bloke, I guess."

"Sounds that way. But he's only going to place us. All that newspaper talk interested him, and he made an arrangement with the governor. Going to give us a lift."

"Well, I'd rather be in New York than out in this state. New scenery big city well, it makes me feel better."

"Forgetting about Beak Latzo?"

"You can't forget that egg, Jack. But I'm not worrying about him. Just remember what I said. Keep mum about him. I'll be on the level."

"Good boy, Steve. That's the way to talk."

Lights went out. The drawing-room was in darkness as the limited roared eastward. No sound came from the upper berth. Jack Targon had gone to sleep. Steve Zurk, still awake, kept mumbling for a while; then became silent.

In the adjoining compartment, a slight click sounded as The Shadow removed his earphones. Fingers, invisible in the darkness, detached the connection of the dictograph wire.

Through Clyde Burke, one of his secret agents, The Shadow had learned that the ex-convicts would be aboard this train. Clyde, a reporter for the New York Classic, had forwarded his chief the number of the car in which Zurk and Targon were to be located.

Knowing that the train trip would give the former outlaws their first opportunity to discuss their new life, The Shadow had boarded the Eastern Limited for the purpose of hearing them talk. He wanted to gain first-hand knowledge of their opinions.

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The Shadow had gained an impression of sincerity from the discourse of both the pardoned men. Though his usual task was to harry men of crime, The Shadow had more than once aided ex-crooks to go straight.

He was ready to do that for Steve Zurk and Jack Targon. That was another reason why he had listened in on their gabfest. A soft laugh told that The Shadow was pleased with his findings. For he had learned of a menace to society with whom he well might deal.

"Beak" Latzo. The Shadow knew of the man. A dangerous mobleader, at present absent from New York. One who was apt to return to Manhattan, now that Steve Zurk was free.

Steve Zurk saw trouble ahead from Beak Latzo. At least, Steve Zurk had expressed that idea to his pal, Jack Targon. The Shadow could see a way to eliminate such trouble.

That way would be to uncover Beak Latzo.

Again a soft laugh whispered in the blackness of the compartment. The Shadow had gained a quest. To find and deal with the menacing mobleader, Beak Latzo.

CHAPTER III. THE NEW WAY OPENS

ON the following morning, a taxicab pulled up in front of a secluded Manhattan residence. The building was a large brownstone mansion, a heritage of the later years of the last century. Yet its well-kept front gave it a modern appearance.

Two men alighted from the cab: Steve Zurk and Jack Targon. Carrying suitcases, they ascended the brownstone steps and rang the doorbell. They were admitted by a dry-faced servant, who nodded as he heard their names.

The menial took the bags and laid them aside. With a bow, he motioned toward a flight of broad marble stairs.

The pardoned men went up the steps, treading upon thick carpeting. They looked about as they went; at the top they stared at each other in partial bewilderment.

Perry Delhugh's home was a place of magnificence. Marble statuary vied with rich velvet drapings. The walls were covered with thick tapestries. The rugs underfoot were of marvelous Oriental design. The former convicts had stepped into a scene of wealth.

Pausing at the top, Zurk and Targon waited for the approach of a frail, stoop-shouldered young man who was coming to meet them. The new arrival stopped in the hallway and surveyed the ex-convicts through a pair of tortoise shell spectacles.

"Good morning," he greeted, in a weak-toned voice. "Which is Mr. Zurk; and which is Mr. Targon?"

Steve and Jack introduced themselves. The young man shook hands with each, wincing slightly at the powerful grips of the visitors.

"My name is Benzig," he informed. "I am Mr. Delhugh's secretary. If you will come this way, gentlemen, I shall take you to his study. He will meet you there."

Benzig led the way along a hall. They passed the door of a room that looked like an office, in which the walls

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were lined with huge filing cabinets. They passed through a small, thick-carpeted anteroom; then came into Delhugh's study.

This room was furnished in quiet but expensive taste. A huge mahogany desk occupied the center; the chairs were of the same wood. Marble statuettes and jade vases stood upon tables about the room. The door of a wall safe showed beyond the desk.

The walls themselves were paneled with thick tapestry material set in mahogany framework.

Impressed by this setting of affluence, Steve and Jack looked about from spot to spot. When they turned to stare at Benzig, the bespectacled secretary had gone.

"Whew!" uttered Jack Targon. "What a place! There's been money spent here, Steve."

"Yeah," growled Steve Zurk, "and I'll bet that Delhugh is a worn-out old guy who can't appreciate it."

"Probably a dyspeptic."

"What's that?"

"A guy who lives on pills."

"And forks over dough to croakers."

"Probably. When the medicos find a rich bird that's sick, they help him get rid of his cash."

"Well, if old Delhugh is as weary-looking at his secretary, I'll –"

Steve broke off. The door of the anteroom was opening. Jack turned about as he saw Steve stare toward the entrance.

Both men were surprised at sight of the person who entered. They knew that he must be Perry Delhugh; but he was entirely different from the man that they had pictured.

PERRY DELHUGH was under fifty. Well built, of middle height, he showed no signs of the portliness that so frequently comes to a man of leisure. Though heavy, he was muscular, not stout.

His face was square. His expression was dynamic. His black hair, slightly thinned, bore only slight streaks of gray. There was a firmness in Delhugh's gaze as he studied the men before him.

Jack Targon's smile sobered as his eyes met Delhugh's. Steve Zurk, half slouching, straightened up; then shifted uneasily as he came under keen inspection. Both of the ex-convicts knew that they had met a man who could command them.

"Targon?" Delhugh spoke the name as he looked at Jack.

"Yes," responded Jack, with a nod.

Delhugh shook hands with crushing grasp. He turned to Steve; called him by name; then gave another powerful clasp. He waved the two men to chairs, then went behind his desk. There he noted the door of the wall safe, showing through the paneling.

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Indifferently, Delhugh pressed a panel and a covering front slid over the safe door. Then Delhugh took his place behind the desk, pulled a box of cigars from the drawer and laid the perfectos where his visitors could help themselves.

Both Steve and Jack were impressed as they took cigars and lighted them. They knew that Delhugh had expected their visit, yet he had left the front of his safe visible, where they might take note of its existence. A small touch, but one that indicated that Delhugh trusted them.

Settling back in their chairs, the pardoned criminals waited for the philanthropist to speak.

"Gentlemen," stated Delhugh, in a deliberate fashion, "your futures have been entrusted to me. Some time ago, the governor of the state wherein you were imprisoned decided to pardon you. He wanted to give you a fresh start in the world. An excellent purpose; one, however, that offered hazard."

The pardoned convicts shifted a bit. Jack Targon managed a smile; Steve Zurk remained solemn, with a countenance that had become a poker face.

"Some men," resumed Delhugh, "are criminals by nature. Others are criminals only by environment. The governor believes that you are of the latter class. I am inclined to accept his opinion."

Jack's smile became less forced. Steve settled back in his chair, but retained his solemnity.

"I have gained wealth," declared Delhugh. "Enough to permit my retirement from business at a comparatively early age. I have occupied my time since retirement with philanthropic pursuits. My contributions to worthy causes have been considerable. But I have done more than merely give away money.

"I have identified myself with various organizations that deal in welfare. I have kept records of those activities; I have managed committees and I have solicited huge sums from wealthy persons, for charitable purposes.

"In brief, my work has carried a personal angle. That is why I became interested when I learned that the governor intended to pardon you two men."

A KINDLY smile changed the inflexibility of Delhugh's countenance. The wealthy man reached into a desk drawer and produced a stack of papers that he separated into two sheaves.

"Here are facts concerning each of you," he declared. "I looked into your pasts. Not so that I could check upon you but in order that I might understand you. The records show that you have been victims of circumstance.

"I have learned more about you than either of you can realize. You, Zurk, are a man with a real business sense. One who can judge values. You showed that" Delhugh's smile ended "by your choice of banks that you robbed."

While Steve remained solemn. Delhugh produced an envelope and pushed it across the desk. He indicated that Steve should take it. Steve did so.

"There is a start for you," stated Delhugh. "A bank account of one thousand dollars a loan to be repaid within one year. A letter to the manager of the Sourlain Hotel, arranging for your credit there.

"Also a personal letter to Joseph Daylin, head of the Daylin Importing Company. I have talked with Daylin.

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He has a job for you in his importing house. It will mean advancement."

Steve, a bit bewildered, nodded thanks. Delhugh smiled; then turned to Jack. He produced a second envelope.

"The same amount for you, Targon," he declared. "You will live at the Hotel Cliquot. Your letter of business recommendation is to Galen Flix, president of the New Century Advertising Agency. You are a man who must have sales ability. This will be your opportunity to prove it."

"This is great of you, Mr. Delhugh," said Jack, taking the envelope. "I'm out to make good; and I can say the same for Steve –"

"It is unnecessary," interposed Delhugh. "I have taken that fact for granted. I have merely arranged to further your opportunities. There is only one proviso that I require."

"What is that?" asked Jack.

"I expect frequent reports from each of you," stated Delhugh. "These will be confidential interviews that will prove of benefit. You have been pardoned; hence there is no element of parole in my request.

"I merely wish to see how the experiment is progressing. I want to know if either of you encounters difficulties or pitfalls. I shall be ready with money as well as friendship if either of you should require assistance."

"That's swell!" began Jack. "Say, Mr. Delhugh –"

"I have not finished." Delhugh's steady interruption stopped Jack short. "These visits that I have mentioned must be frequent at first. I would suggest that they be on alternate nights to begin with. Zurk can come here Monday, Wednesday and Friday; Targon Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Around dinner time, so that brief chats will not disturb your evening plans."

"You want us to come separately?" questioned Jack, a bit surprised.

"Absolutely," affirmed Delhugh. Then, seriously: "You are to follow separate courses. Forget the forced friendship that brought you together. Become new men; then meet again on a fresh basis."

"To-day is Monday." This statement came from Steve. "You want me to come here to-night, Mr. Delhugh?"

"No," replied the philanthropist. "That will be unnecessary. I shall begin with Targon's visit, to-morrow evening. Your visits, Zurk, will commence with Wednesday."

"Very well, sir," agreed Steve.

He arose solemnly and extended his hand to Jack Targon. The younger pal received the unexpected clasp.

"So long, old-timer," commented Steve. "Mr. Delhugh has served it to us straight. We're splitting; and when we get together again we'll have something to talk about instead of the big house."

"Commendable, Zurk," declared Delhugh from behind his desk. "You have accepted my plan in excellent fashion. That is the way to begin. Follow through in the same manner."

DELHUGH was pressing a desk button as he spoke. Benzig appeared from the anteroom. Delhugh stepped

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from behind his desk and shook hands with Steve Zurk. Then he turned to the secretary.

"Call a cab for Mr. Zurk," ordered Delhugh. "Then summon one for Mr. Targon."

Steve followed the secretary as he departed. Delhugh turned and shook hands with Jack. The young man grinned.

"You're right about Steve," he declared. "He knows his business. He grabbed the idea while I was still mulling it. But I'm not quite so dumb as I acted. I've got it now. It's a swell plan for both of us."

"The only plan, Targon," returned Delhugh, quietly. "You will find that new associations are necessary to your success. I have convinced Zurk that I can influence his future. I hope that I have convinced you in the same manner."

"You have," stated Jack. "You and Steve. The way he took it helped."

Delhugh was smiling as he picked up the stacks of papers from the desk. Jack noted scrawled letters among Steve's documents. In his own pile, he observed slips of paper that looked very much like bad checks that he had passed, years before.

The young man smiled sheepishly at sight of this evidence of abandoned crime. Delhugh did not notice the expression. He was putting the papers back into the drawer. Jack Targon turned his eyes away as Delhugh stepped from behind the desk. Then Benzig arrived to announce that Targon's cab was at the door.

Delhugh clapped a friendly hand upon Jack's shoulder. The young man grinned, no longer sheepish. Then, strolling after Benzig, he went from Delhugh's study, faring forth, like Steve, upon a new career.

Perry Delhugh resumed his seat behind his desk. His square face wore a meditative smile as he recalled his observations of these men to whom he had given aid. They had been as he had expected them to be, fitting perfectly to the descriptions that he had gained of them.

Delhugh's smile remained as the philanthropist lighted a fresh cigar. In all his work of welfare, this keen, dynamic man had never before encountered cases that afforded such unusual contrast and such rich promise of future results.

CHAPTER IV. OUT OF THE PAST

IT was evening in Manhattan. Times Square, with its galaxy of lights; broad avenues with lesser, yet brilliant illumination these were the channels that attracted the pleasure-seeking throngs of the great metropolis.

In contrast were the side streets, where lights dwindled as one left the brilliance of the avenues. Here shaded seclusion dwelt amid the teeming city. Nervous pedestrians, as they passed certain spots, could sense impressions of lurking danger.

Not far from Times Square stood a dark-fronted building that seemed pinched between taller structures on each side. The first floor, a full six feet above the street level, was occupied by a Chinese restaurant. Above the eating place were blackened windows that signified unoccupied rooms.

A man from the side street came up the steps that led to the Chinese restaurant. He entered a hallway at the top of the steps; but instead of passing through the curtained doorway to the restaurant, he kept straight ahead along a poorly lighted hall and took to a stairway at the end.

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He followed the steps to the second floor. There, by a single gas light, he noted the second door on the right, toward the rear of the building. A dim light shone through the glass-paneled front; but the door bore no name. The arrival opened it and entered.

BEHIND a dilapidated counter stood a wizened, droop-faced man who eyed the newcomer with an almost startled gaze. There was reason for his semblance of fright for the intruder was a square-set, hard-faced ruffian whose features carried a malicious leer.

"Your name's Dangler?" inquired the intruder, closing the door behind him.

"Yes," replied the wizened man with a nod. Then, in a whining voice: "Are you sure you have the right office? I am a dealer in postage stamps. My name is not yet on the door; but –"

"Cut it," snorted the hard-faced man. "I'm not a dick. You're running this biz on the up and up, ain't you?"

Dangler nodded.

"Then don't spill a line like that," growled the intruder. "It sounds fishy. Like you was a guy with a record. Nobody's got nothing on you, Dangler, even though you was in the green-goods game. Don't be scared of no bulls nor Feds, neither."

An expression of enlightenment dawned on Dangler's face. The wizened man managed a grin.

"Are you Mr. Ortz?" he questioned.

"That's me," chuckled the hard-faced rogue. "I'm Lucky Ortz. The guy you've been expecting from Beak Latzo. I was over to your old joint; I found the card there saying that you'd moved."

"The rent was cheaper here," explained Dangler, "and the place is more secluded. I've been expecting you to stop in almost any time, since Beak told me that you would call for him. But that was three months ago."

"Beak's been out of town," growled "Lucky." "He wasn't expecting nothing while he was away. But he figured maybe you might've got a letter for him lately –"

"I have." Dangler was emphatic in his interruption. He dived beneath the counter and brought out an old, disused postage stamp album. Fishing through the pages, he produced an envelope. "This came in yesterday. Wednesday."

"Good!" Lucky took the envelope, noted the scrawled address. It had been forwarded from Dangler's former office. "I'll take it along to Beak. So long, Dangler. Paint your moniker on that door and give the bulls the haha if they bother you."

A grin on his hard face, Lucky stumped from Dangler's office. There was something contemptuous in Lucky's leer. To this man, lieutenant of Beak Latzo, fear of the law was something to ridicule.

Leaving the building that housed Dangler's office, Lucky strode eastward and then turned along an avenue. He came to the steps of an elevated station. He ascended to the platform, took a south-bound train and rode for several stations.

When he again reached the street, Lucky had arrived in a most dilapidated neighborhood. He was in a district that fringed the underworld, where patrolmen were frequent, their wary eyes on the lookout for dubious

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characters.

Lucky passed several policemen; his gait, neither shuffling nor hurried, attracted no attention. Turning into a secluded alleyway, Lucky unlocked the door of a dilapidated house. He stepped into a darkened hall, blundered up a flight of stairs and gave five short knocks at a door that he discovered in the blackness.

A key turned. The door opened inward. Lucky stepped into a gas-lighted room with drawn shades. He was face to face with a man who looked tougher than himself. This was Beak Latzo.

THE mobleader's sobriquet was a good one. Long, rangy and fierce-faced, Beak Latzo possessed a nose that was definitely prominent. It was a large nose, that might once have been beaklike. At present, however, it bore a flattened look an indication that its wearer had suffered from punches dealt in fistic combat.

In fact, Beak Latzo's nose was a target at which a battler would logically aim. Moreover, it was an item of physiognomy that would unquestionably identify its owner. That accounted for the fact that Beak Latzo was at present occupying a hide-out; the only course by which he could keep his presence in New York unknown.

"Well?" Beak's question came in a raspy tone. "Did you find the goof? Dangler?"

"Yeah," returned Lucky. "Not at his old place, though. He's moved to a dumpy office up over a chop suey joint."

"That's all right. Just so long as you found him. Anything there for me?"

"This is all."

Lucky produced the envelope. Beak Latzo blinked with beady eyes as he noted the scrawled address. Then he ripped open the envelope, spread out the letter that was within and began to read with eagerness.

"Is it from Steve Zurk?" questioned Lucky, noting his chief's enthusiasm.

"You bet it is!" chortled Beak. "Take a squint at it, Lucky."

"Say, its a scrawl, ain't it?" snorted Lucky, trying to read the letter after Beak handed it to him. "All I can make out is the beginning and 'Steve' at the end of it."

"He writes lousy," admitted Beak. "I knew his scrawl the minute I saw the envelope. It's easy to read when you're used to it, though. No trouble for me, even though I haven't heard from Steve since the last time he broke out of the big house. Here give it to me. I'll tell you what it's about."

Beak took the letter, referred to a paragraph and then began to paraphrase a translation of Steve Zurk's poor penmanship.

"Steve figures he's in the money," explained Beak. "He's here in New York got a job with an importer all fixed for him by some ritzy guy named Perry Delhugh. But he's got to make it look like he's gone straight. Savvy?"

"Sure," acknowledged Lucky, in a laconic tone. "With the governor pardoning him, he's got to put up a front."

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"There's only one mug wise to me knowing Steve," continued Beak. "That's a bird named Jack Targon the one that the governor pardoned along with Steve. But Steve and Jack have split. And this guy Targon won't squawk so long as he thinks Steve is staying on the level."

"You mean Targon is really going straight?"

"That's it. But he was a pal of Steve's. So there's no trouble there so long as we stay under cover. That is, keep Steve in the clear. Savvy?"

"I get it."

BEAK LATZO folded the letter and thrust it into his pocket. He crossed the room, seated himself upon a rumpled bed and lighted a cigarette. A knowing smile appeared upon his thick, coarse lips.

"Steve thinks he can pick some nifty lays," declared Beak. "He ought to, being close to that moneybag guy, Delhugh. I'm to sit tight and wait for tips. They'll come through Dangler. Like this letter."

"You won't see Steve, then?"

"Not unless he says to. That would queer the racket. What's more, I've got to keep my own mug under cover. If the bulls spot me, they might think of Steve."

"They never hooked you up together, did they?"

"They may have. No telling about that. Not likely, but it would be too bad if they had. That won't worry me, though, about being in on the jobs."

"Why not?"

"Because Steve Zurk is a fox. When he picks a job it's good. Like clockwork. He figures everything the setup, the blow-off, the get-away. It's a cinch working with him."

"And a double cinch this way, Beak."

"You said it, Lucky."

Another pause. Beak puffed at his cigarette, then rasped an ugly laugh.

"Nobody knows you're working with me, Lucky," he declared. "Not even the gorillas that you've lined up. This hide-out's a pip; and there's others just as good, in case I've got to dive out of here."

"What's more, you're sitting pretty. The bulls have nothing on you. Even the stoolies aren't watching you for a hot tip. Besides that, they didn't lie when they called you 'Lucky.' You know how to grab the breaks."

Lucky grinned. His square shoulders hunched back as his chest swelled at Beak's commendation. The mobleader had spoken a known fact. Lucky Ortiz was one character of the bad lands who always managed to ease out of trouble's toils.

"Don't say much to the gorillas," warned Beak. "Just keep them ready. We'll want them on tap; because Steve moves fast when he sees a chance. It's up to you to keep going in and out of Dangler's new place. We don't want any message of Steve's to lie around until it's cold."

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"Dangler's all right?" questioned Lucky. "He looks like a scary sort of guy to me."

"That don't matter," retorted Beak. "That's the way he ought to be. Scary. He was in with a green-goods outfit I told you about it and we chopped down the crew. He was out when we got the others; he never knew who got them."

"I went to see him, friendly like, and made him think I was a pal of the goofs that got rubbed out. Told him to lay low and keep mum. That's what he did. Knowing how scary he was, I used him for a mailing address, figuring he'd be safe."

"Just dumb enough to be useful. That's Dangler. He knows nothing, so he can't spill anything that will hurt. Steve used him before he sent me messages. It's a sure bet, particularly with you doing the collecting."

With a satisfied leer, Beak Latzo lighted another cigarette, then nudged his thumb toward the door.

"So long, Lucky," he suggested. "It don't do any good hanging around here. Check up on the mob; we're going to need them. And keep an eye on Dangler."

Lucky nodded. Donning his hat, he strolled from the hide-out and closed the door behind him.

Beak Latzo turned the key in the lock. With an evil chuckle, the mobleader dropped back in his big chair.

There was reason for Beak's satisfaction. To his way of thinking, prosperous days were due. For Beak Latzo had confidence in the cunning of Steve Zurk. To Beak, the letter that had come through Dangler was a prophecy of profitable crime.

CHAPTER V. FRIDAY NIGHT

"WHAT is it, Benzig?"

Perry Delhugh put the question as the bespectacled secretary entered the study. The millionaire was seated behind his mahogany desk, busily engaged with papers.

"Those letters, sir," returned Benzig. "Regarding the funds for the Talleyrand Hospital. You told me to remind you of them."

"Ah, yes." Delhugh glanced at the clock on the desk. "Well, there are a few minutes before dinner. Do you have the file with you?"

Benzig produced a portfolio from beneath his arm. Delhugh nodded, and the secretary took out a sheaf of letters which he handed to the millionaire.

Delhugh went through the first letters rapidly. Then he stopped and read one carefully. He placed the others aside and raised the one that he had selected.

"This is the most important, Benzig," he declared. "The one from Theobald Luftus. He is willing to make a contribution of twenty thousand dollars. Think of that, Benzig! Twenty thousand dollars!"

"Quite generous of him, sir."

"Is that remark meant as sarcasm, Benzig?"

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"No, no, sir! I would not have been sarcastic –"

"You should have been. Twenty thousand dollars from a millionaire like Luftus? He should have offered us fifty thousand, at least."

"But perhaps, sir, he does not have funds that he can spare."

"Read the letter, Benzig," said Delhugh, wearily. "Read it carefully. Note the comments that Luftus made." Benzig took the letter and studied it. His face remained perplexed at first; then, gradually, the secretary began to nod.

"I see, sir," he declared. "Mr. Luftus states that if the committee will visit him on Tuesday night, he will deliver them selected securities to the value of twenty thousand dollars."

"Yes," stated Delhugh. "Selected securities. That sounds well; but its meaning is obvious. Can't you see Luftus selecting those securities? Picking over a miserly hoard, seeing how little he can spare?"

"That man has great wealth, Benzig" Delhugh gave an emphatic pound to the desk "yet his charitable donations have been almost nihil. I suppose, though" the philanthropist's expression became meditative and kindly "that we should rejoice because Theobald Luftus has relaxed to this extent. Perhaps the joy of giving once will induce him to repeat what this time must certainly be a painful duty."

"He adds, sir," put in Benzig, still studying the letter, "that he will confer with his broker on Monday, regarding the choice of securities. So that the hospital may be assured of a well-selected gift."

"A bit of dust, Benzig," informed Delhugh, with a smile. "Can you picture Theobald Luftus having any securities that would not be gilt-edged? He wants a conference with his broker. Certainly. So that he can pick out the least desirable of his stocks and bonds.

"It is saddening, Benzig" Delhugh shook his head seriously "really saddening, to encounter men like Luftus. They give only because public sentiment compels the strong to aid the weak. They gain no pleasure from the process; yet they are the first to claim that they are philanthropists.

"Well, let us forget those fine points. Write a letter to Luftus, Benzig. Ask him to telephone Justin Galway, chairman of the Talleyrand Fund, on Tuesday, to arrange the exact time of the call."

The chime of a dinner gong floated faintly through the open door of the study. Delhugh arose and walked toward the door.

"Type the letter before you come down to dinner," he told Benzig. "It will take you only a few minutes. Leave it on my desk with the correspondence. I shall sign it after dinner; and also dictate other communications."

BENZIG typed a brief letter after Delhugh had left. He placed it carefully upon the desk; then, without replacing the loose letters, he put his portfolio on a table in the corner. He left the study and went downstairs.

He joined Delhugh at the dinner table, in the dining room at the rear of the ground floor.

The doorbell rang while Delhugh and Benzig were dining. A servant answered it; then returned to announce that Mr. Zurk was calling. Delhugh looked up from his salad.

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"Go speak to him, Benzig," the millionaire told the secretary. "Usher him up to the study. Tell him that I shall join him within fifteen minutes."

"But, Mr. Delhugh," began the secretary, "don't you think that it would be better –"

"I told you to take Mr. Zurk to the study," interposed Delhugh. "Go, now, Benzig. Do as I have ordered."

"Very well, sir."

Benzig left. He returned in less than five minutes. He and Delhugh finished their dinner in silence. Then the millionaire left the dining room and went upstairs. Arriving in the study, he found Steve Zurk seated there, awaiting him.

Delhugh shook hands with the ex-convict. He noted Steve's attire and observed that the man was wearing a new suit one that was well-fitted and conservative. Delhugh nodded in approval. He took his chair behind the desk and offered Steve a cigar.

"Well, Zurk," he questioned, "how is the importing business?"

"Good," replied Steve in a sober tone. "I like it. I think I'll make good on the job, Mr. Delhugh."

"Any comments from the people there?"

"Only from Mr. Daykin. He is pleased."

"Excellent! Let's see; you were here Wednesday. But that was too soon for you to have opinions regarding the suitability of your new occupation. You are sure you like it?"

"Absolutely! It's a new life for me, Mr. Delhugh. A new life. Lot's different from a month ago" Steve shook his head in reminiscence "when I thought I was going to be in stir until I croaked."

"That's right," nodded Delhugh. "Your accumulated terms amounted to about sixty years, didn't they?"

"Sixty-five," replied Steve, with a wry smile. "I figured it the same as a life sentence. That's what I was a lifer –"

"Let us change the subject," interposed Delhugh. "We must remember, Zurk, that your past is forgotten. I am glad to learn that your present satisfies you. As for the future, that remains with you."

He arose to indicate that the interview was ended. He clasped Steve's hand; then reminded the ex-convict that his next appointment was for Monday night.

Benzig came at Delhugh's ring and ushered Steve downstairs.

DELHUGH was at his desk, studying the other letters referring to the Talleyrand Hospital Fund when Benzig returned to the study. Seeing that his employer was busy, Benzig picked up his portfolio from the chair where he had placed it. Papers slid out as Benzig lifted the portfolio. The secretary turned to the philanthropist.

"Pardon me Mr. Delhugh," said Benzig. "Did you take any other letters from this portfolio?"

"No," replied Delhugh, looking up from his letters. "Why?"

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"The clasp was not securely fastened," stated the secretary. "Yet I am sure that I closed it tightly before I came down to dinner."

"Are the letters all there?"

"Yes, sir. But –"

"But what?" quizzed Delhugh, as Benzig paused.

"I I was wondering about Zurk," stammered Benzig. "He was here while we were at dinner. Perhaps perhaps he –"

"Perhaps he opened the portfolio?" Delhugh's inquiry was cold.

"Yes, sir," nodded Benzig.

"I begin to understand," said Delhugh, his face firm. "That was why you objected, at dinner, to ushering Zurk up here. You don't trust the man, do you?"

"I I was thinking of your letters," protested Benzig. "I didn't want any one rummaging through them. It it was on your account, Mr. Delhugh. It wasn't exactly that I didn't trust Zurk. If any one had come up here, I would have been disturbed."

"I see." Delhugh's voice was grave. "Well, Benzig, you and others like you constitute the menace that such men as Zurk and Targon face. Free from prison, trying to face the world, they meet with the mistrust of small-minded persons. Do you realize, Benzig, that you are helping to destroy the very work that I am attempting to do?"

"I am sorry, sir. Real sorry."

"That means nothing, if Zurk noticed your mistrust. He regards this house as one place where he is free from suspicion; where he meets with friends who believe in his honesty."

"I said nothing to Zurk, sir."

"I am glad that you did not. See to it that your actions do not disturb him in the future. These letters" Delhugh shuffled the ones that he held "would be of no consequence to Zurk."

"But the portfolio –"

"Contains no correspondence of consequence. You probably failed to fasten it securely. Your suspicious nature caused you to imagine that Zurk had opened it."

"I suppose that you are right sir."

"I am right. Moreover, I am annoyed by your attitude, Benzig. This has been shabbiness on your part. Let me see no more of it."

"Very well, sir."

DELHUGH ordered Benzig to take dictation. The secretary did so, his hand shaky as he recalled the

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reprimand that he had just received. When Delhugh had finished giving letters, he arose, nodded a good night and went out, leaving Benzig alone to complete his typing.

His employer gone, the secretary picked up the portfolio. He examined the catch; then shook his head. Though he had been impressed by his employer's words, Benzig could not shake the one idea from his mind.

The secretary was positive that Steve Zurk had made use of his time when alone in this study. He was sure that the ex-convict had examined the letter to Theobald Luftus that lay on Delhugh's desk; and that, following that procedure, he had gone through the contents of the portfolio.

Yet Benzig, timid and fearful of his employer's wrath, had resolved to keep that opinion to himself. From now on, the secretary would have a secret duty of his own one that he would not mention to Delhugh.

Benzig was determined to watch the actions of both Steve Zurk and Jack Targon whenever they paid visits to this house.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S SEARCH

ONE week had elapsed since Steve Zurk and Jack Targon had arrived in New York. It was again a Monday; and evening had brought a sullen, misty blackness to Manhattan. In brilliant areas, gleaming lights cleaved the shroud of darkness; but in more isolated sections of the city, street lamps were pitiful with their feeble rays.

Pacing patrolmen were vigilant this night. This was the type of evening made for crime, when lurking footpads and bold yeggs could venture forth beneath a blanketing protection. Every byway in the underworld was a potential lingering spot for desperadoes.

Beneath the grimy, dew-dripping surface of an elevated structure, a hunched-up man was shambling along in inconspicuous fashion. At times, this fellow paused to light a cigarette. The gleam of the match on such occasions revealed a crafty, drawn face with sharp eyes that gleamed with shrewd glance.

Each time he lighted a match, this wayfarer kept the flame shielded by his hands. Thus the move enabled him to remain unobserved: but gave him the opportunity to look about for persons who might be watching him.

Satisfied at last that he had escaped all notice, the little man drifted off through an alleyway. Blackness swallowed him.

This prowler through the underworld was not unique. Two blocks away, a man of a different type was also looking for an opportunity to duck out of sight. Strolling along a side street, this second wayfarer came beneath the gleam of a lamp. The glow showed a steady, chiseled face that topped a stalwart frame.

Pausing at the entrance to an alleyway, this man glanced sharply along the course that he had followed. Then he stepped into the blackness between the space of buildings. He continued his pacing in methodical fashion until he had gone half a block.

The flicker of a match caught his eye. The stalwart man slowed his pace. He stepped into the shelter of an unused doorway.

The man with the match, catching the click of the other's footsteps, sidled over to the same spot.

"That you, Cliff?" came the little man's whisper.

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"Yes." The response was a low one. "Anything new, Hawkeye?"

"Goofy Ketch just ducked out of the Pink Rat," informed the little man. "He's been palling around with Hunk Robo. Is Hunk down at the Black Ship?"

"Haven't seen him there."

"Think he's over at Red Mike's?"

"Clyde Burke's covering there. Reporters get by at Red Mike's. Burke's looking for Hunk, like I am. No word from him."

"There's only one place they might meet up, then. That new joint in back of Sooky's hockshop. Let's ankle over there, Cliff."

THE two men set out together, silently picking their course through alleyways. Their course showed familiarity with the underworld. Their actions indicated that their quest had been a constant one.

Unlike in appearance, these two were working for a common cause. The little man was known as "Hawkeye," a familiar prowler through the bad lands. The stalwart man was Cliff Marsland, a reputed killer. Both were masking their true characters. Hawkeye and Cliff were agents of The Shadow.

With Clyde Burke, Classic reporter, also on the job, Hawkeye and Cliff had been scouring the underworld in search for some trace of Beak Latzo. So far, they had gained no inkling of the mobleader's whereabouts. Night after night had brought failure in the quest.

On certain evenings, another searcher had also been on the job: The Shadow, himself. Both Cliff and Hawkeye had contacted at times with their chief. Yet no trace had yet been gained. Beak Latzo, if in Manhattan, was well buried.

Lately, The Shadow's agents had altered their mode of search. They had begun to watch gorillas. This was in accordance with The Shadow's orders and it showed the craftiness of that mysterious chieftain. For The Shadow knew that if Beak Latzo should become dangerous he would require the services of mobsters. The best way, therefore, to balk Beak in crime was to look for thugs who might be members of a crew that Beak was forming.

"Hunk" Robo had been picked as a suspicious-looking gorilla. He was one who kept popping in and out; a hard man to follow.

Hawkeye had left the search for Hunk to Cliff and Clyde. He had concentrated upon "Goofy" Ketch, Hunk's pal. To-night he had spotted Goofy, but the man had given him the slip.

The Shadow's agents had neared Sooky's pawnshop. Here their courses separated. Hawkeye sidled across a street and ducked into the cover of stacked ash cans. Cliff picked the alleyway on which the new dive was located. He strolled along, descended a flight of steps and thrust open a door.

Cliff stepped immediately into a small, stone-walled room. Grog-drinking ruffians, seated about at tables, looked up through the smoke-filled atmosphere to survey the intruder. Faces were challenging; then came recognition. Patrons of the new joint waved in greeting to Cliff Marsland.

The Shadow's agent strolled over and sat down at a table. He began to chat with mobsters who had

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recognized him. Meanwhile, he glanced about curiously; as one would when viewing a place for the first time.

Under cover of that natural action Cliff spied the men he wanted. Goofy Ketch and Hunk Robo, brawny, rough-garbed gorillas, were slouched in a corner, chatting as they leaned across a table.

No need to inform Hawkeye. As minutes passed, Cliff knew that the little spotter would be ready. For Cliff, if he had failed to see the men he wanted, would have made only a short stay in the dive. The longer that Cliff lingered within, the surer would Hawkeye be that the quarry had been spied.

Fifteen minutes went by. Goofy looked at a watch; then growled to Hunk. The two mobsters arose and slouched from the dive.

Cliff paid no attention to their departure. But he prepared to leave as soon as convenient. He was merely allowing time so that no one would suspect him of having interest in the activities of Goofy and Hunk.

OUTSIDE, Hawkeye saw the two mobsters appear. The little man gave them leeway. He made no move until both Goofy and Hunk had looked about to satisfy themselves that they were not being watched.

Then, as the pair strolled down an alleyway, Hawkeye sneaked out from behind the ash cans and took up the trail. Stealthy, at times almost furtive, the little man made amends for his slip-up earlier to-night. Not once did he lose track of his quarry.

Five minutes after Goofy and Hunk had left, Cliff Marsland strolled from the dive that he had visited. He walked two blocks, found a cigar store that had a pay telephone and entered to make a call. A response came after Cliff had dialed, a quiet voice over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

Cliff reported. Hawkeye had gained a trail. His report would soon be forthcoming. In his report, Cliff gave the location of the dive from which Hawkeye had begun the trail. His call finished, Cliff left the cigar store.

SOMEWHERE in Manhattan white hands were busy beneath the flickering glare of a bluish lamp. The Shadow was in his sanctum, that hidden abode wherein he made his plans. A tiny bulb blinked from the opposite wall. The hands reached for earphones.

"Burbank speaking," came a voice.

"Report," whispered The Shadow.

The report came. Word from Cliff; none as yet from Hawkeye. The Shadow hissed instructions. The earphones clattered; the little bulb went out. Then the blue light clicked. The sanctum was in darkness. A swish announced The Shadow's departure.

Fifteen minutes later, a blackened shape glided beneath the glow of a street lamp in the vicinity of Sooky's pawnshop. That was a momentary manifestation of The Shadow's mist-enshrouded presence.

Later, the same figure appeared weirdly at the entrance of an alleyway. It vanished into darkness. One minute passed; then a slight hiss came through gloom. A match flickered: Hawkeye's signal.

The trailing agent had reported to Burbank. He had been instructed to contact with The Shadow at this point.

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As his match glimmered out, Hawkeye sensed a swish closed by. He heard a whispered voice:

"Report."

"Trailed them to the first alley past the old Midway Garage," informed Hawkeye, cautiously. "Last house on the right. Guys there waiting for them. They went inside; the other birds moved off."

"Destination?"

"A touring car. Half a block away. Didn't recognize none of them. But it looks like some guy maybe Beak Latzo was crawling from his hideout."

"Report to Burbank," ordered The Shadow. "Contact with Marsland. Vincent to be ready with coupe. Cover with Marsland. Join Vincent in emergency."

A swish. Hawkeye blinked in the darkness. The Shadow was gone. No further sound marked the direction of his departure.

It was eerie, even to Hawkeye. Then, recovering from his momentary amazement, the little agent scurried off through the darkness to follow The Shadow's orders.

FIVE minutes passed. Then came motion in an alleyway. It was the same narrow thoroughfare that Lucky Ortiz had taken on his visit some nights ago, to Beak Latzo's hide-out. It was The Shadow's turn to visit that secluded spot.

Invisible in the thick gloom, The Shadow reached the locked door. A probing pick came into his gloved hand. The Shadow inserted the tool in the lock and began a silent twisting. Gradually the lock yielded.

Opening the door by inches, The Shadow shifted his unseen form into the darkened hall.

He closed the door behind him and locked it. So far, his work had been amazingly silent. Moving through darkness, The Shadow found the stairway. He ascended. A stealthy, noiseless figure, he arrived in the upper hall.

A short way off, The Shadow discerned two slight traces of light. They came from the cracks of door frames, one on each side of the hall. Moving forward, The Shadow listened at one door. He could hear the slight murmur of guarded voices.

The Shadow chose the other door. It was locked. He probed it; the barrier yielded and opened as he turned the knob. Light glimmered into the hall; then The Shadow blocked the illumination with his body. He stepped into the room and eased the door shut behind him.

The Shadow was in Beak Latzo's hide-out.

Tall and spectral, the master investigator loomed like a being from some fantastic world. Close by the door, he used his pick to lock the barrier. It was a timely action. For, as The Shadow lingered, he heard a door open on the other side of the hall. Some one came across and tried Beak's door; then went back again.

Goofy and Hunk were on guard, their job to see that no one entered. They had been stationed in the room opposite. They had not heard The Shadow enter; but they had gone through the routine of trying Beak's door to make sure that it had not been disturbed.

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

THE Shadow looked about Beak's hide-out. He opened drawers in a lopsided bureau; there he found nothing but odd items of clothing. Softly, he opened the door of a closet. A dressing-gown was hanging there; also a new suit of clothes.

The Shadow reached into pockets. His hand encountered crinkly wads of paper. The Shadow drew them out and spread each in turn. He looked at the first sheet. It was the note that Lucky Ortz had brought from Dangler's.

The second letter was more recent. It, too, was from Steve Zurk. The scrawl was brief but pointed. The Shadow read it quickly:

Beak:

First lay: Theobald Luftus, Monday night. Penthouse, Swithin Apartments. Grab everything. Hold off until nine bells. Go the limit. Steve.

The Shadow thrust the first note back into the pocket of Beak's discarded suit. He took the new note the one just read to a table. There he found a sheet of paper. He produced a pen and began to duplicate the message.

Though his procedure was rapid, The Shadow produced a remarkable imitation of the scrawl. The ink dried; The Shadow placed the original sheet beneath his cloak. He crumpled his duplicated message and went to the closet, where he placed it in Beak's pocket.

The Shadow had gauged the time. He had arrived here at quarter past eight. It was not yet eight-thirty. He still had opportunity to reach the penthouse at the Swithin Apartments.

Leaving everything apparently as he had found it. The Shadow went to the door and unlocked it.

Stepping into the hall, he closed the door behind him and carefully relocked it. Cautiously, he began to draw the pick from the keyhole. It was at that moment that a warning came: the opening of a door across the hall.

Light flooded the hallway as The Shadow wheeled backward from Beak Latzo's door. A sharp oath sounded as a tough-faced man yanked a glimmering revolver from his coat pocket. The fellow who spat the challenge was Hunk Robo.

At the very moment of his stealthy departure, luck had tricked The Shadow. Ready to fare forth on a mission against crime, he was confronted by the watchers who had remained to guard Beak Latzo's hide-out.

CHAPTER VII. THE BAD LANDS RISE

HUNK ROBO had gained a remarkable opportunity. Stepping from the room across the hall, he had spotted The Shadow at a most timely moment. For The Shadow, cautious in action, was fully occupied in removing his pick from Beak Latzo's door.

Coming up with his rod, Hunk fired for the spinning form in black. But in his aim, Hunk calculated that The Shadow would whirl to face him. He failed to gather that The Shadow would also perform a fading movement.

Quick in his twist. The Shadow had dropped away from the door. He did not dive in the direction of the stairs, as Hunk might have figured. Instead, he made his sidling movement toward the front of the hall.

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

Hunk's shot, a quick one, splintered the face of the door where The Shadow had been. But the bullet was inches wide. Glimpsing the direction of The Shadow's fade-away, Hunk aimed again. This time he was too late.

The Shadow had neither dropped nor put away the pick that he still gripped in his right hand. Instead, he used his left to whisk an automatic from beneath his cloak. Hunk beat him to the first shot; but The Shadow gained the bulge on the second.

The automatic roared its answer to Hunk's first thrust. The mobster paused, finger on trigger, then gave a sickly snarl. He slumped straight to the floor, a victim of The Shadow's deadly aim.

Behind Hunk was Goofy Ketch. This gorilla was quick with a gat. He had come up with Hunk's first shot. He was aiming as his pal collapsed. But Goofy gained no chance to fire. The Shadow did not wait until Hunk's body was clear away. He fired a second shot while Hunk was on his way to the floor.

The bullet clipped Goofy. The mobster dropped his gun and staggered backward. Doubled, he blundered against the edge of the door; then, just as The Shadow expected him to sprawl, Goofy gave the door a slam.

A moment later came the sound of a turning key. Hunk lay dead, in the hall; Goofy, wounded, was in the room beyond the barrier. The Shadow's laugh sounded sinister in the new darkness that had come to the hallway.

No time to deal with Goofy. The Shadow had other work. Confident that his enemy was severely wounded, he headed for the stairs and made a quick descent. As he reached the ground floor, he heard pounding at the outer portal.

There was reason for The Shadow's swift departure. This building lay on the fringe of the bad lands. Thugs were abroad to-night. Others, apparently, had been stationed close to the empty hide-out.

One inkling that The Shadow was engaged in combat would mean the hue and cry of hordes. The Shadow did not fear such opposition; but he did not want to entail the delay that new fights might produce.

Turning, The Shadow headed for the rear of the building. He reached a closed door. His gloved fingers found a bolt. He drew the fastening and yanked the door open. Air whiffed into the hallway from an outer court.

Then came blinding light. Some one, stationed outside, had spotted the opening door.

As The Shadow stood revealed by the glare of a powerful flashlight, hoarse cries of recognition came from a pair of outer watchers. Revolvers barked as The Shadow dropped back from view. Vengeful forms leaped forward.

THE SHADOW'S retreat ended with abruptness. Automatics thundered out from the hallway as the cloaked fighter pumped lead into the advancers. The flashlight went clicking upon stone.

At that instant, the front door snapped. Another light shot down the hall. The Shadow wheeled to meet its glare. He fired simultaneously with a revolver shot from the front.

A bullet whistled through the swaying sleeve of The Shadow's cloak. The revolver shot was wide. But The Shadow's aim was true. Again a flashlight went clattering; its owner sprawled upon the front steps.

Shots from the outer darkness. There were others in the alley. Then, like echoes, came further shots from

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beyond. The fire from the front door ceased as wild oaths snarled from vicious lips. The Shadow knew the answer.

Hawkeye and Cliff had covered. Those echoes were their automatics. They were starting conflict with the invaders who had come from the front. The clear path was through the rear.

The Shadow spun through the opened door. He spied a passageway that led to the next street. He headed in that direction.

A lamplight glared straight ahead. It made his path a bad one a course that The Shadow would have avoided under ordinary circumstances. But to-night, The Shadow had reason to get clear in a hurry. He was hazarding the chance that he would reach a deserted street.

Abandoning caution, he swept out into the open. A space between houses on the opposite side such was The Shadow's new objective. But luck again tricked The Shadow in his purpose. A cry came from down the street:

"The Shadow!"

Revolver shots. The Shadow whirled to deal with distant skulkers who were bounding into view. One enemy spun about. The others dived for cover. Then came a shot from the other direction. Wheeling, The Shadow saw new foemen.

Chance mobsters, cruising in a battered sedan, had come into this street. They, too, had spied The Shadow. Had they held their fire, luck might have favored them. But one man had been too quick on the trigger. His wild, long-range shot had been The Shadow's cue.

Automatics belched. The Shadow's blasts were withering. Aimed for the front of the sedan, one bullet clipped a leaning mobster who was about to aim. Another shot found the windshield, shattered it and wounded the driver. The car went hurtling to the curb.

Wheeling, The Shadow took to the passage between the buildings. But now his course had taken on the semblance of a flight. This district, it seemed, was teeming with toughened crooks. The cry, was passing along:

"The Shadow!"

Distant shots from far behind. They told The Shadow that his agents were still engaged in combat. Boldly, he headed back toward the street that he had left. Springing from the blackened wall of a building, he came face to face with a pair of pursuing thugs.

Action was swift. The Shadow's long arms swung. Aiming thugs staggered as automatics thudded against their skulls. Springing away from the spot, The Shadow headed down the street while cries arose from behind him. Men of the bad lands were taking up his trail.

The new maneuver had its effect two blocks away. Cliff and Hawkeye, ambuscaded behind stone steps, were putting up a fight against attackers. Suddenly they saw their enemies turn and head for the direction of the shouts.

About to follow, Cliff sprang to his feet. Hawkeye grabbed his companion's arm and pointed down the street. Blue-coated patrolmen were coming up from a new direction. The siren of a patrol car whined in the

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distance.

No chance to aid The Shadow. Instinctively, the agents knew that he had drawn off the attackers. He had chosen a course of his own. Their duty was to follow instructions.

Diving through an alleyway that offered them retreat, Cliff and Hawkeye scudded toward the spot where Harry Vincent, a waiting agent, was posted with his coupe.

CHAOS had swept this neighborhood. The bluecoats spied by Cliff and Hawkeye were but the vanguard of the law. Police were converging toward spots where shots were heard; but the maelstrom of the district was ever on the move.

For The Shadow, following a devious trail, was burrowing deeper toward the underworld, reversing the very course that underworld hordes expected him to follow. He had dropped from sight, leaving bewildered ruffians wondering where he had gone.

Oddly, the spot where the fighting had begun was no longer a center of excitement. Wounded mobsters had stumbled away before the arrival of the police. Those who remained in the actual vicinity of Beak Latzo's hideout were dead with one exception.

That was Goofy Ketch. The lone gorilla was still in the locked room where he had ducked to avoid The Shadow. He had rested gasping on the floor; now, as he heard firing fade, the wounded mobster managed to rise.

Unlocking his door, Goofy stumbled over Hunk's body. Catching himself, he blundered across the hall; there he produced a key and laboriously unlocked the door of Beak's room. With one hand clasped tightly to his body, Goofy looked about.

He saw no sign that the room had been entered. He opened the closet door. There he saw an open suitcase beneath the hanging garments. With one hand, the gorilla snatched down suit and dressing-gown. He stowed them in the bag.

Moving to the bureau, he managed to open the drawers and pluck out the rest of Beak's clothing. He dropped these items into the suitcase, bent to clasp the bag shut; then staggered from the room, carrying the suitcase with him.

Goofy stumbled badly as he descended the stairway to the lower hall. Again he caught himself and managed to make the outer door. Fresh air revived him. Though his pace was faltering, the gorilla made steady progress as he traveled on to the deserted street.

MEANWHILE, police were spreading out through an area that began two blocks away. They had picked up wounded mobsters; they had gathered in a few hiding prisoners. But the law had moved no further into the underworld. Silence proclaimed that the fighting was ended. The police were waiting for reserves.

Within the police lines, mobsters and other riff-raff still roamed at large. Had the police spread out, these ruffians would have returned to the region that they had left. As it was, they were lurking, sullen, awaiting a new opportunity to search for The Shadow.

At one spot, two mobsters were talking in gruff voices. They were close beside an old brick house, where broken windows gave gaping reflections to a street lamp. They were discussing the fact that fully two-score denizens of the bad lands were out to get The Shadow.

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One mobster turned to look down the street. When he swung about to speak to his companion, the fellow was gone. Instead of his companion, the mobster faced a being in black.

Burning eyes surveyed him from beneath a slouch hat. The mobster was staring into the mouth of an automatic.

"The Shadow!"

With that hoarse outcry, the thug hurled himself forward blindly.

Up came a gloved fist. Hand, weighted with automatic, caught the crook's chin. The mobster went spinning to the sidewalk.

Up the street was the front of a darkened store, with a narrow open space at the side. Wheeling, The Shadow headed there, crossing the street as he did so. Then came a cry from a corner just beyond the store. Half a dozen lurkers sprang into view. Revolvers tongued flame.

The Shadow stopped short. Then he became a weaving, swaying shape that blasted long decisive flashes from the muzzles of unlimbered automatics. Bullets sizzled toward the foemen. Slugs ricocheted from sidewalks.

Mobsters wavered before the withering cannonade. One sagged; another staggered; the rest went yelping, diving for safety past the corner. The Shadow had given these rats a taste of metal. They dared not face his swift barrage.

As the street cleared of scummy foe, The Shadow wheeled again. His tall form merged swiftly with the darkness beside the closed store. The place was nothing but an old furniture shop, one that needed little protection against burglary.

The Shadow found a grated window. He used an automatic as a lever to pry the grating loose on its hinge. He pried at the window; it came open. The Shadow entered, closing grating and sash behind him.

New mobsters had come into the street. They saw no signs of The Shadow. They thought that he had performed another swift departure. They passed the blackened store, without attempt to enter it.

INSIDE, The Shadow had discovered a little windowless office. He pressed the light switch; his cloaked figure made an ominous shape as The Shadow bent above a telephone. He was putting in a call to Burbank.

A ticking clock showed three minutes before nine. No time remained for The Shadow to reach the Swithin Apartments before that hour. He could not count upon his agents; they might still be loose, unable to report.

One chance alone remained: A tipoff to the police. The Shadow whispered instructions as Burbank answered. The contact man acknowledged the orders. Burbank was to make a prompt call to headquarters, keeping his identity unknown.

The Shadow hung up the receiver. He rested a short while, then made his way back through the store and out the window. He reached the street to find that mobsters had departed. Police had not yet arrived.

With a low, weird laugh, The Shadow began a new course from this district. Luckless would be the mobsters who might meet him now. For The Shadow, though heading toward the Swithin Apartments, was too late to beat Beak Latzo there.

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Should he encounter underworld denizens, he would no longer avoid them now that his set task was thwarted. He was ready for any fray, prepared to deal fury like that which he had loosed when he saw the opportune store from which a phone call could be made.

The way had cleared, however. Mobsters had scattered to search elsewhere and to escape the advent of the police. Yet The Shadow, though steady in his gait, showed no haste.

He had left the matter of Theobald Luftus in the hands of the law. Delayed through misadventure, he had been forced to trust the mission of rescue to others.

CHAPTER VIII. CROOKS MOVE

A CLOCK was chiming nine from the mantelpiece of an oddly furnished room. A sour-faced old man was seated in a Morris chair, reading a newspaper. This was Theobald Luftus, in his penthouse atop the Swithin Apartments.

Though it was evening, Luftus was still engaged in perusing a morning journal. He was behind time so far as the day was concerned; his establishment showed that he was years backward in his environment.

For the furnishings of this penthouse were old pieces that Luftus had brought from an antiquated house. They were evidences even to the soiled, dingy curtains that Theobald Luftus preferred not to spend money whenever expense could be avoided.

Beyond an old sideboard stood a battered safe, another relic of the past. As a strong box, that steel container was no more than a piece of junk. Yet Luftus apparently considered it good enough to protect his belongings. For the old man's face registered full signs of security.

Some one knocked at the door of this piecemeal living room. Luftus croaked an order to enter. His bald head shone in the light as he looked upward through his glasses. Then an expression of alarm came upon his withered countenance. Luftus had expected a servant to enter through the door. Instead, two masked men stepped into view.

"What what is the meaning of this?" blurted Luftus. "Who who are you? What have you done with Barry?"

"You mean the flunky?" came a growl. The voice was Beak Latzo's. "Don't worry about him. We're bringing him along. Here he is."

As Beak and his companion stepped aside, two more masked men entered. Between them they had a haggard prisoner. The fellow was the servant who had admitted them. The one whom Luftus had called Barry.

Rough hands sent Barry spinning into a corner. The servant, a corpulent, middle-aged man, cringed as he stared hopelessly toward his master.

Theobald Luftus, quivering with indignation, tried to speak. Beak flourished a revolver under the old man's chin. Luftus backed against the wall.

"What's the combination to that box?" growled Beak, nudging a thumb toward the safe.

"I won't give it," challenged Luftus, in a quavering tone.

"You won't?" began Beak. "Well, we'll see —"

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"Hold it!" The interruption came from another raider. This masked man was Lucky Ortz. "I can crack that piece of junk with a hammer and a cold chisel. Watch me."

He produced the tools and stepped to the corner. The first strokes indicated that he could make good his boast. Chunks chipped from the edge of the door as Lucky began his efficient work.

"Like cutting cheese," scoffed Lucky. "All I need is a start; then I'll jimmy the box. Let the old dub hang on to his secret. This is a laugh."

Luftus, his hands half raised, was clenching his fists excitedly. He recognized that the task was an easy one for Lucky. He began to blab half incoherently. Beak caught his words and snorted.

"Lay off, Lucky," ordered Beak. "The old boy don't want his trick box ruined. Saving it to amuse his grandchildren. Here let me at it; he's spilled the combo."

LUFTUS gasped in horror-stricken fashion. Almost unwittingly, the old man had passed this news. He watched Beak step up and turn the dial, while Lucky stood by with hammer and chisel. The door of the safe came open.

Inside were stacks of envelopes, bound with rubber bands. Most of them appeared to contain documents of importance; but with the bundles were loosely arranged sheaves of correspondence.

Beak produced a soft cloth bag. Without ceremony, he and Lucky began to dump the stacks into the bag.

A hoarse cry from Luftus. The old man faltered forward, his eyes ablaze with fury. One of the gorillas blocked him, shoving a revolver muzzle against the old man's chin. Luftus subsided, backing close to Barry.

"Ropes," ordered Beak, as he and Lucky completed the rifling of the safe.

"We're going to tie those two geezers and let them cool a while –"

He stopped short and held up a hand as he was interrupted by the ringing of a phone bell. He pointed to the table where the telephone was resting.

"You'd better answer it, Lucky," he said, cautiously. "It might be one of these gorillas you left down at the hideout.

"Chances are it ain't," protested Lucky. "Let 'em ring. They'll think the old mug here is out."

"Yeah? They'll figure something's wrong. This bird Luftus looks like he never goes out. Answer it."

"But what about my voice?"

"Fake it. Tell them you're Barry."

Lucky nodded. He picked up the telephone and spoke in a tone that was a thin disguise for the servant's. He heard a gasping tone across the wire. His own voice changed. Lucky spoke in his usual tone.

"Yes," he said, quickly. "This is Lucky... Yes... What? He got Hunk? Whew..."

Lucky turned quickly to Beak.

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"It's Goofy," he informed. "He's in his own hangout. Had to scram. The Shadow blew in on your hide-out."

"And he got Hunk?" demanded Beak.

Lucky nodded.

"Find out where he went from there," ordered Beak, in a tense growl.

Lucky talked over the wire. This time he had trouble in getting Goofy's reply. His tone was troubled when he turned to Beak a second time.

"He may be on his way here," explained Lucky. "So Goofy says. He figures The Shadow could be anywhere."

"Did he get into my room?" demanded Beak.

"No," returned Lucky. "That's one break. Hunk and Goofy spotted him outside the door."

"Then we're all right," assured Beak. "If he didn't get those letters that were in my pockets. But if Goofy blew the place, The Shadow might go back there."

"Goofy brought your duds with him," stated Lucky. "I'll tell him to look in the pockets."

LUCKY spoke over the wire. At first he did not receive a response. Then Goofy's voice clicked on the line. Lucky spoke. A pause; again Goofy's voice clicked. Lucky turned to Beak and nodded.

"He's got the letters," assured Lucky.

"Great," acknowledged Beak. "Tell him to burn them in a hurry right now –"

Lucky nodded. He gave the order to Goofy, adding comments of his own. There came another pause a full three quarters of a minute. Then Lucky began to listen intently. He had one hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone while he reported Goofy's words to Beak.

"Goofy's read the letters," he assured. "They're both from Steve... He's burned them. Ashes out the window... Wait a minute, I can't get what he's saying... Something I can't get..."

Lucky suddenly dropped the receiver on the hook. He turned his masked face toward Beak. An oath came from Lucky's lips.

"Goofy's croaked!" was Lucky's added exclamation. "He was telling me he was wounded I could hear him coughing! Then he gasped and I could hear him clatter to the floor, the telephone along with him. The Shadow must have got him!"

"Come on!" snarled Beak. "We're moving!"

GORILLAS seemed eager to go. They grabbed hold of Luftus and began to wind a rope about his wrists. The old man uttered a defiant protest.

"Shut up, you old fool!" snarled Beak. "You want a thump from the butt of my rod?"

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"You can't silence me," crackled Luftus. "Never! I'll tell what I've heard!" He was fighting free from the mobsters. "I'll tell about Steve about this man here the one you called Lucky –"

Fiercely, Luftus broke loose. Springing forward, he hurled his clawlike hands at Beak's throat. The attack was effective because of its unexpectedness. Beak went staggering back, trying to bring his gun into action. Luftus yanked at his mask while the gorillas fell upon the old man from behind.

Then came a sharp cry from Barry. The servant came leaping forward from the wall, to fling himself upon Lucky. Barry had seen that ruffian about to perform a murderous act. The servant wanted to prevent it; but his thrust came too late.

Lucky's gat spoke straight for Luftus. The old man collapsed as the gorillas seized him. His body writhed upon the floor. Then Lucky went jouncing sidewise as a furious form landed on him. Ripping like a demon, Barry was clawing at this killer who had slain his master.

Lucky lost his gun as he sprawled on the floor. Barry, furious, seized it and tried to aim in vengeance. Another gun spoke. This time it was Beak's rod. Barry gasped; sidled to the floor and lay there groaning.

Beak ripped off his mask and hurled it into the open bag. He motioned the others to do the same. They complied. Hoisting the bundle, Beak tucked it under his arm. He snapped an order.

"Out by the service elevator," he ordered. "The way we came in. Get going before they come up to find out about those shots."

"I had to let the old duke have it, Beak," declared Lucky. "He was on you and he was going to squawk –"

"You don't hear me crabbing do you," broke in Beak. "Didn't I give it to the flunky when he was on your neck? Couldn't he blab, too? They had it coming both of them."

Four raiders hastened through the door. Silence followed their departure. Theobald Luftus was dead. Barry's groan had subsided. Death held sway in this antiquated room.

Murder had fallen despite The Shadow's efforts to prevent it. Though rescue was already on the way, Theobald Luftus and his servant had succumbed. Had Luftus used discretion, he and Barry could have remained alive, waiting the arrival of the police.

But Luftus had used wild judgment. Murder had followed robbery. The track which The Shadow must from now on follow would be a trail of blood.

CHAPTER IX. THE ONLY CLUE

SIX minutes after the departure of Beak Latzo and Lucky Ortiz, an elevator arrived at the penthouse level. From it stepped a swarthy, stocky man, who was followed by three others.

The leading arrival was Detective Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force. The other men constituted a squad that Joe had brought with him.

The detectives went through the apartment. They arrived at the living room. A brief glance told them that they had come too late. They saw the bodies of Luftus and Barry; beyond the crumpled men the yawning front of the rifled safe.

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Joe bent over each body in turn. He saw at once that Theobald Luftus was dead. But Barry's form seemed feebly alive. Joe raised the servant's head. The semblance of a groan came from Barry's lips.

Glassy eyes stared at Joe Cardona. It was plain that Barry's wound was mortal. Yet there was a chance that the servant could speak.

Joe's gruff voice came in urging terms. Barry's lips moved.

Slow, gasping words. Yet Cardona heard them as the faithful servant tried his utmost to explain what had occurred. The statement came with breaks.

"The the funds," gasped Barry. "Thousands of dollars gone. Murson Murson the broker he was here. He brought them brought them all with him –"

A hideous cough. Blood showed on Barry's lips. The servant sank in Cardona's grasp.

Joe lowered the body to the floor. He came to his feet, drew out a pad and pencil and wrote down the words that he had heard.

Detectives were prowling about. They saw no sign of the departed raiders. One sleuth, out in a side hall of the penthouse, passed by the door of the service elevator, thinking it was the entrance of a locked closet.

By the time that Joe Cardona had called his squad together, their consensus was that the killers had made a deliberate get-away down through the regular elevator.

Joe went out to quiz the white-faced operator who was standing in the car, aghast at the news of murder.

"How long have you been on duty?" questioned Joe.

"Only half an hour," answered the lad. "I have the night shift. Supposed to be on at nine o'clock I came early tonight –"

"Any other cars running?"

"Only this one."

"Your name?"

The operator gave it.

"And the fellow you relieved?"

The operator gave that name also.

"Where did he go?" asked Joe.

"To a movie, I think," said the operator. "I don't know which one. He had a date."

"Did he say anything about bringing people up and down from this penthouse?"

"Not a word."

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

THOUGH the shooting of Luftus and Barry had unquestionably been recent, Joe Cardona had no proof that it had occurred within the last half hour. In view of the operator's testimony, he was inclined to believe that it had happened during the previous shift.

With this false start, the ace detective turned to routine. Unaware that there was a service elevator to the penthouse, he put in a call to headquarters. While waiting for the arrival of a police surgeon, Joe began an inspection of the death room. The other detectives watched him as he examined the safe.

Out in the hallway of the penthouse, a slight tremble occurred at the doors of the service elevator. Peering eyes gazed through a crack; then the doors opened. A figure came into view. Tall, cloaked and sinister, The Shadow had arrived to find this mode of entry to the penthouse.

Hearing the sound of voices, the weird intruder moved toward the living room. Standing just outside the door, he took in the entire scene.

Cardona had stepped back from the door of the safe. He was eyeing the interior of the strong box while his squad watched him.

The bodies were fully visible upon the floor. The Shadow, from his lookout post, was able to visualize the entire setting. He remained there, listening to gruff comments that came from Cardona.

The telephone rang. Cardona gestured to a detective. The Shadow faded as the man turned in his direction. Joe's aid did not see the figure vanishing from the open door. The sleuth picked up the telephone. He growled a hello, listened, then turned to Cardona.

"A news hound downstairs," he informed. "Burke of the Classic. Wants to come up."

"Tell him to wait for the police surgeon," stated Joe. "You'd better go down, Cassidy. Stay in the lobby. Send Burke up with the doc."

The Shadow was sweeping along the hallway before Cassidy reached the door. He disappeared beyond the turn to the service elevator. After he heard the clang of Cassidy's departure, The Shadow stepped aboard his own elevator and closed the doors behind him. He began a descent.

It chanced that one of the other dicks came out into the hall just after The Shadow's departure. This sleuth heard the dull noise of the service elevator. But it was mingled with the sound of the regular lift, in which Cassidy was descending. Hence the incident of The Shadow's departure passed unnoticed.

The Shadow had seen the spot of crime. He knew that he had arrived too late to save Theobald Luftus. The news that Clyde Burke was coming was all that The Shadow needed.

Evidently the reporter had put in a routine call to Burbank. The contact man, always alert in The Shadow's service, had told Clyde to call headquarters. Phoning there, Clyde had learned of murder at the Swithin Apartments. He had beaten the police surgeon to the place where Cardona was.

FIVE minutes after The Shadow's exit, Clyde Burke came up with the police surgeon. The two formed an odd pair as they entered the penthouse living room. Clyde was a frail but wiry chap who looked underfed. The police surgeon, heavy-jowled and overweight, looked as though he had been summoned while in the midst of a late dinner, which, as a matter of fact, he had.

"Outside, Burke," ordered Cardona brusquely, as he spied the reporter. "Wait until after the examination."

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Clyde strolled along the hall. He turned the corner; there he stopped short and noted the doors of the service elevator. He strolled back to the entrance of the living room. Lingered beyond the portal, he heard a discussion between Cardona and the police surgeon.

"It can't have happened after nine o'clock, doc!" Joe was exclaiming. "There's nobody been up or down since the operator came on his shift. These victims must have been shot before that."

"Your own statement supports my finding," returned the surgeon. "I tell you that this one man" he pointed to Barry "could not have lived for more than a dozen minutes, if that long. Yet you talked to him."

"Then how did those killers get away?" demanded Cardona, savagely. "I can't figure it." He turned toward the door and noted Clyde. "Why the snooping, Burke? I told you to stay out."

"Just found something, Joe," reported Clyde, in a friendly tone. "A service elevator around the corner of the hall. Thought maybe you'd passed it up –"

Clyde broke off as Cardona came hurriedly forward. The detective thrust past, followed the direction that Clyde had indicated and pulled up in front of the telltale doors. He swung about to the two detectives who had followed him.

"Didn't you spot this, Morey?" he questioned, as he indicated one dick. "You looked around out here –"

"Thought it was a closet door," interposed Morey. "Looked like it was locked. The guys we wanted were gone –"

"Are you dumb!" fumed Cardona. "Well, they're gone, all right. With plenty of time for a good get-away. This is the way they blew. Where's that regular elevator operator –"

"Went down again," broke in Morey.

"Then ring for him," snapped Joe. "Get busy. Here come along; I'll ring myself. You might muff it."

WITH that sarcastic thrust, Cardona headed for the main elevators. The telephone was ringing in the living room; he turned in that direction, gesturing for Clyde Burke to press the elevator button. Even before Clyde did so, the sound of mechanism issued from the shaft. The elevator was coming up.

Clyde pressed the button anyhow. He heard Cardona coming back from the living room. The detective's face was sour.

"Worse and more of it," informed Joe. "You know who's on his way up? The police commissioner. Cassidy just called me. Listen, Burke; stroll around the corner and stay there until I send for you. The commissioner might be sore if he knew a reporter got here ahead of him."

Clyde grinned and nodded. He turned about and drifted down the hall, making the turn just before he heard the sound of the arriving elevator.

Glancing back, he caught a glimpse of a stalwart man of military appearance, stepping from the elevator. A momentary flash of a determined face, with short, pointed mustache. Cassidy's call had been correct. The arrival was Police Commissioner Ralph Weston.

Clyde paced the hall. Weston and Cardona had gone into the living room. The reporter knew that the two

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were in conference. He wanted to learn their subject of discussion; but he could only wait in hope that he would be admitted later.

Morey appeared to announce that other reporters were downstairs, according to a call from Cassidy. Weston had said to keep them there. Clyde took this news glumly. Five minutes passed, then Morey reappeared.

"Slide in," said the detective. "Cardona's fixed it for you. The commissioner is going to make a statement for the newspapers. You're on the inside track, Burke."

Clyde nodded.

"But make out like you just came up," added Morey. "Cardona told me to go down and get you. Guess he doesn't want the commissioner to know he had you up here."

Another nod from Clyde. The reporter strolled about for a minute, then sauntered into the fixing room.

Weston observed his entrance and gave Clyde a short nod.

"Explain it, Cardona," ordered Weston.

"IT'S this way, Burke," stated Cardona. "We landed one clue to these murders. Just one. The servant here, talked for a few seconds before he died. Mentioned the name of Murson, old Luftus' broker. Said that Murson had been here. This is the servant's statement."

Clyde noted the paper that Cardona held out. Nodding, he copied it word for word.

"Murson's first name is Adolph," resumed Cardona. "We called his home from here. Then we got his secretary on the telephone. Murson is out of town. Supposed to have gone to Washington."

"A stall?" questioned Clyde.

"We're going to find out," returned Cardona. "They're bringing us his picture and we're going to watch all the railroad stations to see if the fellow leaves New York —"

"Omit that, Burke," snapped Weston, by way of interruption, as the reporter began to make a note. "The statement to the newspapers is this: Adolph Murson is wanted in connection with the murders of Theobald Luftus and his servant. From the servant's statement, it appears that Murson brought killers with him here to-night.

"Presumably the only man who could have known the value of securities in this rifled safe was Murson. His announcement this afternoon to the effect that he was leaving town is an indication of premeditated crime.

"We believe that he is still in New York. Not in Washington, as he said he would be. That sounds like an attempt at an alibi. He had an eleven o'clock appointment for to-morrow morning. He changed it to one-thirty, stating that he would not be back until then. One-thirty to-morrow afternoon."

"I can use all this?" questioned Clyde.

"All except the fact that we are watching the depots," returned Weston. "You may state that the police have begun an intensive search for Adolph Murson."

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"That Murson is still here in New York –"

"Yes, and that we have acted with a promptness that will prevent his departure from the city."

"That indicates that railroad stations, bridges, and the Holland Tunnel will be watched, commissioner."

"Perhaps so. But I am depending upon you to minimize the fact; and to have other reporters do the same."

"All right, commissioner, I think we can soft-pedal it. Particularly if we get Murson's picture."

"You will have it."

TWENTY minutes later, Clyde Burke and other reporters left the Swithin Apartments carrying photographs of Adolph Murson, brought by the broker's secretary. The other news hawks headed for their offices. But Clyde made a stop-over on his trip.

With plenty of time to make the edition, The Shadow's agent had a preliminary duty to perform. He stopped at a drug store and made a telephone call to Burbank. He gave the contact man full details, with a verbatim report of Barry's dying words.

Clyde considered the case as he rode by subway to the Classic office. In his opinion, it looked bad for Adolph Murson. Yet Clyde, knowing of The Shadow's search for Beak Latzo, could see cross purposes beneath the surface of crime.

Of one thing, Clyde felt sure. The Shadow, like the police, would look for the missing stock broker. And Clyde was willing to bet his bottom nickel that his mysterious chief would precede the law in its intensive search.

CHAPTER X. NEXT NOON

AT twelve o'clock the next noon, Jack Targon was seated at a desk in the office of the New Century Advertising Agency. The ex-convict was busy rewriting advertising copy a task that had been assigned him in order that he might gain experience.

A friendly hand dropped on Jack's shoulder. Jack looked up to recognize the austere face of Galen Flix, his new employer. Flix returned Jack's frank smile.

"You're going out to lunch with me, Targon," informed the advertising man. "We have an appointment with a friend of mine. Joseph Daykin."

"The importer?" questioned Jack, as he arose to get hat and coat. "The chap who hired Steve Zurk?"

"The same," said Flix with a nod. "And Zurk will be there also. Let us drop the subject until we meet for lunch."

Flix and Jack went from the office. They descended to the street and entered a hotel half a block away. In a quiet corner of the grillroom they found Daykin, a portly, tired-faced man, waiting with Steve.

Handshakes were exchanged. The four men ordered from the menu. Then, as they began their leisurely meal, Galen Flix looked from Jack Targon to Steve Zurk. Solemnly, the ad man came to the subject that had brought this meeting.

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"I presume," he stated, "that both of you have read to-day's newspapers?"

Nods from Jack and Steve.

"Then," added Flix, "you have read of the murders that took place in the Swithin Apartment. The killing of Theobald Luftus and his servant, Barry."

New nods.

"Luftus was a retired manufacturer," explained Flix. "His company places all its advertising through my agency. Moreover, it imports certain raw materials through the Daykin Importing Company.

"Therefore, Mr. Daykin and I are greatly concerned over the death of Theobald Luftus. We are anxious to see his murderer brought to justice. It occurred to us that you two men" he looked from Jack to Steve "might have opinions regarding that terrible crime. If so, we should be glad to hear them."

Jack Targon smiled slightly. Steve Zurk maintained a poker-faced countenance. It was Jack who spoke.

"I THINK the police are all wet," he declared. "They haven't got anything on this broker, Murson. It looks to me like a bunch of crude workers decided to bust in on Luftus, figuring the old gentleman had dough.

"The coppers muffed it. To cover up their dumbness, they're following this Murson steer. There's my opinion, Mr. Flix. But it's not much of a one."

"Why not?" questioned Flix.

"Well," replied Jack, soberly, "I'm trying to forget my past; but I'll talk about it for the time being. My specialty, when I was crooked, was confidence work. Swindles mostly; sometimes forgery. I stayed away from thugs.

"They're crude, those fellows are. I always figured that if they were really smart, they'd be in some other racket. But I don't know as much about them as I might. Steve here is the chap who can give you the expert opinion on that sort of crime."

Flix looked toward Steve. The dark-faced man gave a slow, reminiscent nod.

"What about it, Zurk?" questioned Flix, in an urging tone.

"Jack is part right about it," replied Steve. "And he's part wrong. That's my opinion, Mr. Flix."

"Can you specify?" questioned the ad man.

"Yes," nodded Steve. "It's a case of even chances. Maybe those killers just blundered into Luftus's place. Maybe they were wise to go there."

"Assuming that they had a planned purpose," urged Flix, "do you think that Murson was behind it?"

"Yes," declared Steve. "And I'll tell you why. If there was real swag in that box at Luftus's, Murson would have known it."

"That's the theory held by the police."

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"Yes. And it may be right. Wrong, you understand, if the raid was just hit or miss. Right, though, if there was any brains behind it."

"Do you think that Murson was with the killers?"

"It looks that way."

Jack Targon shook his head as Steve paused. The opinion did not agree with his.

"Murson would have stayed out of it," he assured. "You're getting into my field of experience, Steve. Murson, if he hired killers, would have acted smooth –"

"You never bought up a crew of gorillas, did you?" quizzed Steve.

"No," admitted Jack. "I wouldn't have been fool enough to deal with murderers."

"Why not?"

"Because I was smooth enough to handle my own jobs –"

"That's enough. You've hit it." Steve turned to Flix. "You hear what Jack says? He was smooth enough to lay off of mobs. He didn't need them."

"But you think that Murson –"

"Wasn't smooth enough. That's the answer, Mr. Flix. Here. Let me reason it out for you. I've seen enough dirty business to know how it works."

Toying with a spoon and a saltcellar. Steve began to unfold his idea. He used the articles to indicate persons concerned.

"HERE'S Murson," explained Steve, setting down the saltcellar with a thump. "A business man. A broker. He sees a chance to grab a lot of swag. He's scary though. Needs somebody to do his dirty work for him. So he finds some bum mobsters."

Steve set the spoon away from the saltcellar, to indicate the crooks approached by Murson. He lifted a half-filled glass of water and placed it at a new spot.

"Take Luftus," he decided, looking steadily at the glass of water. "He's the guy that has the stuff they want. A cinch for these gorillas, any time time want to go after it" he was pushing the spoon toward the glass "but Murson over here" he tapped the saltcellar "is on pins and needles."

"Why?" questioned Flix.

"For fear the mob will bungle the job," replied Steve. "And for another reason. He's worried that they'll beat it with the swag. Double-cross him. So he decides he'd better travel with them" spoon joined saltcellar "and take no chances either way."

"Logical," nodded Flix.

"That's the way it works," said Steve. "Well, Murson, to begin with, throws a bluff that he's leaving for

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Washington. Then he goes up there with the outfit. They turn berserk and Murson does the same. It's curtains for Luftus and his servant.

"The bulls get there. Barry tries to squawk. Who's the first person he mentions? Murson. He says, 'Murson brought' and then he croaks. What did Murson bring? The Mob. That's simple, isn't it?"

Flix and Daykin were nodding. But Jack Targon's eyes were steadily, fixed upon Steve Zurk's face. A grim smile began to form on Jack's lips. The former confidence man became narrow in his gaze. Then, suddenly, Jack changed his expression. He lighted a cigarette and puffed in meditative fashion, as though disinterested in the case under discussion.

"I'm no dick," asserted Steve, suddenly. He pushed spoon, saltcellar and glass aside. "Maybe Murson didn't go up with that outfit; but if he didn't, he probably stuck around outside and was ready to meet them when they came out. At least, that's the way a guy like him would have worked it.

"One way or the other. With the mob or waiting for them. What Barry said makes it look like he was with them. It's possible that he brought the fellows up to the penthouse; then went out, leaving them to do the dirty work. Barry's statement would cover that.

"But the law has pinned it on Murson and I think they've got the goods. They've hit a tough snag, though. I was looking at the evening newspapers, just before lunch. None of the elevator operators at the apartment knew Murson, although they said they'd seen a guy like his picture come in there yesterday afternoon."

"Do you think it was Murson?" inquired Flix.

"Sure," said Steve. "He probably went up to look over the lay. Make sure the swag was there. But when he hit with his helpers, he used the service elevator."

A pause. A waiter brought dessert. As the four men began to eat. Galen Flix made final comment.

"THE police are watching all outgoing trains," he stated. "They are also on watch at tubes, ferries and bridges. The evening papers commented on that fact something that the morning journals did not mention.

"Unquestionably, Murson will be apprehended. My worry was that he might not be the right man. But from what you have told us, Zurk, the law appears to be on the proper trail. What do you think of Zurk's opinion, Targon?"

"Steve knows his stuff," commented Jack, in a casual tone. "He's the one to give the opinion. Not me. Anyway, I hope they grab this bird Murson."

"So do I," declared Flix while Daykin nodded. Then, in an affable tone, the advertising man added: "Both Mr. Daykin and myself must apologize for bringing up this discussion. We know that crime is a subject that you two gentlemen find distasteful.

"But, under the circumstances, we felt a meeting desirable. Because Luftus was our mutual friend you understand. Let us forget the matter. How is our friend Perry Delhugh? Have either of you seen him lately?"

"I dropped in on him last night," declared Steve. "Along about seven o'clock. No it was later than that. After eight, I guess. I stayed there about an hour maybe longer."

"I expect to call on him this evening," declared Jack. His eyes were narrowing on Steve as he spoke. "Just for

a short chat."

Conversation turned to business. Flix and Daykin talked while their companions listened. All the while, Steve's eyes were steady on either Flix or Daykin. He seemed to be avoiding Jack Targon's gaze.

That was a fact that Jack alone noted. But Jack made no comment. At times, his lips pursed in knowing fashion. For Jack, despite his silence, had gained a definite opinion of his own.

His expression showed that he saw bluff behind the comments that Steve had made; that he believed the dark-faced man had concentrated on the theory of Murson's guilt in order to avoid too much discussion.

For Jack Targon knew Steve Zurk. He understood the secrets of Steve's past. He realized that he could easily have dropped remarks that might have worried his former pal. But Jack's silence was expressive. It showed that for the present, at least, he had decided to keep his real opinions to himself.

CHAPTER XI. THE HUNTED MAN

AT the time when four men were concluding their lunch in a Manhattan hotel, a fast train was speeding eastward toward the Jersey City terminal of the Central Railroad of New Jersey.

This was a Baltimore and Ohio limited that had left Washington about five hours earlier. Its eastern terminal was the depot of the Jersey Central; and passengers in the dining car were finishing their lunch in anticipation of a prompt arrival in Jersey City.

Among those in the dining car was a long-faced, dark-haired man with bushy brows and heavy mustache. Glancing from the window, he saw that the limited was nearing the long bridge that crossed Newark Bay. The man arose and went back to the club car.

Under his arm this individual carried a book that he had been reading. That accounted in part for the fact that he had not perused the morning newspapers in the club car. There was another angle, also, to his choice of reading.

Among the newspapers on the train, this traveler had not spied any of the New York dailies. He had passed up Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia newspapers with a mere glance; then had reverted to his book instead.

In the club car, the long-faced man sat down beside a table. He looked up momentarily as another person arrived from the dining car. He observed a quiet-faced young chap who sat down and looked from the window.

Realizing that they were nearly to the end of the run, the long-faced man put aside his book. Then, on the table beside him, he chanced to spy a New York newspaper.

Some one must have brought the journal aboard. It was a morning newspaper that might have been purchased by a passenger who boarded the train at Philadelphia. The long-faced man picked up the newspaper. A suppressed exclamation came from the lips beneath his mustache.

Staring at the front page of the newspaper, the long-faced traveler had recognized his own photograph. Above it was the caption: "Wanted on Murder Charge." Below it was his own name in small capital letters:

ADOLPH MURSON

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A shudder came to Murson's shoulders. Wild-eyed, the broker looked about. No one had apparently noticed the tremor that had quaked his frame. Avidly, Murson began to read the column that appeared beside his name. It was an account of murder in the penthouse of Theobald Luftus.

"Jersey City!" came the porter's announcement. "Last stop —"

MURSON rose unsteadily. His bags had gone out to the vestibule. Clutching the telltale newspaper, the broker jammed it into his overcoat pocket. He moved to the door as the train coasted into the terminal.

Stepping from the club car, Murson saw the line of heavy busses that meet all incoming trains of the B. O. From his pocket he pulled a cardboard ticket that bore a large figure 1. He recalled that he had arranged to go uptown by bus.

His bag had already gone aboard the rear of the bus when Murson arrived and handed the ticket to the driver. Entering the bus, the broker slumped into a deep leather seat and muffled the collar of his overcoat about his chin.

He was a hunted man. Wanted for a part in robbery and murder. Face quivering, Murson tried to cover up his identity. He drew the newspaper from his pocket, glanced at the picture and tried to steady himself.

A poor photograph. An old one that had not reproduced well. It gave Murson an idea. He drew a small case from his pocket and extracted a pair of pince-nez spectacles that he seldom used. Adjusting the glasses to his nose, Murson felt that they might help him as a temporary disguise.

Drawing the newspaper from his pocket the broker held it in front of him and tried to read. He noted that the police were searching for him according to the account; that he had presumably left for Washington the day before.

Dimly, Murson recalled an incident this morning: police at the Union Station in Washington, watching people going through a train gate. But they had been watching southern-bound passengers. Murson realized why. No one would have suspected that he, Adolph Murson, would be coming back to New York.

Murson realized something else. In Washington, he had not stopped at a hotel. Instead, he had stayed over night with a friend in Arlington. He had left by taxicab to catch his train. Had his friend read the newspapers and informed the police that he had left for New York? Murson hoped not.

The bus had started; passing through the terminal, it rolled aboard a ferryboat. Murson continued his reading. He was nervous. He expected that police would be on the other side. He was tempted to leave the bus; but the presence of the other passengers deterred him.

Across the aisle was the young man whom Murson had seen in the club car of the train. This chap was reading a magazine, not a newspaper. Murson felt at ease on that score. Here, at least, was one who would not recognize him.

The ferry reached the Manhattan slip. Big wheels spun; chains clattered; gates were opened. The bus moved forward through a tunnelloike passage. It stopped as it reached the street.

Murson groaned. He saw a policeman coming over toward the bus.

Then came a break. Another bus, one bringing passengers to the depot, rolled up from the opposite direction. The policeman turned and began to look through the windows of the arriving vehicle. He was interested more

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in people who were leaving New York, rather than those coming into town.

MURSON'S bus rolled northward. As it sped along a broad avenue, Murson felt a sickening-sensation. He had intended to ride to the bus depot on Forty-second Street, opposite the Grand Central Terminal. He realized that there would be officers at that spot.

Fumbling for a time-table, Murson read the names of places where the bus stopped en route. A weak smile came to his lips. He clenched and unclenched his hands, rustling the newspaper with the action. Then, as the bus crossed a broad street, he arose and stepped forward to the driver.

"I want the Zenith Hotel," he said. "You stop near there, don't you?"

"Next stop," informed the driver.

Murson held to the handle of a seat, staring through the front window. The bus rolled along another block; then, swerved and pulled up beside the entrance of a hotel. Murson stepped out when the driver opened the door. An attendant put his bag off at the back.

Not waiting for the hotel porter to pick up the bag, Murson headed through the revolving door and reached the lobby of the Zenith Hotel. He had seen a patrolman strolling down the street. In his haste to avoid the officer, he did not learn that another passenger had followed him from the bus.

It was the young man with the magazine. He arrived at the desk in the lobby while Murson was registering under the name of John Dyer, giving his home city as Baltimore.

The young man heard the clerk give Murson Room 912. Then, as Murson turned about, the young man strolled away toward a magazine stand, unnoticed by the broker.

Murson entered an elevator, a bell hop carrying his bag. The young man went directly to a telephone booth and dialed a number. A quiet voice responded:

"Burbank speaking."

"Vincent calling," acknowledged the young man.

"Report," came Burbank's order.

The young man spoke in detail. He told of Adolph Murson's trip from the ferry. He gave the broker's false name and room number.

The call completed, the young man strolled from the booth and left the hotel. Harry Vincent, active agent of The Shadow, had reported to the contact man, Burbank.

UP in Room 912, Murson was fumbling with a phone book. The bell boy had gone. Finding a number, Murson put in a call. He asked for Mr. Dobbs. He was informed that Mr. Dobbs was out. Murson hung up and paced the room.

Ten minutes later, he repeated the call with the same result. Mr. Dobbs was still out. The girl at the other end of the wire wanted Murson's name. Murson stammered incoherently; then hung up.

The broker's back was to the door. Hence Murson did not see a motion of the barrier. Though he had locked

it, the door was opening inward.

Murson swung about. A cry came from his lips.

Standing in the room was a personage dressed in a dark, well-fitted suit. The intruder's face was a calm one, a moulded visage that seemed almost masklike. There was something hawkish in his countenance; and his eyes were burning orbs that gleamed upon the hapless broker.

Murson sank gasping into a chair. He babbled weakly, incoherently; then buried his head in his hand.

The tall intruder's thin lips formed a smile; from them came the faint whisper of a mirthless laugh.

The arrival was The Shadow. Guised as a chance visitor, he had come here to find Adolph Murson. Within a half hour after Murson's arrival in New York, The Shadow had uncovered the hunted man for whom the police were searching everywhere in vain.

CHAPTER XII. THE SHADOW ADVISES

"You you are a detective?" The gasped question came from Murson, as the hunted man looked up. "You have come come to arrest me?"

"I am a friend," spoke The Shadow in a steady, even tone. "I have come to talk to you."

Murson looked bewildered. He had never seen this person before. He could not understand.

"You were calling an attorney." The Shadow's statement was a monotone. "But you learned that he was out."

"I was calling Egbert Dobbs," acknowledged Adolph Murson. "He is my lawyer –"

"Mr. Dobbs is keeping an appointment," informed The Shadow. "One that was arranged on your account. So that you would not talk to him."

"Why why shouldn't I talk to Dobbs?"

"Because he would advise you to give yourself up to the police."

Murson groaned.

"A proper course for an innocent man," added The Shadow. "But one that brings great difficulties. I should not advise it for the present."

Hope gleamed in Murson's eyes. He realized that this amazing stranger was actually a friend. Finding relief, he blurted:

"How did you discover me here?"

"Quite simply," stated The Shadow, a slight smile on his lips. "Knowing that you were innocent, I believed that you had gone to Washington as you stated. Something that the police doubted."

"But but my coming here –"

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"You had an appointment for this morning. At your office. But you changed it to one-thirty this afternoon."

"Yes. I intended to keep it –"

"By coming in on a train that would reach New York about one o'clock. There are two such trains from Washington. On different railroads."

Murson nodded.

"I might have come by Pennsylvania," he admitted. "But I decided to take the Baltimore and Ohio."

"Two persons went to Philadelphia this morning," stated The Shadow. He was referring to Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent. "One boarded the Pennsylvania train; the other took the Baltimore and Ohio. Both were looking for you."

"And they had seen my printed picture –"

"Yes. One man spied you. He came here in the bus that you took."

Murson began to remember the young man with the magazine. He nodded. Then his thoughts went back to his plight. His face registered a troubled look.

"Your spectacles are excellent," remarked The Shadow, maintaining his inflexible smile. "By shaving your mustache and clipping those bushy eyebrows, you can easily pose as John Dyer. Particularly if you remain here. The police are convinced that you are anxious to get out of town. Soon they will believe that you have departed."

"That's right!" exclaimed Murson. "And if I don't call Dobbs, I can sit tight!"

"For a few days," stated The Shadow.

"For a few days!" gasped Murson. "But but what about after that?"

"You can visit the police yourself. By that time, the actual perpetrators of the crime will be apprehended."

THERE was a solemnity in The Shadow's tone that carried conviction. Murson believed the firm words of his amazing visitor. More at ease, he shifted in his chair; then delivered a question that was in his mind.

"Why are you helping me?" he asked. "Why does saving me from arrest have to do with the criminals?"

The Shadow did not give an immediate reply. Instead, he seated himself in a chair opposite Murson and brought a gold cigarette case from his pocket. He offered the broker a smoke. Murson accepted. The Shadow lighted a cigarette of his own.

"Dangerous men have come from under cover," he explained. "Successful in murder, they have dived beneath the surface. They are elated because you are wanted for their crime. Your arrest would make them cautious, because you are innocent.

"But so long as you appear to be the one the police want, the crooks will feel themselves free to move again. They will believe that you are hiding out through fear. They will act as quickly as possible, before you are uncovered.

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"Our purpose" The Shadow's tone was steady and impersonal "is to lull them. That will be accomplished through your cooperation. I have shown you how to remain undiscovered. I shall tell you how and where to reach me in case of emergency. In the meantime, you can assist by telling me all you know regarding the affairs of Theobald Luftus."

Murson nodded; then stared speculatively toward the smoke that was rising from his cigarette.

"Those rogues made a big haul," he stated. "Pretty close to half a million, I should gauge. I can describe a few of the securities that Murson held."

"Later."

"All right. I guess you want to know when I last saw Luftus. That was yesterday afternoon. He asked me to come up and look over a lot of his stocks and bonds. I went there."

"At what hour?"

"About three o'clock. I wasn't going to Washington until about five. A visit to a friend down there. Business regarding investments. Well, sir, Luftus showed me stack after stack of gilt-edged stuff! The man was an absolute miser in his way."

"And his purpose –"

"Was to get my opinion regarding a gift of twenty thousand dollars. He didn't say who it was to. Just picked out batches of securities and asked me which he could give easiest without hurting himself."

"He said some people were coming to get the twenty thousand. He referred to a letter and mentioned that he'd have to call the people up."

"And the letter –"

"Went back into his safe along with the securities."

"You know" Murson narrowed his thick eyebrows "I think that servant, Barry, was trying to tell the whole thing from the start."

"He wanted to tell the police that I could give them information. That I was there, and that I brought old Luftus a special account book in which he could list all of his securities. Luftus was making such a list when I left."

"Would he have placed the book in his safe?"

"Yes. He kept all of his papers there. Well, sir, when I saw the New York newspaper on the train, I went into a funk. It looked bad for me. I guess I did just what you expected I'd do."

"I got out of sight. I didn't want to be arrested and have to give my flimsy story. That's why I came here. And I'm going to stay here, like you've told me."

The Shadow arose from his chair.

"Do exactly as I have ordered," he said in his modulated tone. "Play your part as John Dyer. Answer

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telephone calls without alarm. You will hear further from me. Your testimony has its value. Rest assured that the real criminals will be uncovered."

The Shadow extended his hand. Murson received it. Then the tall visitor turned and departed, leaving the broker sighing in relief.

Standing by the elevators on the ninth floor, The Shadow indulged in a soft, almost inaudible laugh. He had accomplished his mission with Adolph Murson. New knowledge had been acquired.

Through his contact with the hunted broker, The Shadow had gained another step in the swift pace that he was taking toward the climax that he wanted.

With the parts played by Steve Zurk and Beak Latzo already clearing in his mind, The Shadow was prepared to deal with men of crime.

CHAPTER XIII. DELHUGH'S VISITOR

JACK TARGON had mentioned at lunch that he was scheduled for an evening appointment with Perry Delhugh. At seven o'clock, after an early dinner, Jack went to the philanthropist's home. Delhugh had finished his evening meal. Benzig conducted Jack to the philanthropist's study.

Another visitor arrived half an hour later. Benzig, going upstairs, rapped at the door of the study and entered at Delhugh's call. He handed a card to the philanthropist. An exclamation of interest came from Delhugh.

"Lamont Cranston!" he stated. "I have heard of him. A millionaire, famed for his travels. He wishes to see me, Benzig?"

"Yes, sir."

Delhugh turned to Jack.

"I think we have chatted long enough," he remarked. "Your interest in the advertising business is encouraging, Targon. You can tell me more about it on your next visit."

"You want me here Thursday night?" inquired Jack.

"Yes," acquiesced Delhugh. "Stop in for a few minutes, at least."

Jack Targon left, followed by Benzig, who went with Delhugh's order to usher Mr Cranston upstairs.

In the lower hallway, Jack came face to face with the visitor. He noted that Cranston was a person of distinctive appearance. In fact, Jack carried a sharp recollection of the face that he observed.

A firm well-moulded countenance, with an expression that rendered it inflexible and masklike. Such was the impression that Jack Targon gained. For the ex-convict had come face to face with the same person who had visited Adolph Murson that very afternoon.

UP in his study, Perry Delhugh arose to greet his unexpected visitor. The philanthropist, like Jack Targon, was impressed by the appearance of Lamont Cranston. Handshakes were followed by cigars.

While Delhugh took his place behind the desk, Lamont Cranston seated himself in an easy chair and came

promptly to the purpose of his visit.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Delhugh," stated the visitor, in his steady even tone. "I have heard much of your philanthropies. I admire the spirit of them."

Delhugh bowed in acknowledgment.

"Particularly," resumed The Shadow, perfect in his role of Cranston, "your ideas in regard to individual betterment. I have heard that you recently befriended two pardoned convicts; that you gave them a new start in life."

"One of the men just went downstairs," replied Delhugh. "Perhaps you saw him as he went out."

"I saw an intelligent-looking chap going –"

"That was Jack Targon. Former swindler. Now a coming advertising man."

"Remarkable! Let me congratulate you, Mr. Delhugh. You have chosen an excellent type of welfare work."

"It was a new idea of mine, Mr. Cranston. Somehow" he paused speculatively "somehow I have tired of ordinary charities. They are too impersonal. Such as this Talleyrand Hospital Fund. A meritorious undertaking; but a cut-and-dried affair."

"How so?"

"We ask for funds. We get them. We deliver them. The recipients have no contact with their benefactors."

"You are chairman of the fund?"

"No. I am the secretary. It is only one of my many philanthropic connections. That reminds me" Delhugh looked glum "the fund is going to be short twenty thousand dollars. Well" he shrugged his shoulders and smiled "I can make up for that with a contribution of my own."

"Twenty thousand dollars short?" came The Shadow's inquiry, in Cranston's easy inflection.

Delhugh nodded.

"You read of the death of Theobald Luftus?" he questioned. "The murder in the penthouse?"

A nod from The Shadow.

"Luftus had promised us twenty thousand dollars. We were to hear from him to-day. Unfortunately, Theobald Luftus is no longer with us."

"He was robbed of the funds intended for you?"

"Yes. And possibly of a great deal more. Luftus wrote me a letter saying that he would give us some securities of his own selection. So I fancy that he had other funds on hand."

"Did you inform the police of this?"

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"No. I thought of doing so but after reading to-night's newspapers, I decided that it would be unnecessary. The police commissioner has stated" Delhugh referred to a journal on his desk "that the criminals who rifled the dead man's safe must have gained at least a hundred thousand dollars."

"So you would be telling the police something that they already know."

"Precisely! Moreover" Delhugh shook his head seriously "it would be a great mistake to make public the fact that some of those funds were being held for a gift. Many contributors to worthy causes are persons who have hoarded wealth.

"The death of Luftus, as reported, is apt to make hoarders decide to loose their miserly stores. You would be astonished, Mr. Cranston, to learn how often timid people misers by nature became philanthropic after they hear of robberies."

"Quite a logical phenomenon."

"It is. That is why mention of the hospital funds would have an adverse psychological effect. As far as I see it, nothing can be accomplished in the Luftus case until the police apprehend the missing broker, Adolph Murson."

"He probably knows the extent of the dead man's resources."

"Very probably. And evidence points to Murson as the perpetrator of the crime."

There was a pause while Delhugh and his visitor puffed at their cigars. Then The Shadow, in leisurely Cranston fashion, came back to the subject of his visit.

"IT occurred to me," he stated, "that I might try some individual philanthropies of my own. That is why I have come to you. I assume that you must have lists of persons who are deserving of aid."

"I have lists and records," smiled Delhugh. "A whole room lined with filing cabinets. Names by thousands, with details pertaining to their histories and circumstances."

"Could you give me access to those lists?"

"Yes. But the task of going through them would be tremendous. You would find it most burdensome. My secretary, Benzig, could begin on it. But his time it almost completely occupied."

"Suppose I turned it over to a secretary of my own?"

"You have a man available?"

"Yes. A young chap named Vincent. He has a job at present; but he would be glad of the opportunity to do evening work. Would it be possible for him to come here?"

"Certainly. There is a desk in the filing room. He could make his headquarters there. Benzig could show him the best lists. How soon would he begin?"

"At once. Say to-morrow night."

"Very good. Just what kind of cases will he search for?"

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

A smile showed on Cranston's lips.

"Deserving cases," stated The Shadow. "I shall have Vincent pick those which he thinks are best. Say two hundred names. From those with their records I shall select the ten that most appeal to me."

"And make them gifts?"

"Yes. Five thousand dollars to each of the ten persons. Anonymous gifts, dropping from the sky."

"Like manna to the hungry."

"Or rain to the thirsty."

Delhugh nodded his approval. He arose from the desk, noting that his visitor seemed ready to leave.

"Commendable. Mr. Cranston," declared the philanthropist, extending his hand to The Shadow. "This is the type of giving that I approve. Donations that bring dividends in happiness. To the donor as well as to the recipient.

"Ordinary welfare funds are necessary. Charitable enterprises must be supported. But many who contribute to them do so to gain public acclaim. Or to satisfy their consciences because they have, in the past, been grasping.

"This plan of yours is different, however. I shall be pleased to see how it works out. Just as I am looking forward to the fruits of my own experiments. Have your man Vincent come here to-morrow night. Benzig will start him on his task."

Delhugh rang for his secretary. Benzig appeared and ushered the visitor downstairs. He saw Cranston's tall form step aboard a limousine. An order to the chauffeur; the car pulled away.

IN the rear seat of the limousine, encased by soundproof glass, the being who posed as Lamont Cranston indulged in a soft, prophetic laugh. Another step had been made toward balking men of crime.

Here, at the home of Perry Delhugh, lay new opportunity to thwart coming evil. Jack Targon had been here tonight; that was proof that Steve Zurk would also be a visitor. From now on, Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, would be implanted at a spot that was strategically important.

For The Shadow, following Murson's tip, had divined that the leak might have come from Delhugh's. The Shadow had learned from Delhugh's own statement, that the philanthropist had held correspondence with Theobald Luftus.

One chance for crime had been snapped from that source. New opportunities would be in the making. Crooks would gain them; The Shadow, through Harry Vincent, would learn of the opportunities that might come to men of crime.

He, too, would use the knowledge that lay at Delhugh's. With it, The Shadow would see chances to thwart the thrusts of murderous fiends.

CHAPTER XIV. WEDNESDAY NIGHT

TWENTY-FOUR hours had passed since The Shadow's visit to Delhugh's home. Manhattan's East Side lay beneath the blanket of night. A strolling man, erect of shoulder and steady in gait, went past a patrolman who was pacing near the steps of an elevated station.

The stroller kept on, unchallenged. A disdainful snort came from his lips. This fellow had no fear of cops. To Lucky Ortz, a policeman was a dumb flatfoot. For this strolling man was Lucky himself, en route to Beak Latzo's new hide-out.

On a secluded street, Lucky took a darkened doorway to the left of a shoemaker's shop. He unlocked the door, entered and went upstairs. He rapped five times at a door that stood in darkness.

The barrier opened. Lucky entered to greet Beak Latzo.

"Anything new from Dangler?" came Beak's query.

"Sure," chuckled Lucky. "This. Another note from Steve."

Beak ripped open the envelope. He read Steve's scrawl; then applied a match to note and envelope and dropped them, flaming, in a metal wastebasket.

"What's doing?" quizzed Lucky.

"Nothing yet," replied Beak. "Steve says to lay low and wait."

"He said that in his last note," reminded Lucky. "The one where he told us to stick the swag in that package box in the subway, with the key hid on top where he could get it."

"He got the swag," said Beak. "He mentioned that in the note I just burned. Says to do the same with any more we get. Unless we're in a jam; then we're to wait for new word."

"Did he say anything else?"

"Yeah." Beak nodded emphatically. "He says something I wanted to hear him say. Something I was worried about. He says he's wise that The Shadow got into the picture."

"Well, he ought to be wise. All that hullabaloo around your old hide-out got into the newspapers. The bulls found the joint."

"With nothing in it."

"Thanks to Goofy. That was smart of him: dragging out your stuff, taking it to his own place. And I was wise to get it away from there. They found Goofy's body this afternoon."

"The wise part was burning those letters. That was my idea, Lucky."

"You should have burned 'em in the first place."

Beak ignored his lieutenant's remark. He began to rub his rough chin. At last he spoke.

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"We need new gorillas, Lucky," stated Beak. "There's a new job coming and it'll be quick. If I know Steve, he won't let grass grow."

"On account of this mug Murson, that's still missing?"

"Yeah. That's one reason. The other's that Steve is a live wire. He's in soft and he'll use his chances. Listen, now. I've managed to lay low. Nobody knows that you're with me."

"Nobody except a couple of the gorillas. And they're in their own hide-out."

"Well, get going and pick up a new mob. Steve's going to want it."

"Said that, too, did he?"

"No. But he figures we've got the mob anyway. He don't know how many gorillas we lost; I've got an idea that Steve'll pick up some dope to-night. Savvy?"

Lucky nodded.

"Well?" Beak scowled. "What're you waiting around for? I said start to build a mob!"

"O. K., Beak."

Lucky chuckled as he walked from the room. He closed the door behind him.

Beak stepped over and locked it. Then the big-nosed mobleader settled back to read the latest newspaper one that Lucky had brought with him from his excursion to Dangler's.

AT the home of Perry Delhugh, events were taking place that fitted with Beak Latzo's prediction regarding chances for new crime. Perry Delhugh was in his study, dictating a letter to Benzig.

The letter, addressed to a lawyer named Richard Dokeby, pertained to funds that were in the attorney's possession. It was in answer to communication from Dokeby himself; the original letter lay on Delhugh's desk.

A gong sounded, announcing dinner. Benzig went to the typewriter as Delhugh left the study. Rapidly, the secretary completed his transcript of the letter. He laid it, with Dokeby's communication, upon Delhugh's desk.

The secretary joined Delhugh in the dining room.

They were sipping coffee at the end of the evening meal when a servant arrived to announce that Mr. Vincent had arrived. Delhugh turned to Benzig.

"Cranston's man," stated the millionaire. "Take him up to the filing room and get him started."

"Very well, sir."

Benzig departed. Delhugh ordered another cup of coffee. Again the doorbell rang. The servant announced Mr. Zurk.

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"Take him up to the study, Chilton," Delhugh told the butler. "Tell him that I shall join him there in a few minutes –"

Delhugh finished his coffee. Then he went upstairs. The door of the filing room was closed. He kept on into the study, where he found Steve Zurk awaiting him.

"Hello, Zurk," greeted Delhugh. "How do you find the importing business?"

"I like it, Mr. Delhugh," returned Steve.

"So I understand," smiled Delhugh. He brought a sheaf of letters from a desk drawer, ran through a few and discarded them, then passed the rest of the stack to Steve, so that the man could read the uppermost letter. It was from Joseph Daykin, head of the importing company.

A smile appeared upon Steve's lips. It was one of genuine pleasure. Daykin's letter, addressed to Delhugh, stated that his new employee had already displayed remarkable ability.

"You see what Daykin thinks of you," commended Delhugh. "Keep up the good work, Zurk. Any comments of your own?"

"None, sir." Steve spoke as he returned the letters. "Only that I'm getting the best break I ever had in my life. Thanks to you, Mr. Delhugh."

Delhugh clapped Steve on the shoulder. The visitor arose; he and the philanthropist strolled from the study. At the filing room, Delhugh paused and opened the door.

"Bring Mr. Vincent into the study, Benzig," he ordered. "I shall see you there."

Delhugh went downstairs with Steve. Benzig and Harry went into the study. It was five minutes before Delhugh returned. He shook hands with Harry Vincent.

"HOW do you like my filing room?" inquired Delhugh. "Do you think it will serve Mr. Cranston's purpose?"

"Absolutely," returned Harry. "But it will take at least a week to go through all those records."

"A long job," nodded Delhugh, "but one which you appear capable of handling. Well, Mr. Vincent, I suppose you are anxious to proceed with your work. Benzig, you can go back to the filing room with Mr. Vincent."

"Just a moment, sir." Benzig was at the desk, blinking through his heavy-rimmed spectacles. "I saw Mr. Zurk with you in the hall. Did he come up here while you were still dining?"

"Yes," returned Delhugh. "Why do you ask?"

"Because, sir, these letters this stack they were in your drawer –"

"I took them out myself, Benzig."

"But these other two letters." Benzig was a little nervous. "The one from Dokeby; and the reply I typed. Did you move them?"

"I may have. Look here, Benzig. Are you still suspicious of Zurk?"

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"Not exactly, sir. But –"

"Out with it!" Delhugh's interruption was an angry one. "What have you against the fellow?"

"Nothing, sir. I'm just worried about these Dokeby letters. With all those funds in Dokeby's safe two hundred thousand –"

"I understand, Benzig. Well, I feel sure that Zurk was not here long enough to read the letters. I came in only a few minutes after him. I had a chat with him here and downstairs. You are too apprehensive, Benzig."

A trifle irritated, Delhugh took his place behind the desk. Harry and Benzig left the study. In the filing room, the secretary spoke to The Shadow's agent.

"The man who was here," explained Benzig, "was a former convict. I am a little worried about his visits. He comes three times a week. Steve Zurk is his name. Mr. Delhugh has been aiding him."

"Mr. Cranston mentioned it," observed Harry. "He said something, though, about two such men."

"Yes. There is another Jack Targon. I keep an eye on him, too. But he has never arrived ahead of time, like Zurk. This is the second occasion when Zurk could have pried about Mr. Delhugh's study. But Targon never had the opportunity to do so –"

Benzig broke off. A bell was ringing from the hall, summoning him to the study. The secretary departed, leaving Harry alone in the filing room.

THE SHADOW'S agent set his lips and nodded slightly to himself. He was here on a definite task the very one that Benzig had taken on himself; namely, to watch Steve Zurk and Jack Targon.

Already, Harry had gained information. Not only had he seen Steve Zurk and learned of Benzig's suspicions of the fellow. He had also heard mention of a name and a statement regarding a fund in that person's possession.

Dokeby. The name was an unusual one. Moreover, the man must be connected with some philanthropic enterprise.

A small file stood on a table in the corner. Harry looked in it. He found the name Dokeby.

Richard Dokeby. A lawyer, listed in the file as custodian of a library fund that had been accumulated with interest for the past five years. The fund, Harry noted, was slated for delivery this present week.

Harry closed the file and went back to those that contained names of persons aided by charity. But the facts on Dokeby's card remained implanted in his mind. The lawyer's name and office address were points to be remembered.

To-night, Harry intended to leave after brief preliminary work at Delhugh's. And immediately after his departure, he would put in a call to Burbank. Thus would The Shadow learn the facts that his agent had so promptly gleaned.

CHAPTER XV. THE MOB PREPARES

HARRY VINCENT was not the only agent who reported to The Shadow on that Wednesday night. Other word came through Burbank. Important news from Cliff Marsland. Results had been accomplished in the underworld.

The Shadow had foreseen that Beak Latzo, from his new hide-out, would begin to replenish the thinned ranks of the mob that he had used for battle. As yet, The Shadow had not gained a key to the identity of Beak's chief lieutenant. Lucky Ortz had managed to keep his connection well covered.

But already, The Shadow's agents Cliff and Hawkeye had picked out the gathering places of Lucky's clan. The Shadow had ordered them to frequent those dives; and Cliff, now a habitue of the new hangout near Sooky's pawnshop, had gained an important contact.

Posing as a gorilla anxious to gain a berth, Cliff had received a tentative proposition from a tough-mugged slugger known as Mike Rungel. The cagey offer to join up with an unknown mob had come on Wednesday night, some time after Harry Vincent had reported to The Shadow.

Cliff had arranged a new meeting with Rungel for the next day. The Shadow, after receiving this report, had sent instructions back through Burbank. With Cliff moving to a definite goal, The Shadow had decided to bide his time until word came through again from Cliff.

Cliff had arranged his next meeting with Mike Rungel for four o'clock Thursday afternoon. He had learned one important fact: namely, that Mike was not in direct contact with the leader higher up. Mike, a second-rate gorilla, was working through some pal.

AT three o'clock Thursday afternoon, an event occurred that was to show the wisdom of The Shadow's waiting policy. Lucky Ortz, strolling from the neighborhood of Times Square, turned his paces in the direction of the building where Dangler's little office was located.

He was paying an early visit to the unwitting tool who served as post office for Beak Latzo. When he reached the building, Lucky went up past the Chinese restaurant and strolled into Dangler's office. The timid man blinked as he saw his visitor.

No customers were in the stamp dealer's shop. Lucky noted that fact and lost no time in questioning Dangler.

"Anything for Beak?" asked the lieutenant.

Dangler nodded. He produced a letter from the old stamp album beneath the counter. Lucky received it, noted Steve's scrawl on the envelope and uttered a gruff laugh as he pocketed the message.

Twenty minutes later, Lucky arrived at the door of Beak's well-secluded hideout. He rapped five times. Beak opened the door. Lucky entered and handed him the envelope.

Ripping the flap open, Beak snatched out the message and read it with eager eyes. A leer showed on his ugly lips.

"Looks good?" queried Lucky.

"Great!" returned Beak. "Here read it."

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"No use. I can't make out that writing."

"Well, I'll give you the lay. Steve's got hep to something. Big boodle. A lawyer named Dokeby has it. Richard Dokeby. In the Hanna Building."

"Where's that located?"

"Here's the address" Beak pointed to a paragraph in Steve's letter "and it's easy enough for you to read, being figures instead of words."

Lucky looked at the letter; then nodded. His tone was quizzical.

"Forty–eighth Street," he remarked. "I'm trying to figure out just where that street address is located. West of Sixth Avenue, it ought to be maybe west of Seventh –"

"Steve says something here about an old garage. Place where they store cars from the Goliath Hotel."

"I got it now. Sure, I know the place. Say, that ought to be a cinch to get into. What's the system? Same as we used at the penthouse where we bumped Luftus?"

Beak nodded; then added a comment.

"The same, only easier," he stated. "Because there won't be anybody in this office of Dokeby's. Steve wants a lot of us on the job, though. Just in case there's trouble."

"From The Shadow?"

"You guessed it. We're going to hold off until nine bells, on account of there being a theater near Dokeby's building. You know the way those theater crowds go. All over the street until the show starts; then they're all stowed away until eleven."

"Inside, watching the show."

"Yeah. And no cops around bothering about traffic. Gives us a couple of hours in between. Listen now: here's the way Steve wants it worked."

"Spill away."

"WE don't move in a bunch. Instead, we tip the gorillas where to go. They slide around about the time people are getting into the theater across the street."

"Good stuff."

"It ought to be. It's Steve's idea. While the outfit's getting posted, you and I wait. Then we blow in from a taxi and walk into the building."

"It'll be open?"

"Sure. And it's an old dump with a stairway we can use to go up to the third floor. That's where we'll find Dokeby's office. Well, when we go in, we'll have a couple of good torpedoes waiting to follow us."

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

Lucky nodded his understanding.

"Sherry and Pete are the guys for that," he decided. "I'll wise them where to be. Say Steve must have looked over this lay."

"He has." Beak gestured with the letter. "He walked around there last night, before he sent this message. Something else, too" a glance at the scrawled sheet "about a garage next door. There ought to be some guys up there."

"Up in the garage?"

"On the roof." Beak was applying a match to the letter as he spoke. "They can get there easy, just about the time we're going in. We want that lawyer's office covered right. Savvy?"

"Good idea. Do we snatch every thing after we bust the safe?"

"No. Only the swag. It'll probably be bundled. It's some kind of a fund. Cash and securities."

"I get you. Suppose we have to blow the box, though?"

"That won't make no difference. It's just as easy to pick out what we want and carry a small load as it is to grab everything that's in the safe."

Lucky nodded. He agreed.

"We're set," decided Beak. "All except about the gang. Did you get that fixed up last night?"

"I got hold of some dock wallopers," said Lucky, slowly. "Three of 'em and good ones that Sherry picked for me. They'll do for the roof."

"What about the mugs that Pete was supposed to line up?"

"Well, he got a couple, Pete did. One of 'em was Mike Rungel."

"I know Mike. He's a good bet. Any others?"

"Yeah. Mike was to get one or two himself. I figured that was a good idea."

"Where's Mike now?"

"Waiting to hear from Pete."

"And Pete?"

"Waiting to hear from me."

Beak chuckled.

"Say," he approved. "you've got a system, Lucky. No wonder you get the breaks the way you do. Keep yourself covered up, don't you?"

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

"Why not? It pays, don't it?"

"Sure thing. Well, slide out and see those eggs of yours. Sherry and Pete. Tell Sherry to buzz the dock wallopers and have Pete talk to Mike. Then there's the gorillas down in that other hide-out."

"I'll see 'em."

Lucky strolled. Beak scratched his big nose and chuckled in admiration of his lieutenant's methods. Alone in his hide-out, Beak was congratulating himself on success that he could already see.

DOWN in the new dive near Sooky's pawnshop, Cliff Marsland was seated at a table in the corner of the smoke-filled room. Cliff's face, chiseled and expressionless, gave no indication of the impatience that he was feeling.

Four o'clock had passed; yet Mike Rungel had not arrived. Across the room at another isolated table sat a hunched-up little man who seemed concerned only with a bottle on the table before him.

It was Hawkeye. He, too, had a hopeful purpose here.

The outer door opened. A big, tough-looking rowdy entered and sauntered up to a dilapidated bar in the corner of the room. It was Mike Rungel.

Cliff glanced at the newcomer; then stared in another direction. This was in keeping with arrangements. Mike had arrived at last.

Rungel went out a side door one that formed another exit through a passageway. A few minutes passed; then Cliff got up, strolled over to the bar, handed the proprietor a dollar bill and received some change. Cliff took the same exit that Mike had chosen.

Midway down the passage, Cliff stopped by a battered and obscure door. He rapped softly. The door opened. Cliff joined Mike in a gloomy storeroom, where empty bottles lay about in disarray.

"How about it?" was Cliff's question, as soon as he had closed the door.

"All set," returned Mike. "Usin' you to-night, Cliff."

"What's the dope?"

"You an' me's coverin' a job up on Forty-eighth Street. Office buildin' across from de Marcel T'eater. Longside of a garage."

Cliff grunted.

"What time?" he questioned.

"Nine bells," returned Mike. "But we get dere just when de crowd's goin' into de show. See? An' we ain't stickin' out of Forty-eighth Street, after it's clear. We're coverin' a couple of alleys dat go t'rough dere."

"Just the two of us?"

"Naw. I gotta get a couple more guys to help out. One to go along wid me one to be wid you. I seen one bird

I know. I gotta dig up annodder."

Cliff considered.

"Maybe there's somebody hanging around this joint," he remarked. "It ought to be easy to pick a guy here."

"Who's out dere?"

"One fellow I've seen around. A little squirt they call Hawkeye."

"Is Hawkeye out dere? Say he's a foxy mug, dat boy. Dey say he can handle a gat, too."

"Know him, do you, Mike?"

"Sure. But you can go out an give him de high sign."

Cliff went back to the main room of the dive. Standing by the bar, he caught what seemed a chance stare from Hawkeye. Cliff gestured toward the exit; then went back to join Mike Rungel.

Three minutes later, Hawkeye joined them.

MIKE RUNGEL did the talking. He sounded out Hawkeye, found the little man interested, then began to loosen with the proposition.

Hawkeye grinned.

"If Cliff's in," he volunteered, "it's good enough for me. Who do I work with?"

"You stick wid Cliff," returned Mike. "Up by de t'eater. De alley on de left."

Hawkeye nodded. Mike dug in his pocket and produced a roll of bills. He peeled some off the wad and handed the cash to Cliff and Hawkeye.

"Dat's de start," mentioned Mike. "More comin' after de job. Meet you here, in dis joint, to-morrow. Four bells."

The group broke up. Cliff strolled out through the exit; Mike followed shortly.

Hawkeye went back into the dive. The little man had caught a secret signal from Cliff, meaning that Cliff, himself, would report the news.

Agents of The Shadow were ready for their later meeting. Details of coming crime were already on their way, to be passed, through Burbank, to The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVI. VANISHED SWAG

SHORTLY after eight o'clock that evening, a taxicab pulled up on Forty-ninth Street, just beyond the entrance to a garage. The driver of the cab chose a darkened spot to make his stop.

The door of the cab opened. A blackened figure edged forth. A shapeless phantom, that form glided across the sidewalk and merged with the front of a gloomy, four-story structure.

CROOKS GO STRAIGHT

This was not the Hanna Building. Instead of going directly to the address on Forty–eighth Street, The Shadow had chosen another office building, even older and more dilapidated, that was at the rear of his objective.

The cab pulled away. Driven by Moe Shrevnitz, a reserve agent of The Shadow, the taxi had served its purpose for the night. From now on, The Shadow intended to move with swiftness.

The building which had been chosen was occupied by unimportant offices that were chiefly vacated for this structure was slated to be demolished. Ascending to the third floor, The Shadow found an office to his liking. The window was unlocked. The Shadow stepped out. He was on the roof of the garage that ran between Forty–eighth and Forty–ninth.

Manhattan's glow showed The Shadow as a dimly outlined form, close to the wall of the building that he had left. A modern structure, on the opposite side of the garage, blanked some of the city's illumination. Hence The Shadow was in semidarkness as he moved forward along the roof.

The front edge of the roof was well illuminated, because of an electric sign on the opposite side of Forty–eighth Street. This was the glittering sign of the Marcel Theater. Red, green and yellow lights, blinking in mechanical order threw an ever–changing glow across the front of the Hanna Building and the garage roof beside it.

The Shadow, however, found a perfect space of full invisibility when he reached the sheltering side of the Hanna Building. This structure was eight stories high. Windows of the third floor banked the garage roof.

There were shafts for light and air that led to the floors below; there were also bridgelike spots between these; and above the connecting braces were third–story windows. The Shadow chose the first crossing point.

WORKING in darkness, he used a thin instrument of steel between the portions of the window sash. The lock clicked. The lower sash came up. The Shadow entered a darkened office and closed the window behind him.

He next appeared in a gloomy hall. A dull grinding sound told that a night elevator was in operation. The Shadow lingered until he heard it pass above the third floor. Then he moved weirdly along the hall until he found an office numbered 318.

The name of Richard Dokeby was on the door.

The lock gave The Shadow no difficulty. He entered door 318 and found the outer room of a small suite. Opening a connecting door, he stepped into Dokeby's private office. He needed no flashlight to find his way about. The blinking glare from across the street furnished a dull but sufficient illumination.

Dokeby's offices were about midway in the building; their windows opened onto the garage roof. Below the windows, however, was one of the several air shafts. The Shadow could not have entered here from the roof, except by a leap across an open pit.

A study of Dokeby's offices told The Shadow much. It was plain that the attorney must have been a man long in practice. He had probably occupied these offices years ago and had persisted in retaining them, despite the decadence of the building.

Desks and tables were ancient, yet in perfect condition. The inner office was floored by an Oriental rug that Dokeby probably regarded as a prize possession. The Shadow's chief interest, however, lay in the safe that stood in the corner.

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ALTHOUGH its paint was unscratched, this safe was of a vintage even older than the strong box in the penthouse of Theobald Luftus. It was further proof that lawyer Dokeby was a fossilized individual whose ideas of modern mechanics had stagnated during the gay nineties.

The merest apprentice among modern cracksmen could have tapped that safe with ease. Beak Latzo and his henchmen were coming to find a set-up. A made-to-order job that represented the utmost in simplicity.

It seemed plain to The Shadow, however, that Dokeby used this safe but little. It looked like a storage place for ordinary records that would be of no value to marauders. Probably the old attorney kept his funds and important documents in some safe-deposit vault.

Temporary circumstances alone had made the safe the repository for huge funds. Dokeby, unwitting that his safe was junk, but knowing that his possession of the funds was a matter unknown to the public, had probably decided that there would be no danger in keeping the wealth here for delivery to the library committee.

Men of crime were headed here tonight. The Shadow had learned that fact. He knew, through his agents, that henchmen would be posted on the front street. That was why he had chosen the rear entrance. The path along the roof would also offer a quick mode of departure.

Here in this office, The Shadow had found opportunity to trap Beak Latzo and whoever might come with the dangerous mobleader. The Shadow had left the details of action until his arrival on the scene. Hence his survey of Dokeby's inner office was sufficient cause for whispered mirth from The Shadow's hidden lips.

WHILE echoes of a soft, sibilant laugh still clung to the room, The Shadow approached Dokeby's safe and began to turn the dial. Head close to the steel door, he could hear the click of the dropping tumblers. Slowly, easily, The Shadow continued his manipulation.

The door of the safe swung open. Using a tiny flashlight, The Shadow probed the interior.

The stabbing glare showed neatly arranged stacks of letters and legal papers. One sheet alone was out of place. This was a dusty document that had drifted loose from a high stack at the right. The single sheet had dropped upright above smaller piles of letters.

Evidently some one possibly Dokeby had dropped the final pile of letters at the right and the top sheet had fluttered free.

That interested The Shadow. His gloved hands raised the stack at the right. The move resulted in a prompt discovery.

The stack was supported by half a dozen brick-shaped bundles. These were covered with heavy wrapping paper, and they were tied with heavy cord. The knots were gummed with thick chunks of sealing wax, which bore the impression of a metal stamp that The Shadow had noted on Dokeby's desk.

These bundles were the only objects other than letters and typewritten or printed documents. The bundles were alike, with one exception: The topmost package at the left displayed a tear in its paper wrapper.

Folding the torn paper back, The Shadow saw what he had expected. Through the opening in the paper he viewed the green-printed surface of an engraved bond; the top member of a thick packet.

These bundles contained the boodle. An easy grab for arriving crooks. It was plain that they could bag the swag and make a prompt get-away, leaving the useless documents that formed the remaining contents of the

safe.

Two courses lay open to The Shadow. One was to leave the wealth here as bait and trap the crooks when they obtained it. The other was to remove the bundles and let the raiders find an empty nest.

Before deciding on either course, The Shadow found interest in that single sheet of paper that had fluttered from the stack of letters. The flashlight, guarded in front of The Shadow's stooped form, showed that sheet of paper as a printed document that was slightly soiled and dusty.

Plucking the sheet with gloved hand, The Shadow examined its printing. It was nothing more than an ordinary legal release, a printed form that resembled others in Dokeby's safe. It might have been dropped at random on the stack from which it had fallen.

Turning over the sheet, The Shadow made a discovery. On the back, at each side, were the impressions of finger-tips, barely discernible to the keen eyes that studied them. Apparently, some one had picked up this sheet, glanced at it, then dropped it.

Carefully, The Shadow folded the printed paper and placed it beneath his cloak. A soft laugh sounded hollow, caught by the confining walls of the safe. The Shadow's gloved fingers picked up the bundle that had a tear in its upper side.

Extinguishing his flashlight, The Shadow arose. His gloved hands squeezed the bundle in viselike grip as he moved toward Dokeby's desk. Fingers managed to move the cord over one end of the bundle. Carefully, The Shadow opened the unsealed portion of the packet and drew its contents halfway from the sheathing wrapper.

Turning the bundle over, The Shadow saw another bond on the under surface. He riffled the ends of the papers in between, as one would do with a pack of playing cards. A soft, knowing laugh of discovery crept through the room.

A bond at the top. A bond at the bottom. Between the two lay a thick stack of blank paper!

SLOWLY, carefully, The Shadow pushed the worthless mass back into its sheath. Again a powerful grip enabled him to slide the stout cord back in place.

He carried the bundle to the safe and put it where he found it, the torn side of the wrapper still upward.

Again, The Shadow laughed. His keen brain was making a rapid deduction.

Finger prints on the printed legal form indicated that some one had surreptitiously examined the contents of this safe. The torn wrapper of the uppermost bundle was proof that a person had removed the real swag and left wrapped packets of blank paper in its place.

That top bundle with its cunning tear was intended to deceive any one who might pry into Dokeby's safe.

The lawyer himself had not done the deed. The committee that would receive the bundles could not be deceived, for the bundles would be opened by that same committee. Those faked packets were here to fool people who would not take time to examine them. Beak Latzo and his crew!

A double cross? The Shadow's laugh was negative. Chances were that Beak would forward the bundles unopened. Dokeby, whether he suspected crime or not, would have no need of bluffing crooks who would later find that they had been duped.

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To The Shadow, the key lay in the important fact that Beak Latzo was working for another person, as evidenced by the letters that had come to Beak in Steve Zurk's scrawl. Another point was the trouble that Beak had encountered in his attack on Theobald Luftus.

Beak's mob had been ordered to come here to-night, to cover Beak when he grabbed the swag. Beak was an instrument, not the brain behind the game. Hence plans could have been changed without Beak's knowledge.

Some one had come here before The Shadow's arrival. That person had tapped Dokeby's safe. A simple job. The same intruder had taken the real swag. But he had left the dummy packages obviously the boodle so that Beak would go through with his job.

Had it been too late to inform Beak of the change in plans? Was the purpose to make the rifling of the safe look like a mob job? Another negative laugh from The Shadow. Beak, like the man ahead of him, would be able to tap this safe without leaving traces.

A momentary pause. Then came another whispered tone of mirth. It bore a strange touch. As The Shadow laughed, he swung up from the safe, pressed the big door shut and spun the dial with gloved fingers.

With a swift sweep, he headed toward the windows. Lights from the garage roof showed automatics looming in his hands.

Without losing the weapons from his grasp, The Shadow clicked the catch and raised the sash. He peered out toward the roof. His keen eyes spied a lurking shape pressed close to the garage side of an air shaft.

Whirling about, The Shadow listened. His ears caught a creeping sound from somewhere in the hall. His fists tightened on the automatics. The Shadow had the answer that he wanted.

Beak Latzo had not been ordered here for robbery. That had already been accomplished. The big-nosed mobleader was coming for another purpose: one that required a surrounding crew, larger than Cliff Marsland had supposed.

With crime completed, this secluded office had become a trap. Murder had been planned as a follow-up to coming theft. And death's victim if the crooks prevailed would be The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVII. GUNS IN THE DARK

UNTIL the moment of his final deduction, The Shadow had not foreseen the imminence of the danger that now threatened him. He had come to Dokeby's office knowing that he must beat Beak Latzo and a crew of mobsters to the swag. But he had expected to cope with a raid like that in the Luftus penthouse; not with a mass attack from every quarter.

The Shadow had realized suddenly that his agents had sent him incomplete information. He had learned that a trap was ready to be sprung. He had discovered the existence of unusual cunning in this plot that involved Steve Zurk.

Had The Shadow lingered longer at the door of Dokeby's safe, entering enemies would have surprised him. The only outlet the way to the garage roof would have proved itself a second snare.

But The Shadow, as quick in action as in thought, had gained a last-minute edge upon approaching enemies.

Dokeby's inner office was a veritable death trap. A spot in which the odds, as they now stood against The

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Shadow, would prove disastrous. One course alone was feasible: to meet advancing thugs before they could seal the exit to the hall.

Sweeping forward through the outer office, The Shadow gained the door to the hall. His move, though swift, was noiseless. The Shadow's left hand crept to the knob. Carefully, it avoided a click of the automatic against the metal of the knob.

Then with a suddenness that was astounding, The Shadow yanked the door open and whirled out into the hallway, his big guns coming—up to aim. He was face to face with the approaching foe.

THE stairway, to both lower and upper floors, was less than a dozen paces away. It was from that spot that the enemy had advanced. One man had almost reached the door; another had sidled along the opposite wall, revolver drawn, ready to protect the entrant.

Others were at the head of the steps, waiting. For Beak Latzo and Lucky Ortiz had sent their torpedo twins Sherry and Pete ahead to test the trap.

It was for Sherry, by the far wall, that The Shadow aimed his ready right-hand gun. He pressed the trigger of the automatic just as Sherry, recognizing the cloaked warrior, prepared to deliver a revolver bullet.

One gun roared alone. The Shadow's. A hot slug seared Sherry before the thug could press trigger. Sherry began to sag, snarling, unable to retain the gat that was slipping from his loosened fingers. The Shadow had delivered a mortal wound.

Pete hurled himself upon The Shadow. The space between this second gangster and The Shadow was but a half dozen paces. As he leaped, Pete came up with a revolver clenched tight in his right fist.

He wanted to burn The Shadow with a bullet a shot that could not fail at a target within a foot's range. Pete had a chance to gain that objective, for The Shadow's left hand, lowered to swing the door, had not yet come to aim.

But The Shadow's arm swung with Pete's; swiftly, with terrific upward drive. The Shadow did not try to beat the torpedo to the shot. That would have been impossible. His piston arm followed through with its upward drive; The Shadow's automatic cracked Pete's wrist just as the man fired.

Flame from Pete's gun burned The Shadow's hat brim. The bullet, speeding through, missed The Shadow's head by half an inch. The slug ricocheted from the ceiling. It was Pete's only shot.

For The Shadow's swing, carrying Pete's arm up with it, kept on to the springing mobster's jaw. Metal crashed bone. Pete's head bobbed back as if his neck had been made of rubber.

Side-stepping, The Shadow let the crook go sprawling forward on the floor.

Thus did The Shadow deal with the cream of Beak Latzo's outfit. One would-be killer lay dying; the other hopelessly unconscious.

And as The Shadow swung across the hall, he loosed new fire upon the stairway where Beak Latzo and Lucky Ortiz was stationed.

DIVING for safety, the two returned fire. Beak leaped for the stairway to the upper floors; Lucky for the one that led below. Sherry and Pete had blocked them from immediate aim; the sight of the falling torpedoes had

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instilled the two leaders with desire for safety as well as fight.

Their shots were wild as they made their quick retreat. Each killer ducked again, as The Shadow, reaching the stairs, loosed shots along each flight of steps. Left hand pointing downward; right hand pointing up, the bullets from The Shadow's automatics came with the quick succession of a barrage.

Safe on their respective landings, Beak and Lucky kept under cover. Each was ready for The Shadow, whichever way he might come. Both had the same thing in mind: to block that terrible fighter until reinforcements came from the garage roof.

Rats had been driven to their holes. The Shadow's laugh rang out in mockery.

Automatics emptied, the cloaked fighter whirled and headed back toward Dokeby's offices. He dropped his bulletless guns beneath his cloak. A second brace of loaded automatics came forth in his gloved hands.

Beak and Lucky waited. They thought the game was theirs. They could picture The Shadow, scudding for the roof, going straight into the fire of the recruited dock walloppers. But neither Beak nor Lucky knew that The Shadow had detected the existence of an outside trap.

Well did The Shadow gauge the actions of the foe. Had the fight begun in Dokeby's office, the outside men might have kept under cover. But shots in the hall, muffled by intervening walls, would spell an indication that the fight was going inward, not outward. The Shadow knew that the men from the garage roof would be coming through.

They were. As The Shadow whirled through Dokeby's outer office, a window crashed as some one hurled a big gasoline can from the roof. The missile had been heaved at the center of the window. It carried the sash along with the glass.

A man, leaping across the air shaft, had caught the window ledge. Clinging there with his left hand, he was aiming a revolver with his right as he raised his knee to the sill, preparatory for entrance.

A weird laugh from the gloom. Straight ahead, the first of the dock walloppers saw the shrouded shape of The Shadow, sweeping from the dim light that pervaded the outer office. The fellow fired wildly at a fading target. As he did, the burst of an automatic answered.

The Shadow, dropping suddenly, had escaped the ruffian's fire. But The Shadow's own aim was true. The man on the ledge gave a gargling shriek. Backward, he plunged down into concrete-walled shaft.

NEW shots burst from those quick-pointed automatics. A second foe staggered upon the further brink of the shaft. Wounded, this enemy would have followed his companion into the pit but for the presence of the third dock walloper, who yanked his falling pal to the safety of the roof.

Leaving his wounded companion, the third fighter dived behind a stack of emptied gasoline cans and fired fast and furious at the shattered window.

His shots were futile. The Shadow, having repelled invasion from this quarter, had again reversed his tactics.

Hard on the echo of gunfire, he had swung out into the hallway. Beak and Lucky, peering from their landings, were startled by his unexpected arrival at the stairs. Almost before they knew it, The Shadow had leaped into view.

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Nor did he stop. His spring, clear from the hall, carried headlong down the short steps to the lower landing, full upon Lucky, who was caught flatfooted.

As the lieutenant made frantic aim, The Shadow plunged upon him. Lucky collapsed. His head jolted the wall. His body rolled limp, while The Shadow, coming up against the wall, delivered a fierce taunting laugh and blasted bullets up the steps as a warning to Beak Latzo.

Then, as echoes still persisted, The Shadow took to the downward flight of steps. His cloak swept wide as he sprang toward the floor below, continuing on toward the ground floor of the building.

An elevator operator, peering from the lone car that was in use, ducked back as he saw a sweeping avalanche in black. Speeding ahead, The Shadow sprang out to the sidewalk of Forty–eighth Street.

THE thoroughfare was almost deserted for the throngs had already entered the theater across the way. Cleared of the show–going crowd, the street had taken on that odd seclusion that grips so many byways close to more traveled avenues of Manhattan.

But there were eyes that saw The Shadow; and with them, ready hands. As the black–clad form zigzagged from the front of the old Hanna Building, mobsters leaped into view and opened fire from strategic points.

Again, there were more than Cliff had reported. Lucky Ortiz had deployed a formidable array for emergency such as this.

The Shadow was equal to the battle. As the wild fray opened, he spun about straight for the front of the theater, then whirled again in a new direction.

His automatics blazed like rifles in a revolving turret. A mobster hit the asphalt. Another sank wounded to the curb.

Mike Rungel had sprung from his alleyway, with another mobster. Cliff and Hawkeye had copied the move, coming from their own station.

The Shadow's agents were firing. But their shots were purposely wide. Backing to the wall as The Shadow swung toward them, they delivered a wild barrage that passed as an attack upon the cloaked fighter. But actually it stayed mobsters who would have otherwise closed in upon The Shadow.

Mobsters snarled as they saw The Shadow whirl clear of Cliff and Hawkeye. They might have suspected the ruse had Hawkeye not pulled a stagger. But the little agent, smart in the emergency, dropped his gun with a sharp cry and grabbed at his right shoulder.

Cliff, catching the cue, dived toward a doorway as he saw Hawkeye fake a collapse.

Timed to the second, The Shadow sprang into the deserted alleyway. Cliff, springing into view, headed after him, while Mike and other mobsters came dashing to the chase. Hawkeye, pulling himself together with a well–feigned effort, came up at the rear.

The Shadow was gone. With amazing swiftness, he had gained the Forty–seventh Street end of the alleyway. But the mobsters kept on their race. They had gained cause for flight.

Shouts were coming from along Forty–eighth Street. Men were piling out of the garage. The operator from the Hanna Building was bellowing for help.

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Police whistles were blowing. Sirens followed; patrol cars were coming up. Along Forty-seventh Street, the fleeing mobsters were scattering. Cliff and Hawkeye were dashing in a direction opposite the others.

Sirens ahead, along Eighth Avenue. Cliff and Hawkeye stopped short. Their one course was to duck back, to mingle with crowds in the neighborhood of Broadway. Suddenly they spied a cab, cruising in the wake of other taxis that had passed through.

Cliff swung toward the curb and signaled. Moe Shrevnitz wheeled up, then increased speed as Cliff and Hawkeye came aboard. The Shadow's agents were clear for a get-away.

THE fray on Forty-eighth Street had caused arriving police to take up chase of fleeing mobsmen. Even the excited cries of the elevator operator had failed to bring an immediate search of the Hanna Building.

In Dokeby's inner office, Beak Latzo was working at the safe, mumbling low epithets while Lucky Ortiz, dazed from his conflict with The Shadow, held a flashlight focused on the safe door.

The safe opened; Beak, though hasty, had managed the simple combination. The flashlight showed the bundles that looked like boodle. Green showing through the torn wrapping paper was sufficient. Beak bagged the swag.

Heading toward the shattered window, Beak hurled the bag to the roof beyond the air shaft. He made the leap to safety and whispered hoarsely for Lucky to follow. The lieutenant climbed the sill, steadied and made the jump.

The last of the dock wallopers had abandoned his wounded comrade. The man lay groaning near the edge of the air shaft. Beak and Lucky offered him no aid. Instead, they hurried along the roof, found a window in the rear building and climbed through.

Chaos had not reached Forty-ninth Street when the two crooks arrived there. Beak saw a cab by the curb; the driver was standing on the sidewalk, looking east toward Seventh Avenue, where cars had clustered to watch the passage of police cars.

Beak yanked open the door of the cab and thrust Lucky aboard. He tossed the bag in with the punch-drunk lieutenant. In casual fashion, Beak hailed the cab driver. The man trotted over and took the wheel.

As the taxi rolled from the curb, a figure emerged from a gloomy spot some thirty feet away. The Shadow had weaved a remarkable course back from two squares below. He had arrived just in time to witness the departure of the crooks.

A soft laugh hissed from The Shadow's lips. To deal with these killers at present might bring complications, now that police were flooding the neighborhood. Better that Beak and Lucky should get away, believing themselves triumphant, though belated.

For The Shadow had bigger game. The recovery of the real swag. New evidence gained, he had won the conflict with guns in the dark. Through pretended flight, he had left the way open to a new thrust by men of crime.

And before that climax came, The Shadow's plans would be completed. Crooks, lulled by the fact that they had managed an escape, would be ready to strive again.

Then could The Shadow meet these ruffians and the remnants of their thwarted mob; and with new conflict,

he might gain a triumph over the real leader who had issued commands to these fierce hordes of crime.

CHAPTER XVIII. FROM THE SANCTUM

BLUISH light flickered in a black-walled room. White hands lay beneath the downward focused glare. A glimmering stone, The Shadow's priceless girasol, sparkled from a moving finger. The Shadow was in his sanctum.

Clippings came between those deft fingers. These were newspaper accounts of the fray on Forty-eighth Street. For twenty hours had elapsed since The Shadow had fought his battle with Beak Latzo's underlings.

Lesser crooks, dead and living, had fallen into the hands of the police. Wounded mobsters had been unable to escape the advent of the law. Some such as Mike Rungel had managed a get-away. The Shadow's agents had ridden clear in Moe Shrevnitz's cab.

Beak Latzo and Lucky Ortiz had eluded the law. The Shadow had known that Beak must be the man on the upper stairs; he had recognized Lucky when he had slugged the lieutenant. But The Shadow had gained no traces to the hide-out where the pair had fled.

The police according to the newspaper accounts had learned nothing from the small fry whom they had captured. They had followed back to Dokeby's office; there they had discovered the opened safe. Dokeby had been informed and a search was on for traces of the missing funds.

The actual amount of the loss had been minimized probably by Dokeby. For the stolen securities were negotiable, and certain facts had been soft-pedaled in the accounts that reached the press.

Clippings dropped from lithe fingers. Reports came under The Shadow's consideration. Word from Cliff Marsland, stating that he and Hawkeye were regaining contact with Mike Rungel. Details from Clyde Burke, adding points of inside information that had not appeared in newspaper accounts.

Each of these report sheets had been inscribed in code. Written characters vanished after The Shadow read the messages. Such was the way with secret communications between The Shadow and his agents. All were done in a special ink that disappeared after the messages had been opened.

A third report: From Harry Vincent. It stated that Jack Targon had paid a routine visit to Perry Delhugh, at dinner time last night. Delhugh had been in conference with the Talleyrand Hospital committee and had sent a message to Jack by Benzig, telling him to return later. Jack had come back sometime before eight o'clock, to spend an hour with the philanthropist.

In reporting these facts, Harry had been forced to rely upon remarks dropped by Benzig. For most of the time, the door of the filing room was kept closed. Footsteps and voices in the hallway were the only way by which Harry could guess at arrivals and departures when his door was closed.

Being Thursday night, Jack Targon's visit to the house was one that Harry had anticipated. There was no news at all regarding Steve Zurk. That also was natural, for Steve had come on Wednesday and was not due again until to-night Friday.

A SLIGHT laugh shuddered through the sanctum. It carried a peculiar significance. It was The Shadow's own admission of neglected opportunities. For in this maze of combated crime, The Shadow had left one point uncovered.

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Crime came at night. Through Cliff Marsland, The Shadow could keep tabs on gang movements. Through Harry Vincent, he could check on the visits of Steve Zurk and Jack Targon, at Delhugh's. But therein lay the weakness.

On nights when Jack Targon visited the philanthropist, Steve Zurk did not come there. Hence The Shadow had no watch upon Steve's actual activities except on those evenings when the ex-convict stopped in to see Delhugh.

Yet The Shadow's laugh was not an admission of failure. The mysterious investigator had deliberately allowed Steve Zurk to roam at large, despite the evidence which had been at Beak Latzo's first hide-out, in the form of letters. For The Shadow had seen a definite system in the scheme of crime. The dirty work had been left to Beak Latzo, as a complete cover-up for the tip-offs.

The dope had been crossed last night. That sudden change of method was the one point that had upset The Shadow's scheme. Vanished swag had showed a double cunning in the routine of crime.

A crumpled paper came between The Shadow's hands. Long fingers smoothed the ruffled sheet. This was the letter that The Shadow had taken from Beak Latzo's; one of the two that Beak thought Goofy had burned.

Here, in Steve Zurk's ragged scrawl, was the order that had sent Beak and Lucky to rob and murder Theobald Luftus. This sheet of paper was a link for which the law had searched in vain.

The Shadow placed the sheet aside. In its place he brought forth a dusty printed form.

This was that chance paper that had been tossed aside in Richard Dokeby's safe. The Shadow placed the paper with the printed side downward. The bluish light from the shaded damp showed the finger prints with remarkable clarity.

A thick, glossy paper dropped upon The Shadow's table. Upon it were photographic copies of thumb and finger impressions. This record, long in The Shadow's possession, was identified with a printed name: Steve Zurk.

The Shadow had already compared the finger prints on the legal form with this photographic record. The impressions were identical. Thus had The Shadow gained an important link to the second crime. The paper from the lawyer's safe had been smudged by Steve Zurk.

The Shadow turned the paper, printed side up. This surface was less spoiled than the other. It was smudged, but no impressions had registered themselves. But what were two missing thumb prints, compared with eight finger impressions that stood out in detail?

The Shadow laughed. His whispered mirth was echoed as he placed the document and the records to one side.

Then came a click. The bluish light went out. Paper crinkled in total darkness. A final laugh throbbed from invisible lips. Amid the sibilant echoes came swishes of The Shadow's cloak.

Then silence.

IN contrast to the pitch darkness of The Shadow's sanctum, the outer world was illuminated by the light of day. Though the sun had set, dusk had not yet arrived. Evening was still an hour off.

Not long after The Shadow had departed from his secret abode, a tall, strolling figure appeared upon a

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secluded side street. This personage approached a parked limousine and stepped aboard the car. A uniformed chauffeur turned about.

"Club, Stanley," came the quiet order.

"Yes, Mr. Cranston," responded the chauffeur.

The Shadow had resumed the guise in which he so frequently traveled. As Lamont Cranston, quiet, leisurely millionaire, he was visiting the Cobalt Club.

The limousine required some twenty minutes to reach its destination. There the passenger alighted.

Dusk settled. Manhattan streets began to glow. Stanley was peering through the fading daylight when he saw his master reappear at the door of the club. Again The Shadow stepped aboard the limousine. He gave an order in Cranston's quiet tones.

The limousine rolled away. It followed a threaded course through varied streets until it pulled up in front of a secluded brownstone mansion. There The Shadow alighted and spoke a few words to Stanley. After that he went up the steps of the house.

This was the home of Perry Delhugh. Again, The Shadow as Cranston – was calling on the philanthropist. He had chosen this hour for an early call, ahead of the time when Steve Zurk was due to arrive on an appointed visit.

CHAPTER XIX. THE SHADOW TALKS

"BENZIG told me that you had telephoned, Mr. Cranston."

Perry Delhugh, seated behind his mahogany desk, made this statement as he proffered a cigar to his calm-faced visitor. The remark brought a nod from The Shadow.

"Yes," he replied, in Cranston's tone. "I called from the Cobalt Club. I am going back there later."

"Will you wait until Vincent arrives? He usually comes early in the evening."

"No, that will not be necessary. Vincent is doing his work capably. There is no reason that I should see him until his job is completed."

"Indeed?" Delhugh's tone was quizzical. "This is surprising. I thought that you had come to talk about those lists that Vincent is making."

"No." A thin smile showed on the lips of Lamont Cranston. "I have come to discuss another matter."

"Another matter?"

"Yes. Crime."

Perry Delhugh looked puzzled. Then his strong face took on a sudden change. The philanthropist's eyebrows furrowed as an anxious look revealed itself.

"Regarding those men whom I have aided?" he questioned. "Something to do with Zurk and Targon?"

"Yes," replied The Shadow.

Delhugh settled back in his chair. He puffed at his cigar and his face remained troubled. He seemed to be recalling hazy facts. His attitude, at the same time, was one of listener.

"YOU mentioned to me," began The Shadow, in a steady tone, "that Theobald Luftus had communicated with you not long before his death."

"He did," nodded Delhugh. His voice was grave. "In regard to a philanthropic contribution."

"Perhaps in writing to you" The Shadow's voice was Cranston's, but it carried a steady monotone "Luftus conveyed the impression that he had large funds available in his penthouse."

"I did receive that impression from his letter."

"And perhaps Steve Zurk or Jack Targon might have had opportunity to see that letter."

Delhugh did not reply at once. He tapped his desk with his fingers, again recalling past circumstances. Then he said, slowly:

"Steve Zurk could have read the letter from Luftus. Also my reply to that same letter."

A pause. Then came the quiet tone of Cranston.

"You receive a great deal of philanthropic correspondence," stated The Shadow. "Perhaps other letters concerned the library fund held by Richard Dokeby."

This time Delhugh made no delay in his reply. He leaned across the desk and spoke frankly.

"Dokeby wrote me a letter," he declared, "and stated that he had those funds available. What is more, Mr. Cranston, Steve Zurk could have read the letter. And my reply."

"Then you have probably come to some conclusion."

"I have. But it has left me bewildered. Often, Mr. Cranston, I have mistrusted certain persons. But Steve Zurk was not one of them. The man struck me as honest."

"And yet –"

"Yet circumstances are against him. My secretary, Benzig, made pointed remarks concerning Zurk. He chided Benzig for doing so. I have tried to maintain a faith in Zurk's integrity. I like the man."

Delhugh came upright and pounded the desk emphatically.

"I like the man!" he repeated. "That is enough to make me hold confidence in him. It takes more than idle rumor to shatter a well-formed belief."

"I hold no proof against Zurk. All that I know is that he did have opportunity to learn facts regarding both Luftus and Dokeby. Benzig was suspicious of him, yes; but one can not take Benzig's opinion as a criterion."

A pause; then Delhugh added seriously:

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"Targon and Zurk both started on a road to honesty. Targon had no opportunity to stray. But Zurk did have. Twice. And after each of those occasions, crime appeared on the horizon. Most damaging of all, it was crime of a type that Zurk could have aided."

Delhugh reached out and opened a desk drawer. He produced a stack of papers and spread them out upon the desk. He began to speak musingly.

"I HAVE hesitated to consider these documents," he admitted slowly. "They refer to Zurk's past; and, somehow, they link in with Benzig's suspicions. Had Benzig alone shown a suspicious trend, I would have remained firm in my trust of Zurk."

"But when a man like yourself, Mr. Cranston one with philanthropic leanings adds weight to suspicion, I am forced to listen. I am compelled to make a study of Zurk's past, as these papers record it."

"It happens that Zurk does not know how closely he was investigated. He does not know that he was linked with a vicious desperado called Beak Latzo, who is still at large. Even the police do not know that fact."

A pause. Cranston's tone came:

"Yet you have known it."

"Yes," admitted Delhugh. "And I know also that this man Latzo would be capable of perpetrating the two crimes that have occurred. I really believe" he nodded seriously "that if a new link showed between Zurk and Latzo, I could suspect Zurk of guilt."

"But as it stands" again Delhugh pounded the desk "I still swear by Steve Zurk! I like the man! I believe in him! Despite his past connections and all that the law once had against him."

DELHUGH leaned back and swept the papers half across the desk. Typewritten statements fluttered to the floor. A scrawled letter stopped short of the desk edge. Photographs slid apart. One was a rogues' gallery picture of Steve Zurk; the other a photostatic copy of finger-print impressions.

"There's not an iota of evidence against Zurk," proclaimed Delhugh. "The man's new career shines blameless. This mass of data pertains to the past not to the present."

"Sometimes the past link, with the present," remarked The Shadow, quietly.

"Not in the case of Steve Zurk," decided Delhugh, with a shake of his head. "Suspicious even from you, Mr. Cranston are not sufficient to incriminate Zurk in my eyes."

A pause; then, as Delhugh, firm-jawed, maintained an emphatic attitude in defense of Steve Zurk, The Shadow reached leisurely into his pocket and produced a crumpled ball of paper that Delhugh eyed curiously.

"I should be interested," stated The Shadow, in the quiet fashion of Cranston, "to have your opinion regarding this paper, Mr. Delhugh. To learn whether or not it would injure your belief in Steve Zurk's integrity."

He passed the paper to Delhugh, who opened it. Delhugh's eyes registered genuine amazement. His mouth opened wide. He was reading the message that The Shadow had found in Beak Latzo's hide-out.

Recovering suddenly from his astoundment, Delhugh snatched up a paper that lay on the desk. It was a specimen of Steve Zurk's handwriting. Delhugh compared the scrawls. He dropped both papers and sank his

forehead to his upstretched hand.

"This is terrible," groaned Delhugh. "It shows Zurk's guilt, Cranston. It shows it beyond reclaim. The handwriting proves that Zurk wrote this message to Beak Latzo.

"How when where –" Delhugh paused speculatively as he raised his head. "Tell me, how in the world did you manage to find this damning document?"

"It came into my possession," replied The Shadow, quietly, "through an agency that I can not name at present. It was brought from a house where Beak Latzo had been living."

"You have other evidence like this?" questioned Delhugh, indicating a briefcase that his visitor had brought. "Reports of investigators? Other facts against Zurk?"

"I have this." The Shadow produced the paper that he had found at Dokeby's. "A legal form, found in an incriminating spot. Note the finger impressions upon the under side, Mr. Delhugh. Tell me: Do they compare with Zurk's?"

DELHUGH made a study of the photostatic copy. He held it, with the legal form, close into the light. Then he nodded. With a look of puzzlement, he asked:

"You say this came from an incriminating spot? What place might that be?"

"From Richard Dokeby's safe," replied The Shadow.

Delhugh arose. He placed his finger upon the button that showed on his desk. Then he stopped and shook his head.

"I was going to summon Benzig," he declared. "I wanted you to hear his statements regarding the suspicions that he held of Zurk. But I have a better plan. Let us go downstairs."

He placed Zurk's papers in the desk drawer, added the documents that The Shadow had brought, then turned a key in the lock of the drawer.

"With your word for it, Cranston," remarked Delhugh, "the statement that the paper with the finger impressions came from Dokeby's is quite as damaging as the letter that speaks for itself. I suppose, of course, that you can reveal facts later. Regarding the investigation that you have apparently conducted privately."

He came from behind the desk and motioned toward the little anteroom. The Shadow picked up the briefcase and walked with Delhugh.

"Zurk is coming here to-night," informed the philanthropist. "It would be the logical time to confront him with these proofs. Are you agreed?"

They had reached the anteroom. The Shadow, with his briefcase, had stepped ahead at Delhugh's urge. He turned about as the philanthropist spoke.

"No," replied The Shadow, in the steady tone of Cranston. "We should not be too hasty, Mr. Delhugh. There are reasons why we should first watch Steve Zurk."

"Reasons?" quizzed Delhugh. He had stopped short at the entrance to the anteroom. "What sort of reasons?"

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"Reasons that pertain to crime," replied The Shadow. "Ones that may prevent —"

ENDING his sentence, The Shadow stared sharply at Delhugh. From Cranston's immobile face gleamed burning eyes a sudden revelation of The Shadow's true identity.

The briefcase left The Shadow's clutch; his hands shot forward with a sudden spring.

A change of Delhugh's expression had produced The Shadow's quick action. But, for once, The Shadow made a thrust too late. Delhugh's right hand had slid to the side of the doorway. The philanthropist pressed a hidden button.

The thick carpeting of the little anteroom split like a trap. The Shadow's leap ended almost as it began. As Delhugh dropped back, The Shadow's hands missed the philanthropist by an inch. Then the tall form of Lamont Cranston went plunging downward into a blackened pit.

Powerful fingers caught the edge of the study floor and clung there for an instant. Delhugh, gripping the side of the doorway, drove his foot toward The Shadow's hands. His brutal, grinding kick was calculated to loosen The Shadow's clutch.

But The Shadow, staring upward, defeated the fierce move by opening his fingers just before Delhugh's heel arrived. With that release, Delhugh saw his enemy go plunging down into the depth. A crash announced The Shadow's arrival at the bottom of the pit.

Delhugh pressed the switch again. The trap closed. The false philanthropist delivered an ugly, fiendish laugh. Himself a partner to crime, Delhugh had tricked The Shadow. The master foe of crime had dropped into a superplotter's snare!

CHAPTER XX. A HOUSE OF DOOM

"DID you ring, sir?"

Benzig, coming up the hallway, gave the question as he found Perry Delhugh stepping from the door of the anteroom. The secretary had been downstairs. He thought that he had heard the call of the bell.

"I rang" acknowledged Delhugh. His face wore a mild smile. "I wanted you to be about, Benzig, as I may need you later. Come along. Downstairs."

Benzig followed the philanthropist.

"Mr. Cranston is in my study," remarked Delhugh, as he and Benzig descended the long marble stairs. "He is not to be disturbed. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Should any callers come, have them remain in the parlor. I am going down to the cellar; I shall return shortly."

They had reached the bottom of the stairs. Delhugh found himself confronted by Chilton. The servant's face was troubled.

"What is it, Chilton?" inquired Delhugh.

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"Something odd, sir," replied the servant. "A great clatter from the cellar. The cook and I heard it, sir, from the kitchen. I was just on the point of descending, sir –"

"Some boxes may have fallen," interrupted Delhugh, in an annoyed tone. "The vibration of a truck passing in the street could have jarred them loose. It has happened before."

"I didn't know that, sir. This noise startled us –"

"Was it prolonged?"

"No, sir. It sounded like a crash. Nothing more."

"Boxes. Nevertheless, I shall look about. I am going down to the cellar to bring up some bottles of my special Tokay."

"Very well, sir."

To both Benzig and Chilton, Delhugh's explanation sounded logical. The reference to the Tokay was also understandable. Delhugh kept choice wines in a small storeroom to which he alone had the key. When entertaining special guests, he occasionally went down in person to obtain his treasured bottles.

The door to the cellar steps was a thin one. Delhugh opened it; then noted Chilton standing anxiously in the hall. Smilingly, he dismissed the servant, telling him that he would call if anything was wrong.

Delhugh descended.

Near the entrance of the cellar, Delhugh turned on a light. He opened the door of a coal bin. There, sprawled upon a heap of coal, was the figure of Lamont Cranston. The visitor's briefcase lay a few feet away.

DELHUGH noted that his victim was unconscious. The two-story drop had been a terrific one. The presence of the coal had evidently broken the fall, for The Shadow's legs were buried deep in the black lumps.

It was a backward snap that had stunned the victim. A gash across the side of the masklike forehead was testimony to the force of the blow.

Delhugh looked upward toward a solid ceiling. He smiled in satisfaction.

The Shadow had dropped straight through an unused closet on the first floor. Two traps had operated simultaneously at Delhugh's control: the one in the floor of the anteroom; another in the floor of the closet, directly beneath.

Two large boxes stood in a corner of the coal bin. Delhugh lifted the lid of one. He brought forth a coil of rope. Advancing to his victim, he yanked The Shadow from the heap of coal and began to truss him in expert fashion.

The limp form offering no resistance. Delhugh found no difficulty in binding The Shadow thoroughly. To make the job secure, Delhugh picked up a coil of wire and broke off lengths of it. He wound these sections into the knots of the rope, thus making possible escape doubly difficult.

As a final touch, Delhugh produced a thick handkerchief and used it to gag his victim. He wired the knot of the handkerchief, hoisted The Shadow's helpless form and flung it roughly into the big box. He closed the lid;

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turned around and picked up The Shadow's briefcase.

Opening this, Delhugh discovered a mass of folded black cloth. He began to poke into the cloak in search of guns, knowing that this was The Shadow's special garb. For Delhugh, from the moment that he had met The Shadow's blazing eyes, had had no doubt as to the identity of his victim.

Footsteps came from the stairs. Delhugh wheeled about, opened the lid of the box and dropped the briefcase in with The Shadow. He stepped from the coal bin just as Chilton arrived.

The servant's face was anxious.

"I didn't hear you call, sir," apologized Chilton, "but I did hear another clatter. I was afraid, sir, that some one might be down here. Some intruder –"

"I made the noise myself, Chilton," interposed Delhugh. "Look here, in the coal bin. See those boxes? One of them must have fallen from the other. Suppose we stack them as they were."

"Very well, sir."

Chilton started toward the box that contained The Shadow. Delhugh stopped him and motioned to the empty box. Together, the two men lifted it and placed it upon the other. The box was of heavy construction and made a sizable burden.

"Now for the Tokay," remarked Delhugh. "I almost forgot it. Come with me, Chilton."

He led the way to the wine closet, unlocked the door and removed two bottles which he handed to the servant.

Leading the way, Delhugh went upstairs, Chilton behind him. It was Delhugh who extinguished the lights, for Chilton was clutching the Tokay.

BENZIG was waiting in the upper hall. Delhugh beckoned to the secretary, then spoke to Chilton.

"Ice those bottles," he ordered. "I shall want them later, Chilton. And by the way, Benzig" he turned to the secretary "Mr. Cranston will be with me for some time. He wants his car to go back to the club. Give that instruction to the chauffeur."

"Yes, sir."

"And when Vincent comes," added Delhugh, "take him to the filing room as usual. Then knock on the door of the study to indicate that he is here."

"Very well, sir."

Benzig started away. He remembered something and turned about to Delhugh.

"What if Zurk arrives?" queried the secretary. "This is Friday night."

"Zurk called up some time ago," replied Delhugh. "He is going to Mr. Daykin's home to-night. A business matter."

"You have an appointment there also, sir."

"Yes, as a social call. You are going with us, Benzig. I shall ask Mr. Cranston if he wishes to accompany us."

Delhugh continued up the grand stair-case. His face, usually benign, showed the traces of a fiendish nature. Unviewed by Benzig, the treacherous philanthropist was free to reveal his true feelings of evil.

For his wicked brain was formulating new plans to follow past success. Delhugh had used this mansion as a snare. He was planning to make it a house of doom. One which The Shadow, a helpless captive, would never leave alive.

CHAPTER XXI. STRATEGY BY NIGHT

PERRY DELHUGH had been crafty from the time when Lamont Cranston had been announced as a visitor. Adhering to an appearance of genuine honesty, he had let The Shadow bring up the subject of Steve Zurk.

In fact, Delhugh had definitely avoided mentioning that Steve had called up earlier to cancel his usual Friday evening appointment. In every way, the master crook had worked to retain The Shadow's confidence.

Delhugh had played a skillful game of crime. He was the sponsor, the actual author, of instructions that went to Beak Latzo. He was using Steve Zurk as an instrument to gain Beak's aid.

Posing as benefactor to two ex-crooks, Delhugh had pretended that he was setting them along an honest path. Actually, he had deliberately made a secret offer to one of the pardoned convicts, inducing him to return to secret crime.

Delhugh had gained a willing tool who had the ability to work with him. The Shadow, entering the game, had gained goods on Beak Latzo. The Shadow had also found facts regarding Steve Zurk. Then Delhugh had blocked The Shadow.

Delhugh, real brain behind crime, pretended philanthropist who had used benefactions merely as a build-up toward a career of master crookery he was a man who now enjoyed an evil triumph. Delhugh had bluffed The Shadow. He had caught the master investigator unawares.

But the very strategy that had enabled Delhugh to capture The Shadow also made it impossible for the crook to immediately eliminate his helpless foe. Delhugh, in his private life, kept clear of crooks. Benzig Chilton these servants of his were honest men.

Had they been crooks, The Shadow would have spotted it. He would then have been wary of Delhugh. He would not have met the treacherous philanthropist as man to man. The Shadow had walked into a snare only because Delhugh had refrained from keeping criminals as members of his household.

Thus the cleverness that had enabled Delhugh to trick The Shadow now forced the master crook to act with caution. Chilton had heard suspicious sounds from the cellar. Delhugh had lulled the servant with an explanation. But Delhugh, even had he been so inclined, could not have risked a revolver shot down in the cellar.

The Shadow still lived; and Delhugh, true to his policy of letting others do the dirty work, intended to have crooks dispose of their arch foe. He planned to keep Benzig and Chilton unalarmed, to make those honest servants serve him with alibis as he might need them.

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REACHING the empty study, Delhugh closed the door behind him. He picked up the telephone on his desk. He dialed a number. He heard an answering response. Delhugh began to speak in a quick, cautious tone.

"I've bagged The Shadow," he informed. "No, not dead, but helpless... A prisoner. In a big box in the coal bin... Center of the cellar..."

A pause. Questions were coming over the wire. Delhugh answered.

"Get a note through at once... Yes, deliver it in person at Dangler's office... Yes, Lucky will be sure to go there before he and Beak start out..."

"That's the idea. Have them split tonight... Beak goes to Daykin's house, with a small crew... Yes, Lucky can come here... With the rest of the mob... Yes, they'll have to grab Vincent, too."

"Benzig is going out with me... Dinner downtown. I'm giving Chilton and the cook the night off... That's right... Right... Right... That's the way for Lucky to work it... He'll understand."

"Yes, Benzig and I shall come to Dangler's later. I shall look for you there... Good... Very good... You will be covered perfectly..."

Delhugh completed the telephone call. His square face was gleaming as he sat at the desk. Reaching into the drawer, the master crook removed certain papers and placed them in his pocket. Leering lips showed that Delhugh was formulating final schemes of new crime.

OUTSIDE the brownstone mansion, Benzig was speaking to the chauffeur in the limousine. The secretary was informing Stanley that Mr. Cranston intended to remain a while at Delhugh's. The car was to go to the club.

Stanley was not one of The Shadow's agents. The chauffeur merely regarded his master as an eccentric person who was likely to change plans at any time. Hence Stanley nodded in agreement with Benzig's order. He turned on the ignition and prepared to leave with the limousine.

As the big car started, Benzig turned back toward the house. At that moment, an approaching pedestrian stopped short some thirty yards away from the brownstone mansion.

The arrival was Harry Vincent, coming for his evening's work at Delhugh's.

In his contact with The Shadow, Harry knew that his chief was playing the part of Cranston. Hence the sight of the limousine told him that The Shadow was at Delhugh's. The fact that Benzig was dismissing the car without a passenger indicated that The Shadow had remained.

The situation struck Harry as unusual. Trained to use keen judgment in such cases, Harry decided that it would be a poor play to enter the house immediately. So he strolled back along the street, chose a good lingering spot and lighted a cigarette.

One smoke ended, Harry began another. At the end of a third cigarette, he glanced at his watch and decided that at least a quarter hour had elapsed. Turning forward, Harry approached the house and ascended the steps.

Chilton answered Harry's ring. Benzig appeared, nodded, and conducted the visitor up to the filing room. As soon as Harry was settled there, Benzig continued on and rapped at the door of Delhugh's study.

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Inside, Delhugh glanced at the clock on his desk. He smiled. The time interval between Benzig's dismissal of the limousine and the signal of Harry's arrival seemed proof that Harry could not have seen the departing car. Delhugh arose and left the study.

Benzig had gone downstairs. Delhugh knocked at the door of the filing room. Harry opened it. Delhugh greeted him with a beaming smile.

"Ah, Vincent," greeted Delhugh. "Back at work again, I see. How long will you be here this evening?"

"Until midnight," replied Harry.

"Quite all right," decided Delhugh. "Benzig and I are going out to dinner, so I am giving the servants the evening off. However, we shall be back by eleven, before your time to leave. You do not mind working alone here?"

"Not at all, Mr. Delhugh."

"Good evening, then."

Delhugh went downstairs. He walked back to the kitchen, where he found Chilton and the cook. Benzig, seeing Delhugh's arrival, followed.

"Chilton," said Delhugh, "we shall not require those bottles of Tokay. Benzig and I are going out to dinner. You and the cook may have the evening off."

"Thank you, sir," returned Chilton.

"What about Mr. Cranston?" queried Benzig.

"He intends to work a while with Vincent," informed Delhugh, smoothly. "When he leaves, Vincent will show him out."

"And Vincent?"

"Expects to be here when we return at eleven. Come. Benzig. We must start at once. Call a taxicab."

FIVE minutes later, Delhugh and his secretary departed.

Twenty minutes after that, Harry, listening by the door of the filing room, heard Chilton and the cook make their departure. A deep silence pervaded the house.

Harry stole from the filing room. He approached the door of Delhugh's study. He rapped softly and received no response. He opened the door and entered. Harry looked about, puzzled. No one was in the room.

Had Harry not been convinced that The Shadow was still here, the finding of an empty study would not have troubled him. Delhugh, in leaving, did not care whether or not Harry chose to prowl about. For Delhugh was convinced that Harry thought the house was empty.

Harry, however, thought otherwise. His perplexity became anxiety. He went to Delhugh's desk, picked up the telephone and put in a call to Burbank. He made a brief report.

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Burbank's quiet voice showed no alarm; yet it was questioning. For Harry's report was not the first that Burbank had received. There had been another, previously, from Cliff Marsland.

Yet Burbank had tried both the sanctum and the Cobalt Club without response from The Shadow. Until now, that had not troubled Burbank. Sometimes The Shadow deliberately let reports rest until he needed them.

Harry's report, however, placed a most unusual angle to the situation. Burbank, like Harry, could not fully understand the reason for the dismissal of Lamont Cranston's limousine. Steady questions came across the wire. Harry answered them.

Burbank gave directions. This was within his province. There had been times when Burbank had directed the work of agents during The Shadow's absence. His present orders were ones that Harry could carry out without causing damage to any plans that The Shadow might have.

"Orders received," acknowledged Harry, when Burbank's voice had finished. "Will report back every fifteen minutes."

Hanging up the receiver, Harry went from the study. In the hallway, he drew a revolver from his pocket. He closed the door of the filing room; then stole to the head of the grand stairway.

The place was filled with oppressive silence. Not a living sound disturbed the massive residence. The home of Perry Delhugh seemed like a house of doom.

Tensely, Harry proceeded down the stairs, clutching his revolver as he went. Something was wrong within these sullen walls; and to Harry Vincent belonged the task of learning what it was.

CHAPTER XXII. SQUADS SET FORTH

A SINGLE light was burning in a stone-walled room. One dozen hard-boiled ruffians were seated about on battered chairs and benches. Facing them was an ugly-visaged rogue whose big, flattened nose marked his identity.

Beak Latzo was talking to his mob of gorillas.

"At last you mugs know who you're working for," announced Beak, in a growled tone. "Some of you thought you were in with Lucky Ortz. The rest of you didn't know who was paying you. You hadn't even met Lucky.

"Well, Lucky was handling things for me. While I kept under cover. Except when the jobs were on; then I was there. Two guys helped me and Lucky on the first job while some of you were guarding my old hide-out. The whole bunch was in on the second. All except those of you who are new guys with the outfit."

Beak paused. He was bringing up ominous recollections. Only two of this mob were survivors of the original battle with The Shadow. Only three others Rungel, Cliff and Hawkeye were leftovers from the second fray.

"We ran into some tough breaks," stated Beak, "but to-night's a cinch. The job we're doing could be handled by me and a couple of torpedoes. But we're all going along, so's to take no chances.

"A house out on Long Island. Belongs to a guy named Joseph Daykin. An importer. He's got a storeroom loaded with a lot of fancy swag. Savvy?

"Well, this room of his is easy gotten into from outside. Down through the cellar. Daykin thinks nobody

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knows about it. That's why it's soft. A few of us are going in to bring out the swag.

"The rest of you will be around. Covering. Whoever we hand the swag to brings it here. Savvy? Because I'm going in with the torpedoes to see what else we can grab. Daykin's got a safe upstairs that we can hit after the big swag's gone.

"We'll have all the buggies we need for a get-away; but we want the heavy stuff riding clear before we start after the box upstairs. Lucky's coming here to join us –"

Beak broke off as five taps came from the only door of the room. Striding over, Beak opened the door and admitted Lucky. He started to speak to the lieutenant.

Lucky stopped him and motioned outside. They left together; while Beak closed the door, Lucky produced an open envelope.

"Lamp this!" he exclaimed, in an eager whisper. "I got it from Dangler, just now. From Steve. It was left in Dangler's office. I opened it riding in a cab. Steve's got The Shadow!"

BEAK grabbed the letter. He read the scrawl. He chuckled as he tore the paper to pieces and lighted the fragments with a match.

"Bagged The Shadow up at Delhugh's, eh?" chortled Beak. "Well, Steve's smart, however he managed to do it. Guess he must've nabbed him without anybody around there getting wise. Should have bumped him, though."

"Probably he couldn't," put in Lucky.

"Well, it fixes things the way we want 'em," decided Beak. "I'll only need three gorillas for that Daykin job. You take the rest and pull it the way Steve says. Get The Shadow and that other guy. Make it look like you were pulling a big job at Delhugh's."

"Leave that to me," grinned Lucky.

Mobleader and lieutenant went into the room where the gang was waiting. Beak looked about. Roughened faces were quizzical. Beak laughed.

"We're changing things," he stated. "Two jobs instead of one. Both easy. I'm taking three guys with me. Stolly, Fresco and Marsland. No, not Marsland. I'll take you, Rungel, for the third. Lucky may need you, Marsland."

Beak did not specify why he made the change. The reason was that he remembered something he had heard about Cliff in the past. Once it had been noised about that Cliff Marsland was gunning for The Shadow. Cliff had not succeeded in that quest, for it had been a bluff, part of The Shadow's strategy to build up Cliff's reputation in the underworld.

But the fact that Cliff was still alive had always impressed Beak Latzo. Mugs who talked about getting The Shadow usually disappeared mysteriously from the bad lands. Apparently, Cliff was too tough for The Shadow to get. Beak decided that it would be best to have him present at the kill.

"The rest of you go with Lucky," ordered Beak. "Split up now; then we'll start."

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MOBSTERS arose and followed their respective leaders. The gangs went from the stone-walled room, followed a darkened flight of steps and came into the gloom of an abandoned East Side garage.

Here they entered touring cars and sedans, black vehicles that stood hazy in the darkness. Motors chugged. The cars rolled in procession from a curving outlet. Lights did not come on until they were clear upon a dismal, secluded street.

A few blocks on, cars separated. Cliff and Hawkeye, seated together in the rear of Lucky's sedan, kept silent. But both were thinking; and each was puzzled.

Cliff and Hawkeye had been tipped to the fact that a job was due to-night. Cliff had phoned that word to Burbank. Then Mike Rungel had met them and taken them directly to the rendezvous beneath the old garage. There had been no chance to get new word to The Shadow.

Cliff had been counting on some opportunity to call Burbank again. He had been working toward that end from the moment when Beak Latzo had announced that their objective would be the home of Joseph Daykin.

Then, out of a clear sky had come the changed plans. Cliff and Hawkeye were being whisked away to an unknown destination. There was nothing to do but play along and hope for luck. The fact that to-night's rendezvous would also be storeroom for the boodle was a piece of knowledge that could be used later.

Cars swung left from beneath an elevated structure. They rolled through secluded streets. At last they came to an isolated spot where they could park unnoticed.

Lucky stopped the sedan. The other cars pulled up. Climbing from behind the wheel, Lucky signaled. He started across the street. The others followed.

One block through another quiet street. Then Lucky picked a space between two buildings. Mobsters filed through. They came to the rear of a large house.

While mobsmen clustered, Lucky worked on a back door. It yielded.

With nine men at his heels, Lucky motioned forward through a darkened kitchen. They came to a huge, silent hallway. There, Lucky opened a door and revealed a flight of cellar stairs. He started men moving down among them, Cliff and Hawkeye. Lucky stopped two gorillas at the rear of the mob.

"Listen," he whispered. "You birds slide upstairs. First door on the right is a filing room. A guy's in there we want to get. Plug him; then head down here."

The gorillas nodded. Lucky watched them steal toward the carpeted stairway. He followed down the cellar steps and joined the others. Using a flashlight, Lucky picked his way to the center of the cellar. There he found a light switch. He pressed it and pointed into a coal bin that was now illuminated by a single bulb.

Lucky noted two boxes stacked in the corner of the bin. He chuckled as he pointed them out to the mob. He saw ready revolvers in the hands of his underlings. The crew would do for a firing squad.

"See that lower box?" quizzed Lucky, in a snarled tone. "We're going to drill it all together because there's a mug inside it. We'll load it with lead before we drag it out of here."

"I'll tell you why. Because the guy that's in that box is tough, even if he is tied up and wired so he can't get out. The guy in that bottom box is The Shadow!"

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GORILLAS stood astounded. Hawkeye shot a wild glance at Cliff. He caught a grim nod from his companion.

Cliff turned his automatic close against his hip, covering Lucky. Hawkeye was ready to open on the rest of the mob. Then came sounds from above that made Lucky hold up a restraining hand.

Shots from the second floor. Quick shots that came in muffled succession. Lucky chuckled at this message from the two torpedoes whom he had sent to the second floor.

"They've finished the mug upstairs," he announced. "That's all we've been waiting for. Open up. On the lower box. Drill it, everybody –"

Mobsters wheeled about. As they did, one gorilla leaped suddenly upon Cliff and sent The Shadow's agent sprawling to the floor. The mobster had spotted Cliff covering Lucky.

Hawkeye wheeled at the attack. Another gorilla piled upon him as he aimed for Lucky.

Shots roared through the coal bin. Lucky, not noting Cliff or Hawkeye, had opened fire on the lower box. Other mobsters joined with him. Their bullets riddled the wooden-walled target.

Then, with the resounding echoes came a burst of terrific laughter. A wild, outlandish peal of mirth that challenged those who had dispatched the volley of their revolvers.

Wild-eyed mobsters looked up. The lid of the top box had swung open. Down toward the would-be killers were peering eyes that burned like fire.

Gloved hands were aiming mammoth automatics. A collared cloak, a shrouding hat brim covered the face of the mighty foe, save for the eyes that gleamed upon the startled mobsters.

The Shadow had given snarling killers a chance to loose their fire. Safe in the upper box, he had waited to deal death to those who had tried to murder him.

Unbound, no longer a prisoner, The Shadow had chosen an unexpected spot from which to answer the first barrage.

CHAPTER XXIII. LUCKY IS LUCKY

EVEN as The Shadow loomed vengeful from his improvised turret, the burst of an automatic came from the door of the coal bin. Cliff Marsland, rolling free from the mobster who had slugged him, had taken aim in return.

The mobster was leveling his revolver as Cliff fired. The Shadow's agent beat him to the shot. Then, coming up, Cliff aimed for Hawkeye's assailant. This fellow, swinging, was quicker than Cliff. The Shadow's agent would have lost this second combat but for an interruption.

Roars from The Shadow's automatics. The first bullets from those guns were aimed toward Cliff's new assailant. The gorilla sprawled, while others Lucky among them went diving through the entrance of the coal bin.

Mobsters, as they dived, sought spots from which to return The Shadow's fire. Booms from the automatics launched clipping bullets that sent two gorillas sprawling. Then, as The Shadow picked his targets, Cliff and

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Hawkeye threw him their aid.

With a quick swing of his arm, Cliff rammed his automatic down on the gun hand of an aiming crook. Hawkeye dived for Lucky Ortiz and grappled with the leader of the band. The odds were ended.

Lucky and his mob totaled ten. The number had been reduced to eight when Lucky had sent two gorillas to get Harry Vincent. Cliff and Hawkeye, by their desertion, had dropped the total to six.

Cliff had spilled one; The Shadow had dropped one, then two. Four from six left only Lucky and a single gorilla. And Cliff, attacking the lone mobsman, had disarmed the fellow while The Shadow was aiming to meet the gorilla's revolver.

Only Lucky remained. He was struggling toward the stairway, while Hawkeye battled him savagely. A tough fighter, Lucky was dragging the little man along. Cliff aimed; but he hesitated, afraid of hitting Hawkeye.

Then The Shadow came vaulting from the upper box. He landed on the heap of coal and sprang to the door of the bin, to join with Cliff. The Shadow arrived just as Lucky and Hawkeye went struggling out of sight, up the stairs.

A figure came tumbling, crashing downward. At the same moment, footsteps pounded upward. The door slammed at the head of the stairs. Cliff leaped forward to find Hawkeye coming to his feet at the bottom of the steps. The little man grinned sourly.

Lucky had pitched him loose. Half groggy from his tumble, Hawkeye nearly collapsed as Cliff caught him.

Then came a hissed command as The Shadow swished by and took to the steps in pursuit of Lucky. Helping Hawkeye along with him, Cliff followed The Shadow up to the ground floor.

WHEN Cliff and Hawkeye arrived in the big hall, they found that Lucky had escaped. The Shadow was standing there; toward him was coming a man from the floor above. It was Harry Vincent, an automatic in his right hand.

"They started into the filing room," reported Harry. "Only two of them, so I opened fire from the anteroom of Delhugh's study. Both wounded. Here are their guns."

The Shadow's laugh whispered through the hall. Understanding came to Cliff Marsland. Somehow Cliff was recalling Lucky's statements to the mob The Shadow had been captured and stowed in that lower box.

Harry must have made a search. In so doing, he had found and released The Shadow. Knowing that mobsters would be coming for their kill, The Shadow had adopted the ruse of entering the upper box, garbed with cloak and hat from his briefcase, ready with the automatics that Delhugh had not removed.

Harry, in turn, had been waiting to turn the game on others. He had used a lurking spot upstairs to spring an ambush on crooks who might be dispatched to get him. The Shadow had planned well. He had counted on Cliff and Hawkeye being with the crew that came here.

Lucky had escaped through the rear of the mansion. Cliff wondered why The Shadow had not followed him. The explanation came. As Cliff and Harry watched, the cloaked form began to sway. Harry caught The Shadow and supported him.

Still jarred by his two-story fall from Delhugh's study anteroom, The Shadow had fought on nerve alone. The

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fray ended, his strength was slipping from the strain of combat.

Gloved fingers went beneath the cloak. The Shadow brought forth a phial that was half filled with a purplish liquid.

He raised the little bottle to the lips that were just above the cloak collar. He finished the draught; the effect was immediate. The Shadow had used half of this potent liquid before the fray. He was drinking the rest now that he might continue. His tall form steadied.

Whistles were sounding from the front street. Some one in the neighborhood must have reported the sounds of gun fray.

The Shadow motioned to his agents. They followed him out through the rear of the house.

The fresh air aided in reviving The Shadow. As for Hawkeye, he had already recovered from his tumble down the stairs. He was as quick as Cliff and Harry as they made their way toward the rear street.

The Shadow paused in darkness. Cliff came up beside him. He caught The Shadow's low-toned order. The Shadow wanted quick details regarding the moves of crooks.

More whistles from the street in front of the mansion. A siren whined from an avenue. Yet The Shadow waited while he heard Cliff's brief report. His laugh was sinister and whispered when he heard mention of Beak Latzo's destination.

Cliff spoke of the cars that the mobsters had left a block away. The Shadow turned and led a quick course in that direction. They found a sedan and a touring car.

The Shadow entered the first machine. Cliff, beside the wheel, responded to the instructions that he heard.

The sedan shot away. Harry and Hawkeye were in the touring car, Harry at the wheel Cliff leaped aboard and repeated The Shadow's orders while Harry nodded. The second car moved off, following The Shadow's course away from the zone that would soon be in charge of the police.

IN another car one that had pulled away before The Shadow had arrived two men were growling in conversation, as they headed toward the East Side. The one at the wheel was Lucky Ortiz; his companion was the mobster whom Cliff had disarmed in the cellar.

"So Marsland socked you, eh?" quizzed Lucky. "Cracked your wrist, eh, Pokey?"

"Yeah," returned the gorilla. "Just as I had a bead on The Shadow."

"Funny The Shadow didn't plug you.

"He didn't wait. He hopped from that big box when he saw me flop to the floor. He was after you."

"Why didn't you grab your gat and let him have it?"

"Huh! Why didn't you stick aroun' an' battle with him? Besides that, me fingers was all limp. I couldn't do nothin' the way I was. I scrambled for a window."

"And yanked it open."

"Yeah, with me left mitt. They was goin' upstairs then; The Shadow an' them other guys. I beat it for the buggies."

"You were lucky to get here before I started."

"Pokey" snorted.

"Me lucky?" he quizzed. "Say you're the lucky gazebo. They don't call you 'Lucky' for nothin'. You was lucky to–night, Lucky."

Lucky laughed. His tone was ugly.

"Maybe I was," he declared. "And maybe it was The Shadow that was lucky. That's what we're going out to find."

"You're going to join up with Beak?"

Pokey's tone was incredulous. It brought a fierce growl from Lucky.

"That's where I'm going," returned the lieutenant. "I ain't calling no quits and you ain't neither."

"I'm with you, Lucky. Seein' as me mitt is better. I can move these talons now. All I need's another rod. I didn't grab up that one I had –"

"You'll get another gat." Lucky was emphatic. "And you won't be the only torpedo that I'm taking with me. Beak's got the first bundle of swag by now. It ain't far in from where he went on Long Island."

"You mean there'll be guys back at the garage?" quizzed Pokey. "The ones Beak's sendin' in?"

"Yeah. They'll be there soon," returned Lucky. "And there'll be more with 'em. I'm going where I can get a crew in a hurry."

Lucky Ortiz drove on in silence. His face was fierce and venomous. For Lucky, confident that his luck would hold, had concentrated his thoughts to a single goal. Vengeance against The Shadow.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE SHOW-DOWN

"YOUR work has been commendable, Zurk."

Joseph Daykin made the statement. The portly importer was seated in his living room, talking to his new employee. Steve Zurk, puffing at a long cigar, was apparently enjoying this visit to Daykin's Long Island home.

"So commendable," added Daykin, "that I am going to send you on the road, visiting our customers throughout the country."

"Thanks Mr. Daykin," returned Steve. "I may find it tough sledding, though. Big orders may be hard to get unless you're going to push that line of Swiss cameras that just came in."

"That is exactly what we do intend to push," said Daykin, with a tired smile. "Galen Flix will be here shortly. I have arranged to place a huge advertising contract with his concern."

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"To plug the Swiss cameras?"

"Yes. The Blorff camera will be known in every important city throughout America, before you start your trip, Zurk. But let us forget business until Flix arrives. I want to show you my storeroom."

"Isn't that it in there?" Steve nudged his thumb toward a door at the back of the living room. "Where you've got the big safe?"

"No, no," laughed Daykin. "That is my strong room. I told you about the storeroom that I have in the cellar. Surely you must remember that I spoke about those valuable curios from the Orient?"

"Jeweled idols," nodded Steve. "I remember. But I thought you had them in some warehouse. I must have misunderstood you."

"I mentioned that the items were very valuable," said Daykin. "Particularly the idols. I told you where I kept them; but you probably forgot. Particularly because it would seem strange to have such curios stored in a cellar. But no one except myself and a few friends has any idea of their worth. Come, Zurk –"

Daykin was rising when a servant entered the room to announce that Mr. Flix had arrived. The importer smiled and settled back in his chair.

"Tell him to come in, Rhodes," he told the servant. Then to Steve: "We can visit the storeroom later."

GALEN FLIX appeared. The advertising man shook hands with Daykin and Steve.

"A friend of yours was coming with me, Zurk," he said. "I refer to Jack Targon. I told him that you would be here."

"Why didn't Jack come?" asked Steve.

"He suddenly remembered an important appointment," replied Flix. "Some client he had promised to see."

"Too bad," rejoined Steve. "I'd like to have seen Jack."

"Well, gentlemen," began Flix, "this ad campaign looks like it should be a world-beater. If we don't sell half a million of those cameras, I'll –"

He stopped short. From the chair that he had taken, Flix was looking straight toward a pair of French windows that opened to a porch. The curtained portals were trembling. As Flix spoke in puzzlement, they swung open.

A rough clad man sprang into view. His face was masked with a blue bandanna. His right hand held a gleaming revolver. As he covered the seated trio, this rowdy was followed by another masked ruffian who also flourished a gat.

"Stick 'em up!" came a growled command. It was Beak Latzo's voice. "Keep 'em up, you dubs! We're taking a look around here!"

HANDS raised promptly. Daykin's arms were trembling; Flix was by no means steady. Only Steve lacked fear. He held his arms poised and stared quietly at the bandits.

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"We're looking for your safe, old bean," growled Beak, as he faced Daykin. "Guess it's past that door, huh?"

"All right" this to the other masked man "you keep a bead on 'em while I go in. This guy in particular" he motioned his gun at Steve "because he looks tough."

Moving toward the door, Beak paused to deliver a contemptuous snort at Daykin.

"Don't feel happy, mug," he sneered. "That swag of yours downstairs has been loaded long ago. Sent it away where we can use it. We're just dropping in to see what else looks good."

Beak placed his hand upon the door and opened it. He looked into the room where the safe was located. His henchman was watchfully covering the seated men, ready to open up if any one made trouble.

Steve, like Daykin and Flix, was watching Beak. None heard stealthy footsteps creeping in from the hallway.

A sudden exclamation came from the gorilla who was covering the seated men. The masked mobster had felt something cold press against his neck. He knew the sensation of a revolver muzzle. He loosened his fingers and let his own gun clatter to the floor.

Beak whirled about. He was too late. He was staring into the mouth of a gun held by a second arrival. Sullenly, Beak let his own gat drop. He knew the man who had him covered. It was Detective Joe Cardona.

DAYKIN and Flix turned. So did Steve. They recognized the man who had pressed a revolver to the neck of the second crook. Cardona's companion was Jack Targon.

The rescuers backed Beak and the gorillas into a corner. While Jack stood by with ready gun, Joe whisked the masks from the faces of the disarmed crooks. The detective uttered a grim comment.

"Beak Latzo," said Cardona, in recognition. "I thought so. All right, Targon" Joe turned, keeping the crooks covered "Have your gun ready and tell these gentlemen what you told me."

Jack hesitated. He looked squarely at Steve, who had let his hand fall to the arms of his chair. Then, with solemn lips, the ex-swindler spoke.

"I hated to do this, Steve," he said. "But you remember what I told you. I was with you while you played square."

Steve made no reply. He looked toward Beak. The mobleader's face was hard.

"I didn't like the looks of things," asserted Jack. "That murder of Luftus the way you tried to pin it on some broker. After that the mess when the lawyer, Dokeby, lost a big bunch of dough."

"What is this, Targon?" questioned Flix, as Jack paused. "Are you accusing Zurk?"

"Yes," replied Jack. He faced the ad man. "I knew that Steve used to work with a crook named Beak Latzo. Those jobs looked like Beak's work. When you told me Steve was coming out here to-night, I had a hunch something was up.

"I wasn't sure. I went to headquarters and told Detective Cardona what I suspected. I asked him to come with me here, figuring that he could step out if things looked all right. But they didn't."

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It was seldom that Steve Zurk smiled. On this occasion, however, his lips formed a definite grin.

"You're all right, Jack," he said, commendingly. "A swell fellow. And you've nabbed Beak Latzo. I'm glad of that. Used to work with me, Beak did; but that's all over. Long ago. Those jobs did look like Beak might have done them. But lots of other people might have pulled them, too.

"Think it over, Jack, and you'll see you shot too far. Just because it happened to be Beak doesn't mean that I'm in on it. Say" he chuckled coldly "wouldn't I be a dub to bring Beak to a place like this. Me, just out of the big house, pulling something as raw as all that. It don't fit, Jack."

"No?" The question came from Cardona. "Well, that's the smart part of it, Zurk. Crossing the dope. What better alibi would you want than to be with your boss when his place was robbed?"

Steve made no reply.

"Figuring we didn't have you hooked with Beak Latzo," added Cardona. "Well, we didn't until this chap Targon put us wise. We'll dig up your record, Zurk, and put some frills on it."

"You'll prove nothing against me," remarked Steve. "The past doesn't make the present."

Beak Latzo, hard-faced and silent, looked ready to support Steve's statement. Cardona began a gruff growl. He paused as some one entered. It was Rhodes, Daykin's servant. The man quavered at the sight of guns. He did not know what had happened in here.

"There's a gentleman to see you, sir," stated Rhodes. "It it's Mr. Delhugh, sir –"

"The man we want to see!" exclaimed Jack to Cardona. "The very man!"

"Have Mr. Delhugh come in," ordered Daykin.

Rhodes left. He returned with Delhugh and Benzig.

DELHUGH stopped short at the scene before him. He looked from person to person in apparent bewilderment.

"What's this?" he questioned.

"Attempted robbery" replied Cardona. "This man" he motioned to the corner "is known a Beak Latzo. Targon and I nabbed him. We think that Steve Zurk was working with him."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Delhugh. "This is a mistake. At least" he paused, troubled "at least, I hope it is a mistake."

"You have facts regarding Steve's record, Mr. Delhugh," put in Jack. "Don't any of them mention a hook-up between him and Beak Latzo?"

Delhugh nodded slowly. He looked toward Steve and spoke in a quiet, reassuring tone.

"Zurk," he declared, "it is my painful duty to state facts that appear very much against you. Until I have finished, I shall ask you to remain silent. Is that understood?"

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Steve nodded.

"Because," added Delhugh, "these facts are somewhat circumstantial. If you are innocent as I hope and believe they may not matter. I came here intending to discuss them with you privately. Since you are suspected of crime, it is better that I should reveal them. It is always a mistake to hold facts back."

Steve nodded in agreement.

"You are Detective Cardona?" asked Delhugh, turning to Joe. Receiving a nod, he added: "Since you and Targon are needed with your revolvers, I shall allow you to listen while I show this evidence to my friends Flix and Daykin. You can judge by their opinions."

"All right," agreed Cardona.

Turning to Flix and Daykin, Delhugh produced a bundle of papers from his pocket. As he handed documents to the two men, he described each paper.

"This," stated Delhugh, "is an investigator's report that connects Zurk with Latzo. Something that Zurk has apparently not denied as part of his past. Here is a specimen of Zurk's handwriting. This is a photograph of his finger prints."

Flix and Daykin nodded.

"Here" Delhugh produced a crumpled sheet "is a recent letter from Zurk to Latzo. I say recent, because it refers to a proposed robbery of Theobald Luftus."

Steve was staring hard at Delhugh. Beak's jaw had dropped. The production of The Shadow's evidence was something that no one had expected.

"And this paper," added Delhugh, "is a legal form that was found in Richard Dokeby's safe. Its reverse side bears impressions of Zurk's finger prints."

"It's Zurk's writing," declared Daykin, studying the crumpled paper. "It compares with the specimen."

"And the finger impressions coincide with the photostatic copy," added Flix.

"And regarding those robberies," remarked Delhugh, "I shall call upon the testimony of my secretary. What have you to say, Benzig?"

"ONLY this, sir," stated Benzig. "Zurk was alone in your study twice. On each occasion he could have examined your correspondence. Some of it referred to Theobald Luftus; and some to Richard Dokeby. There are letters in your files, sir, which can be produced."

"I regret," declared Delhugh, turning toward Cardona, "that I did not inform the law earlier regarding these matters. You see, I had nothing but Benzig's suspicions to go on until to-night, when I obtained actual documents as evidence against Zurk. Then I decided to act promptly."

"This is a lie!" cried Steve, coming suddenly to his feet. "I never wrote a line to Beak since I came out of stir. I wasn't in Dokeby's safe –"

"Move over here," broke in Cardona, moving his gun. "Line up with the other crooks. And no more talk!"

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Reluctantly, Steve backed along beside Beak and the mobster. Beak growled in Steve's ear.

"Goofy was to have burned that letter," informed the mobleader. "That's what Goofy said he did; but he was croaking."

Steve stared blankly at Beak. A sudden look of puzzlement showed on the mobleader's ugly face.

"Some one phone headquarters," Cardona was saying. Then, to Delhugh: "You've given us the goods on Zurk. There is enough evidence here to convict him. Along with Latzo."

"Too bad," declared Delhugh, with a sad shake of his head. "You see, when I obtained this evidence –"

His voice broke. Delhugh saw heads turning. Papers in hand, he wheeled about, toward the doorway from the hall. As Delhugh swung, a burst of shivering mirth swept through the room. Delhugh quailed at the mocking tones.

Framed in the doorway, ready with steadied automatics, stood the enemy whom Delhugh believed dead. Again, the arch-crook faced his formidable antagonist; but this time the Nemesis of crime was garbed in his guise of black.

Papers crinkled between Delhugh's trembling hands as the false philanthropist stared at the tall, weird form of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XXV. THE SHADOW REVEALS

"EVIDENCE!"

The Shadow's tone was sibilant in its mockery. The black-cloaked visitant had picked up Delhugh's final word. Sinister in his contempt, The Shadow's blazing eyes were upon the papers that Delhugh held.

"False evidence against an innocent man," proclaimed The Shadow. "Papers brought back to their author. Testimony that proves Steve Zurk's innocence not his guilt."

Joe Cardona had not made a move since The Shadow's entrance. The ace was standing with his revolver covering Steve, Beak and the mobster. Jack Targon, also armed, was rooted, his own gun pointing nowhere. He had swung; then stopped at sight of The Shadow's weapons.

"Contact between Zurk and Latzo," sneered The Shadow. "You needed it, Delhugh, that Beak might serve you in crime. So letters came to Latzo. You are holding one of them."

A pause. The Shadow's eyes were toward Steve Zurk. The ex-convict spoke boldly for himself.

"I did not write that letter," asserted Steve. "If Delhugh sent it, he fixed it up himself. Say" Steve paused, his eyes on Targon "did you forge that letter, Jack? That was a specialty of yours, wasn't it? Working for Delhugh I get it with him having samples of my bum scrawl –"

Jack Targon was rigid. He made a slight move with his gun hand; then stopped as he saw The Shadow's eyes upon him. Delhugh was chewing his lips. The Shadow had seen through the game. But it was Steve who continued talking.

"And Delhugh planting letters," declared Steve. "There in his study, where I could have found them and got

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wise to Luftus and Dokeby. Say, Benzig" he swung toward the secretary "were you in on this racket, too?"

"No, no," protested the bespectacled secretary. Honest Benzig was aghast. "I was duped! By Mr. Delhugh! I see now that he must have opened my portfolio and disturbed letters so that I would suspect you."

"Lies," snarled Delhugh, defiantly. "These finger prints are Zurk's – on this legal form from Dokeby's safe –"

"Prove that it came from Dokeby's safe," ordered The Shadow in a sneering tone.

Delhugh stood bewildered. He had only The Shadow's own testimony to back his statement. Now The Shadow was challenging him to offer proof.

"State that it came from Dokeby's," hissed The Shadow, "because you had it placed there. By Targon. When he entered Dokeby's office early Thursday evening. After he had received the paper from you. Before he came back to your home with the swag."

Delhugh's face was livid. Jack Targon's teeth were clenched. Beak Latzo, still covered by Cardona's gun, was glowering. Oddly, Benzig was the person who suddenly spoke.

"Targon did come twice that night," recalled the secretary, anxious to clear himself of suspicion. "The first time Mr. Delhugh gave him a note. The second time, Targon brought a package and left it downstairs. He –"

Benzig broke off as he caught a glare from Delhugh.

"A paper with finger prints," sneered The Shadow. "But with no thumb prints on the other side –"

"I'VE got it!" exclaimed Steve, turning to Cardona. "Delhugh gave me a stack of letters. Told me to read the top one." He turned to Daykin. "A letter from you, sir, on top of a stack. That legal form must have been on the bottom. To get my finger prints, so it could be planted in Dokeby's safe."

"And this job was to follow quick. Beak here grabbing the swag with me in the house. Jack coming in to snag him. They bluffed Beak and they framed me. Get that, Beak?" He swung to the mobleader. "They bluffed you."

"Yeah?" growled Beak. "Well, I'm all for 'em. There was dough in it. And I'd have worked for 'em anyway and helped 'em to frame you. Going straight, all right, that's what you were. I'd have queered a yellow game like that myself."

Beak's ugly challenge was the final evidence of Steve Zurk's innocence. Crooks were at bay, their cause demolished. Perry Delhugh as the master criminal; Jack Targon, a corrupted tool who had double-crossed a pal; Beak Latzo, nothing but a crook these formed a dejected trio.

For The Shadow held them at his mercy, and Joe Cardona, seeing truth, was ready to click the handcuffs on the cornered band. The detective motioned to Steve to relieve Jack Targon of the gun that the forger was holding. Steve stepped forward; then suddenly stopped.

French windows were swinging inward. Beyond them came the flash of revolvers; then upon the sill appeared Lucky Ortiz, springing forward with a leveled gun. The gang lieutenant was aiming for The Shadow, while henchmen were following to cover others.

THE SHADOW wheeled as Lucky fired. With his swing, the cloaked warrior did a fading trick to the right.

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Had The Shadow possessed his normal quickness, he would have eluded Lucky's aim.

But The Shadow, wearied by his ordeal of this night, was lacking in the speed of his quick move. His cloaked form spun as it dropped. The red lining of the cloak swept wide as The Shadow sprawled upon the floor.

Lucky's shot had clipped The Shadow's left shoulder. Firing again, the lieutenant leaped forward, hoping to score another hit against his crippled foe. His second shot, hasty, sizzled wide. His third never came.

Flat from the floor, The Shadow loosed an answer. An automatic, swinging up in the gloved right fist, spoke forth with deadly aim.

Winged as he leaped, Lucky took a bound in the air. Then he flattened face foremost on the floor, writhing in death agony.

Even as Lucky fired his first shot, guns barked from the lawn outside of Daykin's home. The crash of the French windows had been seen by The Shadow's agents, stationed near the house. Cliff, Harry and Hawkeye had not spotted the stealthy arrival of Lucky's new mob until the leader had broken through the doors.

Gunmen, outlined against the light of the living room, were perfect targets for a rapid fire. Forgetting the prey in the living room, gorillas dived back to the porch. They fired wildly as they scattered under the withering fire of The Shadow's three reserves.

Jack Targon swung for Joe Cardona. But the detective, having the bulge, beat the forger to the shot. Joe's revolver barked; Jack's fell from his hand. Steve Zurk made a dive for it. So did Delhugh.

Cardona aimed for the arch-crook. Beak Latzo piled upon the ace detective and bore him to the floor. The odd gorilla hurled himself on Steve and sent the innocent man sprawling while Delhugh grabbed the gun.

Daykin and Flix grabbed the gorilla. Steve wrestled free and dived for Beak Latzo, just as the mobleader managed to get hold of Cardona's revolver. The three fought fiercely. As Cardona slipped, Steve twisted the weapon and pressed the trigger.

Beak Latzo slumped away. Cardona was half groggy on the floor; but he was safe from harm. Steve Zurk had settled scores with Beak; but right now, Steve was thinking of a bigger crook: Perry Delhugh.

BENZIG had wrestled with his former master. With one swing, Delhugh sent the secretary rolling across the floor. Delhugh swung toward the spot where The Shadow lay motionless after the effort that had enabled him to dispatch Lucky Ortiz.

As Delhugh aimed for the foe he thought helpless, Steve Zurk swung about and leveled Cardona's revolver at Delhugh. Steve knew that he was too late; but he also knew that he could beat Delhugh before the man could fire a second shot.

From the floor, The Shadow's eyes looked up, straight toward Delhugh's down-swinging gun. The Shadow's gloved right hand was knuckled downward on the floor, an automatic limp within it. Fingers tightened. The forming of the fist snapped the gun muzzle upward; and with the same move, The Shadow pressed the trigger.

Finger motion was shorter than the swing of an arm. The Shadow's gun spat flame before Delhugh could fire.

The arch-crook swayed, wounded. He pressed the trigger of his wavering gun and sent a bullet ripping

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through the floor. He tried to steady as he saw The Shadow's fist repeat its tightening. Then came a roar from behind Delhugh.

Steve Zurk had fired. Delhugh slumped forward as The Shadow managed a final shot. The added bullet seemed to jolt the arch-crook backward. Delhugh twisted; then sidled to the floor and sprawled motionless.

The Shadow's right arm moved. Like a lever, it raised the weary body. The Shadow came to his feet, sagging to the left. Steve Zurk had joined Daykin and Flix; they added subduing touches to Beak Latzo's henchman.

Joe Cardona, half groggy and weaponless, stared toward the living room door. There he saw The Shadow moving slowly into the hall, two automatics dangling from his gloved right hand. Joe braced. He started after.

The front door was open when Cardona reached it. Joe managed to make out a wavering figure passing through a gate some thirty feet away. He heard a weary laugh. He saw the dim forms of three men springing up to aid The Shadow.

Lucky's gorillas had been winged and scattered. Lucky himself was dead, like Delhugh, Targon and Latzo, the three who had played major parts in the reign of crime. Steve Zurk, vindicated, had aided The Shadow in the fight for justice.

A motor chugged as Cardona, revived by clear air, stood staring through the darkness. Lights blinked; a car shot away from beyond the grounds. The Shadow's agents were traveling away with their wounded chief.

Only one thing more to be done: the notification of Murson, the broker hiding in the hotel at The Shadow's orders, that he need remain in hiding no longer. His evidence would not be needed, for the real killers of Luftus had been apprehended.

And as Cardona lingered, his ears caught a sound that boded well. The wild burst of weird mockery rang out through the night air. It shuddered to a fierce crescendo; then wavered into echoes.

A strong, amazing taunt. To Cardona, a proof that its author, though weary and wounded, would soon again be ready to war against hordes of crookdom.

The gibing, eerie triumph laugh of The Shadow.

THE END