

THE CUP OF CONFUCIUS

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. DYNAMITE I

THE broad concrete approach leading to the New Jersey entrance of the Holland Tunnel was jammed with an orderly procession of automobiles as far as the eye could reach. Although the hour was late, the usual jam of tunnel traffic filled every lane with trucks and pleasure cars in a slow-moving, bewildering mass.

Yet there was no confusion or excitement. Lights blazing overhead gave the scene the appearance of midday. The lines of traffic slowly converged, passed the ticket booths where busy cash registers tinkled. Cars roared down the smooth incline that led onward into the square maw of the tunnel. But in spite of the efficiency of the tunnel police, the waits were frequent. Drivers read papers or dozed, most of them bored and sleepy.

Lamont Cranston, however, was wide awake. He sat behind the wheel of his imported, beautifully streamlined coupe and his hawklike eyes were alert and intelligent. It amused him that people stared with envy at his shining car, yet took no particular interest in him. It pleased Lamont Cranston to remain anonymous and unnoticed.

For Lamont Cranston was The Shadow, mysterious avenger of crime. The Shadow, garbed in trailing cloak and slouch hat of black, roamed the reaches of the underworld ferreting out crime in his lair and bringing to

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justice those criminals who flouted the law! The name of The Shadow was a byword of terror in the far corners of crimedom!

There was a real Lamont Cranston a world traveler who spent most of his time exploring odd corners of the globe. Membership in New York City's exclusive Cobalt Club was his. He maintained also a palatial estate in New Jersey, but was seldom at home. Because of this, The Shadow at times adopted Cranston's personality and physical characteristics, thus being able to appear in public and gain knowledge of crime in the making that could not be his if he passed as The Shadow.

TO-NIGHT, The Shadow in the guise of Cranston was returning from Cranston's New Jersey home. An obscure item on an inner page of the daily newspaper was responsible for The Shadow's decision. To an ordinary observer, the news item would have seemed unimportant, the routine story of a minor attempt at petty crime. The Shadow, however, sensed menace, conspiracy perhaps a sensational murder behind the bare facts of that small clipping.

The Shadow uttered a grim, sibilant laugh as he sat in the midst of the stalled tunnel traffic. Again he read the item he had cut from the paper:

TROUBLE AT SHADELAWN

Quick wit and quicker action prevented an attempted burglary last night at Shadelawn, the magnificent estate of Arnold Dixon in the exclusive Pelham Bay section of New York City. An intruder, attempting to enter the window of Bruce Dixon, only son of the retired millionaire, was discovered and driven off by William Timothy with the help of Charles, the Dixon butler. Although numerous shots were fired at the fleeing crook he succeeded in escaping.

A peculiar fact in the case is that Dixon's son Bruce was unaware of the burglar's presence until he heard the shooting, although he was in his room playing solitaire when the attempt occurred. William Timothy, who is Dixon's lawyer and an old friend of the millionaire, was unable to identify the crook from police photographs; but Charles, the butler, picked out "Spud" Wilson as the man whom he and Timothy had fired at. Detectives Cohen and Maloy have been assigned to the case.

This is the second time in recent months that Shadelawn has appeared in the news. Three months ago Bruce Dixon returned home after a prolonged absence of ten years due to a violent quarrel with his millionaire father. Efforts to discover the reason for the quarrel and the recent reconciliation were fruitless. Neither Arnold Dixon nor his son would consent to an interview. Through his lawyer Timothy, the aged millionaire declined to discuss what he termed his "personal and private affairs."

The Shadow placed the clipping back in his wallet. The cars ahead of him were beginning to move. He drove slowly past the toll booth, and a moment later was whizzing swiftly through the electric-lighted whiteness of the tiled tunnel that led under the mud of the Hudson River to the pulsing streets of distant Manhattan.

A single fact glowed like flame in the keen mind of The Shadow. "Spud" Wilson, the "burglar" who had tried to enter the mansion of Arnold Dixon, was no burglar at all! He was a cleverer and more dangerous type of rogue than that. Spud was a daring confidence man, a shrewd swindler. He worked only at jobs where millions were involved.

What, then, was his purpose in sneaking into the grounds of Shadelawn? And why did he risk bullets and death by pretending to be a common sneak thief?

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The Shadow intended to find out the true answer to his puzzle. Some one was manipulating the clever Spud for purposes far more important than the routine robbery of a millionaire's mansion.

The Shadow was hastening to his sanctum to-night. He wanted to study certain documents his agents had collected. Those documents referred not only to Arnold Dixon and his recently returned son; they concerned also William Timothy, the millionaire's lawyer, and Charles, his butler.

Hidden in his sanctum in an old building in the heart of New York, its whereabouts known but to himself, The Shadow would study and ponder the significance of these accurate reports. From the knowledge thus gained he would know before morning just what course to pursue.

The Shadow's first hint of danger came as he exited from the tunnel and drove swiftly northward along Varick Street.

An automobile was parked at the curb, and beyond the motionless car was the weedy expanse of an unfenced vacant lot. Instantly The Shadow slowed his speed, his glance rigidly alert. He was interested not in the parked car, not in the vacant lot. He was watching the face and figure of a man.

The Shadow, as Cranston, took a quick searching look at that distant figure as his coupe idled past the vacant lot and rolled onward to the corner. The man he noticed had just emerged from the side door of a brick building that adjoined the lot. He was hurrying stealthily across the lot toward the sidewalk where the car was parked.

For barely an instant, his face was illuminated by the light above the doorway of the brick building. But that instant was sufficient for the keen eye and the alert memory of The Shadow to combine in a swift guess of the fellow's probable identity.

The man was Spud Wilson! The shrewd crook who had so recently attempted to burglarize the home of Arnold Dixon!

THE SHADOW acted without delay. His coupe shot around the corner and came to a quick halt. A moment later the car was braked and locked, and The Shadow was returning to make sure that his guess was a true one.

He crossed Varick Street and his step slackened. He managed to time himself so that he walked abreast of the suspect just as the latter emerged from the weedy lot and began to hurry toward the curb where the parked automobile had first attracted The Shadow's attention.

In the suave manner of Lamont Cranston, The Shadow was holding an unlighted cigarette in his slim, muscular fingers. He smiled gently, said with an apologetic murmur:

"I beg your pardon, sir. I wonder if you might let me have a match?"

"Huh? Oh, sure!"

The Shadow saw to it that he was between the man and the curb. He remained there as he struck a match hastily and held the yellow flame to the end of his cigarette. He didn't attempt to cup the flame. He held it so that the light shone full into the face of the pedestrian, who was now scowling at him with a look of frowning suspicion.

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The man was Spud Wilson. No doubt of it at all. Narrow, pinched eyes, thin slash of a mouth, a pale, bumpy forehead. His words as well as his appearance proved The Shadow's deduction.

He said in a low, menacing whisper: "What's the idea of staring at me, mister? You're not a city dick or I'd know you. What are you a government man?"

"Not at all. I'm merely a private citizen borrowing a match. If you'll excuse me, I'll be moving along. Thank you for the accommodation."

Wilson's hand reached out, caught Cranston by the wrist. "Wait a minute, pal! You ain't kidding me! What's the idea of trailing me?"

His hand jerked from under his coat. The Shadow saw the dull gleam of an automatic. He hadn't expected so savage a move from a confidence man.

No flame spat from the muzzle of the pistol, but as Wilson pivoted on his toes, the barrel of his weapon whizzed like a glittering club and struck The Shadow a glancing blow on the temple that sent his hat flying and made him stagger off balance.

The next instant The Shadow's own gun was in his hand. But the strangely unexpected assault of Spud Wilson was followed by a terrified and equally strange flight. He whirled away, ran straight for his car at the curb.

He was behind the wheel, his foot fumbling toward the starter pedal, before The Shadow could gather his muscles and sprint across the sidewalk.

The brief delay in pursuit was all that saved The Shadow's life. He saw the sinuous length of wire attached to the starter pedal. He saw the wire jerk as Wilson's foot jammed down hard.

The Shadow threw himself face downward on the sidewalk. As he did so the car, the curb the very street itself erupted into a pillar of flame. The thunderous roar of an explosion filled the air like the vicious boom of a field gun.

Blinded, his ears buzzing from the enormous wind—pressure of the blast, The Shadow groaned. He could feel a white-hot pain in his side and knew dully that a flying chunk of metal from the dynamited automobile had ripped past his body just below the curve of his ribs. He could feel the warm gush of blood, as he rolled dazedly to his knees and staggered to his feet.

A smoking heap of wreckage lay scattered along the blackened pavement. A few bloody tatters of clothing were all that was left of the unfortunate Spud Wilson. Some one had planned for that desperate crook to die! Some one who had deliberately planted dynamite in the parked car and wired the starter to a detonating cap!

THE SHADOW divined all this as he fell weakly to the pavement and again clawed himself to his feet. He heard the screams of women, the hoarse shouts of terrified men.

"There he goes! That's one of them now!"

The yell restored The Shadow's ebbing strength. He had no desire to be halted and questioned. Around the corner was his own car, with a suitcase inside that contained the complete disguise of The Shadow that would change him from Lamont Cranston to his original identity. To be caught now would be to have his secret betrayed, his mysterious identity forever ruined.

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He raced desperately around the corner. Before the wildly excited neighborhood knew clearly what was happening, a sleek coupe was vanishing in a droning whine of high power.

A voice screamed thinly far behind him: "A Jersey car! Get the license number!"

The Shadow laughed.

His hand reached toward the dash and jerked at a small knob that looked like a choke. It wasn't. Apparently nothing happened. But The Shadow was leaving nothing to chance. By his quick gesture he had changed the license number on the rear of the car. The plate was no longer the same. It was now yellow and black. A New York license!

The Shadow's jerk at the knob in the dash had allowed the fake plate to slip downward from beneath a patent-leather covering just above where the real license had been suspended.

The Shadow was no longer Lamont Cranston. A black slouch hat covered his forehead and shaded the piercing eyes. Black gloves covered his lean hands. In spite of the throbbing agony of his wound, he had slipped into his disguise with sure dexterity. His safety now depended on speed and cleverness. He knew he had to reach a safe haven before he collapsed.

He slackened speed. Biting his lips to keep from fainting, he drove as fast as he dared to the spot he had in mind from the very moment he knew he was hurt.

His goal was a dark doorway on a quiet and sedate street in residential Manhattan. He shut off his motor and locked the car, taking the key with him. Staggering, he managed to climb a short flight of steps and press a bell button.

Over the bell was a small bronze plate that read: "RUPERT SAYRE, M.D."

The Shadow felt unconsciousness flooding over him. But he had will enough to turn with a last effort and satisfy himself that no one had observed him leave the car at the curb and climb the stoop to the doctor's private office. It was his final coherent thought. His body crumpled in a limp heap.

THE SHADOW was lying thus when the door opened. A keen-faced man peered, saw the unconscious figure and uttered a quick exclamation.

"Good heavens! It's it's he!"

He turned and shouted a tense order to some one inside the door. "Quick! Give me a hand! Get this man inside in a hurry!"

A man in the white jacket of an intern appeared hastily. He said no word at all. He was too well-trained for that.

Together he and Doctor Rupert Sayre lifted The Shadow and carried him inside the quiet house. The door shut with a discreet click. For a few moments, there was silence outside. Then again the door opened. This time, the intern in the white coat appeared alone. He carried a basin of warm water, a sponge and soap.

There were bloody smears on the stone where The Shadow had fallen. They disappeared without delay.

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Rupert Sayre was more than an alert young surgeon. He was a man with a grim hatred for crime and criminals. The Shadow trusted him as one of his most competent agents.

In the gifted hands of Doctor Rupert Sayre the bleeding body of The Shadow would be given competent treatment under conditions of absolute secrecy.

CHAPTER II. TROUBLE AT SHADELAWN

NO one had noticed the arrival of The Shadow at the modest brownstone office of Doctor Rupert Sayre. But if some one had and had waited on the sidewalk for two full days in order to witness the manner of The Shadow's departure that observer would have been a very puzzled man.

For The Shadow never did leave Sayre's office!

The gentleman who departed under cover of darkness on a cold, windy evening had the features of Lamont Cranston. In his hand he carried a light leather bag. Inside it was a black robe, a broad-brimmed slouch hat, gloves and certain other articles that formed an indispensable part of The Shadow's necessary equipment.

The Shadow walked quietly to a near-by garage, unlocked the coupe in which he had escaped from the scene of the blast. He drove northward through the city.

His driving was careful, as befits a man who has had a narrow escape from death. The wound in his side had not been as deep or as dangerous as Doctor Sayre had at first feared. The flying fragment of metal from Spud Wilson's dynamited automobile had inflicted a shallow, bloody gouge rather than imbedding itself deeply into the flesh. That fact, plus Sayre's skill and the splendid vitality in The Shadow's lean body, accounted for his miraculous reappearance behind the wheel of his high-powered coupe.

A stiff corsetlike band of adhesive tape made Lamont Cranston's figure sit somewhat slantingly behind the wheel. That and the unusual pallor of his lean cheeks were the only indications of a desperate adventure that had filled the newspapers with screaming headlines.

Who had planted the dynamite that had blown that parked car to pieces? And why? As yet, The Shadow had no answer to either question. But he matched those two unanswered questions with two accurate facts that only he, himself, knew.

The first was that the bloody tatters of rags that were found in the wreck of a stolen car on Varick Street were all that was left of a sly crook named Spud Wilson. The second fact was that the answer to the outrage seemed to point very definitely to the mansion of Arnold Dixon in Pelham Bay. The "burglary," which had first excited The Shadow's attention, was very evidently a cover-up for something far more sinister and murderous.

It was toward the mansion of Arnold Dixon that The Shadow was now driving. His plan was simple. He had an overwhelming desire to meet, observe and study at close range this eccentric millionaire. He wanted to talk to Bruce, the recently returned son.

He hoped to observe the butler and if possible William Timothy, the millionaire's lawyer. The Shadow was aware that the latter was a friend of Dixon's of long standing. Nearly every night the two played chess together and drank a glass of port.

The Shadow had already arranged a plausible excuse to explain his visit. In his inner pocket was a letter of

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introduction from the curator of ceramics of the Museum of Art. Lamont Cranston was an amateur collector of Chinese pottery of no mean reputation. He had even written a monograph or two on the subject. Hence The Shadow had no trouble obtaining the letter of introduction from the curator and he expected no trouble in getting into Dixon's home.

Dixon's private collection was the largest and best in the country. He was proud of it. He took a childish delight in showing off some of his rarer pieces to the jealous eyes of rival collectors.

A SIBILANT laugh of satisfaction escaped the lips of The Shadow as he saw the massive gray walls of the Dixon estate loom up in the darkness. It was a large place, built like an old-fashioned castle in a swanky and restricted section overlooking Pelham Bay.

The Shadow drove past the gate, watching carefully until he saw a spot where he could hide his car. Turning the coupe, he backed under a thick clump of evergreens and left it there, securely hidden from sight.

The Shadow discovered that the gate which led to the grounds was closed but not locked. He passed through and walked with deliberate steps along the curving path that led through a rather thickly planted park toward the distant turrets of the stone mansion.

Within an ornate, high-ceilinged room on the ground floor of the Dixon mansion, two men were awaiting the appearance of the millionaire. One of them was dressed in the severely dark clothing of a butler. He was a short, stocky man with a placid face and a fringe of gray hair around his ears and the back of his almost bald skull. This was Charles who had been in the service of Arnold Dixon for more than thirty-five years.

Charles was arranging carved ivory chessmen on a board, but it was evident that his mind was not on his occupation. His eyes kept veering toward the other man. This second man was William Timothy, the millionaire's attorney and his closest friend. It was for him and Dixon that the chess game was being prepared.

Timothy was tall, spare. He paced up and down with an alert, nervous step, except for the cringing limp every time his left foot touched the carpet. He suffered from chronic attacks of arthritis. But to-night his anxiety was mental, not physical.

He said, abruptly: "Charles, put down those chessmen. I want to talk to you."

Charles straightened from his task. There was a look of relief on his plump face as he stared at the lawyer. He smiled wanly, as if he knew what Timothy was about to say.

"There's no need for either of us to beat about the bush, Charles," the lawyer murmured. "We know there's something highly unusual going on in this house. Mr. Dixon won't talk. He's desperately afraid of some one or something... We've both of us sensed that."

"That's true," Charles quavered. "The master hasn't been himself for the past three months not since those two men first came here for a private interview with him."

He added, timorously: "They're calling to-night, as I whispered to you over the telephone."

"You were right in letting me know about it," Timothy said. "I'm very anxious to get a good look at this Bert Hooley and his friend, Joe Snaper."

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"They both have white, pasty faces; they talk in husky whispers out of the corners of their mouths. Very ugly-looking fellows, indeed."

"The names are probably aliases," Timothy murmured, grimly. "I've tried to trace them, to have them shadowed to wherever their headquarters is; but no luck."

His voice hardened. He queried: "The same peculiar thing happens each time they call?"

"Yes, sir!"

CHARLES amplified his exclamation in a low hurried voice, his glance watching the huge doorway through which presently would emerge Arnold Dixon and his good-looking son, Bruce. Hooley and Snaper had been coming regularly to the mansion for the past three months, twice every month. Their visits seemed to terrify Arnold Dixon, but he never refused to see them. They were closeted alone with him in his private office for twenty minutes or so. They always left looking triumphant.

Charles had tried timidly to speak to the old man about it, and had been amazed at the angry transformation in his usually gentle employer. In a high, strident voice, Dixon had told the faithful butler that if he didn't mind his own business and stop asking impertinent questions he'd be instantly discharged.

"And Bruce what of him?" Timothy asked.

Again the butler glanced at the draped doorway.

"I'm afraid of Bruce, sir. I I don't trust him."

"Why not?"

"Because every time these two fellows call, Mr. Bruce vanishes. He's done it every time, sir. Never once has he commented on them to either me or his father. But the moment they enter his father's study and the door is locked, Mr. Bruce vanishes.

"I wasn't sure of that until lately. Then I began quietly to search for him. It was no use, sir. Apparently, Mr. Bruce either leaves the house or is hidden somewhere in the old wing where his father's study is located."

"And a valuable collection of Chinese pottery, eh?" Timothy said, softly. There was a taut smile on his worried face. "Tell me honestly, Charles, what is your opinion of these two fellows?"

"I I think that Hooley and Snaper may be blackmailers, sir. It's curious that their visits began shortly after Mr. Bruce returned from his long absence. I'm convinced that the master is paying regular tribute to protect either himself or Bruce. Mr. Bruce was always a wild, headstrong boy. He left home after a dreadful quarrel about his gambling, his debts and his peculiar friends."

Charles's eyes dropped away from the lawyer's steady stare.

"I have an uneasy feeling that Mr. Bruce always disappears when these rogues call, because he is in league with them."

Timothy said, sharply: "Are you hinting that perhaps Bruce may not be Arnold Dixon's real son?"

"I I don't know what to think," the butler whispered.

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There was a long silence. Timothy shook his head, patted the trembling shoulder of the old servant.

"We're both allowing our fears and our imaginations to run away with us. Bruce is the real son. He can't be otherwise. You know the tests I insisted on making. Physical and mental. Tests of memory that go all the way back to the boy's childhood."

His voice deepened impatiently. "Bruce passed every one of those tests with flying colors. The same appendicitis scar across his abdomen. No lobes on his ears. His face, his body, his very way of talking! You yourself heard him tell me things when I examined him—things about people, places, events that no one but the true son of Arnold Dixon could possibly have known. You yourself, Charles, were absolutely convinced."

"I know it, sir. But well, for one thing, he's so good-humored; so devoted to the welfare of his father. Before he left home, ten years ago, he was utterly different—headstrong, obstinate, downright vicious."

"Ten years make a big difference," Timothy said. "Bruce is twenty-seven now. He's had a hard time, learned his lesson. A man learns sense from getting hard knocks all over the world. It's to be expected. The natural thing."

"He had definite criminal tendencies before he left home," Charles insisted in a low voice. "I hope I'm wrong. I want to be wrong! But if Mr. Bruce were actually, by some queer trickery, an impostor—"

TIMOTHY'S warning hand on Charles's arm cut short his anxious words. Both men turned toward the draped doorway. The lawyer's face was smiling.

"Hello, Arnold! Ready for our chess game? Good evening, Bruce."

Charles went back to his interrupted arranging of the chessmen. There was lazy, bantering talk between the two old friends. As Dixon took a cigar from his humidor and handed one to the lawyer, Bruce sprang forward with a lighter and held the flame with a courteous hand to the tips of the two weeds.

Mindful of the butler's ominous words, Timothy studied Bruce quietly out of the corner of his eye. The resemblance between father and son was striking. The same long nose with flaring sensitive nostrils, the same wide Dixon mouth. Other things that were surer proof than mere resemblance. The ears with no lobes to them. The scar at the hollow above Bruce's smooth cheek bone.

That scar dated back to a mishap that had occurred when Bruce was a lad only eight years old. He had fallen from a pony and struck his head against a pointed rock.

William Timothy caught the butler's eye and shook his head with a slight reassuring gesture. He began to puff on the excellent cigar Dixon had handed him.

The old man's hesitant words put an end to Timothy's complacency.

"Afraid we won't have time for chess to-night, William."

"No chess?" Timothy, who had been sliding to his regular chair behind the polished game table, pretended surprise. "Why not, Arnold?"

"It just happens I expect a couple of visitors to-night. Friends of mine I used to know in the West. They happen to be in town on a business trip and I invited them over for a chat. Do you mind?"

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"Not at all," Timothy replied, his voice even.

"I hate to call off our chess game, but I'll probably be closeted with my friends for some time in my private den. As an old friend, I know you'll understand and excuse me."

The millionaire was extending his hand with a cordial smile, but with a definite hint of dismissal in his manner.

Timothy, however, lingered. So did Bruce. So did Charles, the butler. The lawyer kept watching the son unobtrusively; Bruce's face was blandly innocent. It was impossible to tell whether Bruce was worried or merely bored by this talk of business and visitors.

Silence descended on the room. Dixon's gray head kept lifting alertly while he murmured inconsequential things to the lawyer. Timothy knew that his friend was listening for something. He knew what that something would be the sound of the doorbell. He decided grimly to delay his slow departure until he had a chance to see this Hooley and his friend, Snaper.

Charles began to remove the chess pieces from the board and repack them in their box. Suddenly, he started nervously and his tremulous hand upset a bishop and a knight.

The quick cry of a brazen gong echoed through the silence of the living room.

Some one was impatiently ringing the front doorbell.

CHAPTER III. THE VANISHING SON

CHARLES straightened with the habitual woodenness of a servant and left the room.

Bruce gave his father a quick, unreadable glance and picked up a magazine from a side table. He sat calmly down in a leather chair, flipping open the magazine pages with a casual hand. Timothy was conscious that the son's eyes were staring covertly at him above the top of the spread periodical.

To the lawyer's relief, he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Charles stood for an instant in the doorway, bowing formally.

"Mr. Lamont Cranston," he said.

If The Shadow, as Cranston, was aware that his visit was unexpected he gave no sign of it. Smilingly, he approached the puzzled millionaire, held out his hand.

"How do you do, sir? I believe you know me, Mr. Dixon. If not by personal acquaintance, at least as a fellow art enthusiast. I came to-night, hoping for the privilege of viewing your collection of Chinese pottery. I have a letter with me from the curator of ceramics of the Museum of Art, and I trust –"

Arnold Dixon had recovered his scattered wits. Color came back into his pale face. He forgot everything except his pride in the collection that had made him nationally famous in art circles.

"Lamont Cranston? Of course! I'm delighted to meet you! I've read your monographs on the ancient Oriental methods of glazing porcelain with a great deal of interest. I disagree with some of your theories and perhaps I can explain why, when I show you some of the older specimens of my –"

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"Aren't you forgetting, father, that you expect other visitors to-night?" a voice said, dryly.

The Shadow turned to observe the calm young man who had laid his magazine aside and was rising lazily to his feet.

"My son Bruce," Dixon said, with a quick smile. "And this is Mr. William Timothy. My lawyer and an old friend."

The Shadow shook hands with both. He gauged their appearance as accurately as he had that of the millionaire. Dixon was ill at ease, frightened. The lawyer was alert, very much interested. Bruce was pretending to be bored, but that was merely pretense. Behind the vague surface of his blue eyes was a bright inner gleam that indicated repressed annoyance.

"Too bad Mr. Cranston has had his trip out here for nothing," Bruce said quickly. "I'm sure he would have enjoyed seeing those lovely Ming vases."

"I'd be glad to wait," The Shadow said, smoothly.

Arnold Dixon hesitated. He was torn between his desire to get rid of Cranston and his childish eagerness to show off his collection to a man who understood their rare value.

He glanced at his son, but Bruce merely shrugged and went back to his magazine. Timothy bowed, murmured a courteous phrase and took his leave.

A FEW minutes passed, which The Shadow bridged skillfully with Cranston's polite conversation. He was determined to find out who these visitors were to whom Bruce had referred.

Their coming had evidently excited both father and son. The Shadow decided from the old man's fidgety behavior, his sly glances at his watch, that the visitors were due at any moment now. He was correct. Again the front door bell clanged.

Bruce rose instantly from the sofa where he had been sitting so lazily. His whole manner became sullen, almost defiant. With a quick stride, he walked toward the living room door.

He said crisply over his shoulder: "Good night, father. I think I'll go to the library and play a game or two of solitaire."

He was gone before Arnold Dixon could utter a word.

Hardly had he left when the heavy footfalls of Charles approached from the front hall.

"Mr. Joe Snaper and Mr. Bert Hooley," Charles announced.

"Better show Mr. Cranston into the library," Dixon said, hurriedly.

"Very good, sir."

But The Shadow had other plans. He wanted to study for a moment this strange pair who had just entered the room. He stepped closer to them, his smile friendly.

"Good evening, gentlemen. I'm sorry to have blundered in on your appointment."

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"Okay. That's all right with us," Hooley said.

"Sure! We got lots of time," Snaper said. He laughed briefly, exposing yellow teeth.

The Shadow summarized the two with a swift glance. Jailbirds! No doubt of that at all. The pasty faces, the low husky voices, the peculiar enunciation from the corners of their mouths were eloquent evidence that these two "gentlemen" had served time behind prison walls.

Snaper was the uglier of the two. He was lanky, loose-jointed, with a grin as tight as a steel trap. He had a thin shock of mouse-colored hair. In spite of the fact that he was wearing expensive clothes, he had neglected to shave himself and his leathery cheeks were peppered with a frosty stubble of beard. From the set of his coat The Shadow was convinced that the fellow was carrying a large-calibered gun in a concealed shoulder holster.

Hooley was plumper, definitely more dapper. He was almost completely bald. He smelled faintly of cheap perfume.

"Perhaps I'd better wait in the library while you gentlemen transact your business," The Shadow remarked in Cranston's quiet tone.

THE SHADOW followed the butler down a long gloomy hall, around a corner cut sharply in the length of the corridor and so into a massively built room with bookshelves lining the wall solidly on all sides.

There was a deck of cards lying on the oaken surface of a heavy antique table and a leather chair was drawn up close to the table edge. But otherwise the library was empty. There was no sign of Bruce.

Charles was drifting quietly away when Cranston's curt voice halted him.

"Just a moment, please. Where's Bruce?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir."

"He said he was coming in here. Do you happen to know where he went?"

"No, sir. I don't."

Charles was getting more and more nervous under the curt questioning of this well-dressed clubman with the piercing eyes.

"It's not my place to follow the movements of Mr. Bruce," he murmured, his whole manner defiant.

"Is it your place to discuss his character and his personality with Mr. Timothy?" The Shadow asked, sharply.

"Do you suppose your employer would like to know that you are in doubt about the paternity of his son?"

Charles straightened as if he had been shot. His face became pale with fright.

"You you heard me talking to Mr. Timothy, to-night? Who who are you, sir? Not a detective?"

"I'm a friend of Mr. Arnold Dixon. A word from me will lose you your job, Charles. Let that be a warning to you to answer my questions and to say nothing afterward. What do you really know about Snaper and Hooley?"

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"Nothing, sir. I swear it!"

"You're sure that you don't know where Bruce disappears when these men call twice a month on his father?"

"I don't know."

The Shadow studied the butler narrowly.

"Very well. We'll drop that matter, for the present." He listened rigidly for a moment. "I want you to leave this library at once and remain in the hall near the front door. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"When you hear Hooley and Snaper coming out of Mr Dixon's study, I want you to cough twice. I have keen ears and will hear you."

"I understand, sir."

Charles left with frightened haste, taking care, however, to make no sound.

THE SHADOW waited a moment, then he approached the library window. It was locked, but he found the catch, released it and lifted the heavy sash. Thrusting his head out into the darkness, he stared toward the projecting of the house where the study was located and where this was The Shadow's shrewd guess the valuable collection of Chinese pottery was probably stored on one of the upper floors.

He could see nothing of the scene inside Dixon's study. The shade was drawn on the only window within range of his vision. But, veering his eyes about the grounds that stretched black and formless under the stars, he was suddenly aware of furtive motion.

A figure was gliding rapidly between the shaggy masses of two adjacent bushes. A man! bent low toward the ground, with something rigid in his hand that looked suspiciously like the outline of a gun. The man was gone before The Shadow was able to catch a glimpse of his averted face.

Was it Bruce Dixon? This was the thought that made The Shadow stiffen. In poundage and height the figure had seemed remarkably similar to the millionaire's mysteriously vanished son.

The Shadow was lifting one well-shod foot across the sill of the window when from the corridor beyond the library he heard the unmistakable sound of a man coughing. Instantly, he abandoned his plan to slip out and have a look at the grounds. Hooley and Snaper were leaving! Charles, afraid to disobey Cranston's orders, was warning him of that fact.

The Shadow lowered the window. He left it unlocked. He hurried from the library to the front hall, just in time to intercept Arnold Dixon and his two departing visitors.

Glibly, The Shadow explained that he had changed his mind. He had remembered a previous appointment that would make it impossible for him to remain and view Dixon's collection of pottery.

As he talked he managed to bump slightly against Joe Snaper. His sharp eyes had detected something that jammed up the flap of Snaper's coat pocket. It was the leather top of a large bill fold.

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To slip it unnoticed from Snaper's pocket was child's play for The Shadow. It was palmed in his deft hand, shielded by the width of his body as he turned with a sudden amused acclamation.

"Bless my soul!" he said in Cranston's drawl. "I must have left my fountain pen in the library. Excuse me."

He was gone instantly, leaving Dixon and the two visitors staring at each other. He knew that his hasty withdrawal was most welcome to all three. They had been talking in low whispers when he had hurried out to intercept them. Undoubtedly, they'd need a minute or more to finish whatever they had been talking about.

A minute was all The Shadow needed.

He hurried alone into the library, laid his fountain pen on the table for a blind in case he was followed. With his back to the doorway, he opened the stolen bill fold with a swift gesture.

The sight of its contents made The Shadow smile with stony satisfaction.

There was a check in the side pocket of the bill fold. It was drawn to "Cash." And it was signed by Arnold Dixon.

The check was for one thousand dollars.

CHAPTER IV. FORCES OF EVIL

THE SHADOW'S glance at the check was but a momentary dart of his keen eyes. It sufficed, however, to crowd his brain with definite answers to some of the things that had puzzled him. The fact that a check of so large an amount could be drawn to cash and honored at a bank, indicated that the bank officials were familiar with such a procedure. This was obviously not the first check paid by Dixon to his two ugly visitors.

Blackmail! There could be no other deduction.

The Shadow formulated a plan at once.

He left the library, walked quietly back through the corridor to the main entry. He dropped the wallet close to the wall as he passed the console table. A search later would easily find it. Snaper and Hooley were still conversing in whispers with the millionaire.

"Find your fountain pen, pal?" Snaper asked.

Hooley didn't say anything, but his whole manner was unmistakably hostile.

The Shadow excused himself, promised vaguely to come back at some later date to view Dixon's rare collection.

He walked slowly down the curving path that led from the mansion toward the distant entrance of the grounds. The moment he had rounded the first turn and was sure that the shaggy bushes concealed him from view of the house, his dawdling manner changed to one of purposeful speed. He darted from the path, began to hurry swiftly through the darkness.

He remembered the exact spot where he had left his car. He ran diagonally toward the stone wall that divided the thick shrubbery from the road outside. In an instant, he was over the wall.

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He found the green glade where his car was concealed and entered the powerful little coupe. A moment or two later, he emerged again. But not as Lamont Cranston. The figure that crossed the road swiftly and ran toward the stone wall would have sent superstitious shivers up and down the spines of Hooley and Snaper.

Inky-black from head to foot, hands encased in black gloves, a slouch hat drawn low over deep-set eyes that burned like steady reddish flame, The Shadow reclinced the wall and dropped noiselessly to the dark turf inside.

The Shadow moved with the swift silence of an Indian. Suddenly he halted. Ahead of him he could see the bent back of a man.

The man was crouched behind a dark bush, peering intently through the spread leaves that gave him a good view of the curving path that led toward Arnold Dixon's door. The watchful face turned slightly and The Shadow caught a revealing glimpse of a tense profile.

It was Bruce Dixon!

THE SHADOW didn't delay. He made a cunning detour and passed the silent watcher without betraying his presence. He hadn't returned to spy on Bruce. That would come later. The two blackmailers were the men who now interested The Shadow.

His circling approach brought him almost to the front door of the mansion. Flat on the damp grass behind a spreading bush, he waited.

Feet came pounding down the gravel path from the gate where the two blackmailers had parked their car. It was Hooley and Snaper and they were cursing with rage. They ran straight for the front door, which had closed behind them only a few moments before. They began to ring the bell and pound on the oaken panel with angry fists.

The Shadow smiled. He had expected this little drama! The crooks had discovered that the wallet and the thousand-dollar check was missing. A show-down with Arnold Dixon was in the making.

Dixon himself opened the door. He quailed as Hooley shook a vicious fist under his nose.

"Gentlemen, what what in the world is wrong?"

"You know damned well what's wrong!" Snaper rejoined. "You stole that wallet with the check! We want it back quick or else!"

"I stole my own check? I don't understand."

"No? You picked my pocket, wise guy! Where's that check? Hand it over!"

Arnold Dixon recovered his wits. "Don't be a fool," he said, harshly. "Why should I do that? You've undoubtedly dropped the wallet accidentally in the foyer or in the library corridor. Please, gentlemen, be quiet. Come inside quickly!"

The two thugs shouldered in and the massive door closed. The Shadow rose swiftly, peered back at the grounds. If the lurking Bruce Dixon had heard the disturbance, he gave no sign of his presence.

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The Shadow rounded the stone corner of the mansion. He glided toward the wing in which the library was located. He pushed up a gentle inch or two the window which he had unlocked when he was in the room previously. He had barely accomplished his purpose when Arnold Dixon and his two visitors entered the room.

A trailing length of leafy vine hit The Shadow's prying eyes. He saw that Snaper had already found his lost wallet, as The Shadow had intended him to do. The rogue was waving the leather fold in one hand, the check in the other.

Hooley was the calmer of the two.

He said, grimly: "Don't try to kid us, mister. You picked Joe's pocket. Try to double-cross us!"

His face deathly pale, Arnold Dixon denied any idea of theft or treachery. He pointed out that the wallet had been found lying on the floor under the table, where it had undoubtedly fallen accidentally from Snaper's pocket when he brushed against the edge of the furniture.

Snaper cursed the millionaire with fluent rage. "How would you like Bert and me to go see some cops and talk? I mean talk plenty!"

"No, no," Dixon moaned. "Not that, gentlemen don't do that!"

"Then don't try any more foxy tricks like you tried to-night." Hooley grunted. "A thousand bucks twice a month is cheap for a guy as wealthy as you. Especially when he's a guy who could go to jail for —"

THE SHADOW was leaning forward, his ear intent on not missing a single word inside the room. A sound behind him made him spring abruptly away, turning on his heel with a lithe movement.

The sound he had heard was the snap of a dry twig. The next instant, dark bushes parted and a man came plunging at him. So swift and deadly was the attack that The Shadow's hand was caught midway as he reached for an automatic. A muscular heave threw The Shadow to the soft grass. He rolled over and over, trying to squirm out of the clutch of his powerful assailant.

Dazed, The Shadow fought for his life. He saw a gun come whizzing down toward his skull. He managed to duck away and avoid the bone-crushing blow, but at the cost of a sharp, tearing pain in his side.

The wound he had suffered two nights ago from the explosion on Varick Street was beginning to bleed again. He could feel the sticky warmth. Strength seemed to ooze out of his body with the flowing blood.

His assailant caught him by the throat. The eyes of The Shadow were bulging now. His tortured mouth gaped wide. He could see the grim face of his enemy glaring close to his. It was a man The Shadow had never seen before. Tiny, pin-point eyes under a curiously white forehead and brown, tousled hair. A pointed brown beard. Teeth as even and white as a woman's.

The Shadow's head lunged downward. He clamped his teeth on the flesh of the man's wrist. He heard a shrill, animal-like scream and the pressure on his throat relaxed for an instant. As The Shadow took a staggering step, "Brown Beard" was on him again like a flash.

But an interruption came from an unexpected quarter. The library window flew wide open. Framed in the opening were the tense faces of Snaper and Hooley. They came leaping out to the soft turf, guns glittering in their hands.

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Brown Beard whirled to meet this new threat. His gun flamed. The bullet missed Snaper by an inch and sent him diving headlong to the ground. Hooley had leaped aside as he saw the flash. His gun jerked level as Brown Beard hurdled the fallen Snaper and jumped at him. The gun in Hooley's hand exploded once twice but the bullets screamed harmlessly upward toward the dark sky.

Both men had a double grip on the swaying gun and were wrestling fiercely for its possession. Snaper started to rise from the ground to come to his partner's assistance. A back-heel kick of the brown-bearded man caught him full in the throat and tumbled him flat again.

The Shadow waited to see no more of the death struggle. He began to run in an erratic line through the dense shrubbery. He was desperately weak from his reopened wound and knew he was on the verge of collapsing.

The cold air on his face revived him. Already, he could see the dark roughness of the stone wall, when he heard a warning cry.

"Halt, or I'll shoot!"

Bruce Dixon was almost directly in The Shadow's path, rising ghostlike from a patch of weedy darkness. The gun in his hand was rigid, pointed like an ominous steel finger.

THE SHADOW'S movement was purely instinctive. He bent, and his hand closed over a pebble as large as a walnut. He threw the round, hard stone with all his strength.

His aim was good. The missile flew toward Bruce in a straight line and struck him squarely on the forehead.

Bruce was stunned by the numbing blow. The gun slipped from his fingers and he slid to his knees. He was not unconscious, but he was too dazed for the moment to do more than grope feebly for the weapon that lay in the grass at his feet.

The Shadow resumed his flight toward the wall. The rough stones helped him to gain a hasty foothold and to swarm upward to the broad top. He rolled across and dropped headlong to the road outside.

He could hear the thud of Bruce's pursuing feet. Sprinting into the bushes across the road, The Shadow reached the sheltered spot where he had left his speedy coupe. A wrench of his black-gloved hand and the door flew open.

An instant later, the motor was pulsing. The car backed out of concealment onto the road. The Shadow's foot jammed hard on the gas pedal. The powerful car responded. It was racing down the road when the face of Bruce Dixon appeared above the top of the wall.

His gun flamed again and again. The noise of the shots was inaudible to The Shadow. The roar of the pulsing engine was like a blanket covering the barks of the pistol.

The Shadow's eyes veered briefly backward, as a turn in the road hid him from sight of his enemy. Faint laughter came from his pain-tightened lips.

Two facts became clear in his mind as he left the estate of Arnold Dixon far behind. Bruce Dixon was not as innocent as he had seemed at first. He was part of some vicious conspiracy against his father. And the conspiracy itself was a double one.

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Two forces of evil were fighting each other back in the darkness of that lonely and secluded estate on Pelham Bay. Hooley and Snaper were on one side, perhaps with the aid of Bruce. Brown Beard was on the other.

To-morrow the newspapers would carry another brief "burglary" item. Or perhaps no news at all. The two rival gangs would flee to cover. Arnold Dixon would attempt to hush up the whole affair.

Only The Shadow knew!

His goal was his secret sanctum, where a private telephone wire linked him with trained agents who were eager to do his bidding. At the other end of that wire, night and day, was the calm voice of Burbank, The Shadow's trusted contact man.

The coupe roared onward through the night.

CHAPTER V. THE SULPHUR CANDLE

LATE afternoon sunshine was staining the windows of Manhattan with a ruddy blaze when Clyde Burke sauntered into the lobby of the Brentwood Hotel. He went straight to the desk, smiling as he noted that the clerk on duty was a man who had good reason to be grateful to Clyde for past newspaper favors.

Clyde Burke, of the Classic, was a reporter, one of the smartest in the city. He was more than that. Unknown to his editor, he was a loyal agent of The Shadow. The night before, he had received from the quiet lips of Burbank an order, which he had faithfully carried out. That order was to pick up the trail of Joe Snaper and Bert Hooley. He had succeeded.

He was entering the Brentwood Hotel for purposes connected with a camera that was jammed in the side pocket of his overcoat. He did not tell the clerk at the desk what his real purpose was. He lied smoothly and efficiently.

The fact that Clyde was a well-known reporter made the yarn easy to put across. He told the friendly clerk that he was after an exclusive financial story for his paper.

Two Western business men, Bert Hooley and Joe Snaper, were secretly in town to meet an Eastern executive and sign a huge mining contract without the knowledge of the financial houses in Wall Street. Clyde wanted a photographic scoop for his newspaper. He asked the desk clerk to telephone upstairs and tell Snaper and Hooley they were wanted in the lobby.

"Why can't you follow them and photograph them on the street?" the clerk protested, uneasily.

"That's impossible," Clyde said.

He didn't explain why. The truth of the matter was that he was not interested in the faces of Snaper and Hooley. He wanted an opportunity to get clear pictures of their hands, the fingers particularly the tips of the fingers.

The orders of The Shadow had explicit on this point. Faces of criminals change with the passing years. The Shadow had been unable to identify Snaper and Hooley from pictures in his private files. He wanted finger prints and his efforts had been balked so far by a strange and significant fact.

Both the suspects wore gloves when ever they left the hotel. So far, there had been no opportunity to obtain

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specimen finger prints of the wily pair to be compared with the prints on record in Washington.

"Well?" Clyde whispered to the clerk. "Will you help me? Don't forget the favors I've done for you."

"Okay. But for Heaven's sake don't let them see you!"

He turned toward the room phone and spoke briefly into the instrument. There was a long pause. Then he shrugged.

"Sorry. Can't help you to-day, Clyde. They're not in their room."

"Are you sure?" Clyde looked puzzled. He himself had seen both crooks enter the side door of the hotel barely a half hour earlier and go upstairs in the elevator.

They couldn't have left without his knowledge. He was certain of it, in spite of the fact that the clerk turned to the key and showed him the room key hanging idly on its hook.

CLYDE BURKE left the hotel lobby. But he didn't walk very far from the vicinity of the hotel. He merely turned the corner, hurried up the street and came back through the side entrance.

He wondered why Snaper or Hooley hadn't answered that telephone call from the desk. Evidently they had made for themselves a duplicate room key taken from a wax impression of the original one on the hook downstairs. That would make it easier for them to come and go without creating any particular attention.

Frowning, Clyde patted the camera that was tucked inside his coat pocket. He took the elevator a rear one near the street corridor and got off at the eighth floor. This was the floor where Hooley and Snaper had reserved their expensive double room. The number was 829.

Clyde Burke sauntered past, his slow, careful steps making no sounds on the thick carpet. The corridor was deserted.

He dropped to one knee outside the quiet closed door of Room 829. Instantly, he made a rather alarming discovery. The keyhole was plugged with cotton. So was the crack between the bottom of the door and the threshold.

Clyde got swiftly back to his feet. Because of his intimate knowledge of the Brentwood Hotel, he knew exactly what to do.

Striding hastily toward the far end of the corridor, turning right-angled into the adjoining corridor and running to its end, he began to shove upward at the stained-glass window that gave dim light to the hall.

The balky window lifted with a squeak. Clyde scrambled over the sill to the slotted platform of a fire escape. The fire escape steps made a steep slanting ascent from a rear courtyard to the roof of the hotel. But Clyde didn't climb or descend.

He shut the stained-glass window behind him, hiding him from view of any one who might walk along the corridor. Then he took quick stock of his surroundings.

Luck was with him.

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The thing that made Clyde squint his eyes with satisfaction was the red, dying blaze of the afternoon sun. It shone straight into his eyes, and into the rear windows of the hotel rooms.

Leaning sideways from the fire escape platform, Clyde could see that the shade was drawn tight on the nearest window to keep out the unwelcome glare. If the first window was that way, the others were probably the same.

There was a narrow stone balcony outside each window. Not more than three feet of space separated each one of those stone projections.

Clyde counted the room windows. Before he had left the hallway inside the hotel he had made sure that 829 was the sixth window from the end. He made the dangerous leap across space to the first balcony without difficulty.

He swung across four of the stone balconies, protected from discovery by the drawn window shades.

Suddenly, he stiffened.

There was a tinkling crash from the window of Room 829. A heavy object flew through the window and fell to the stone projection outside. It was a glass inkwell.

Clyde gave the missile itself only a brief glance. He was watching the shattered hole in the window. Gray fumes were curling outward and ascending lazily through the glare of the sunshine.

WITH swift, monkeylike heaves of his body, Clyde crossed the remaining balconies. He tried the window of 829. It lifted easily under his tug.

Choking clouds of smoke blew outward into his face. He smelled the strange reek of sulphur. It made him gasp and cough and he drew backward with tears welling from inflamed eyes. Luckily, there was not much concentration of the deadly vapor and the brisk wind sweeping through the sunny courtyard dissipated it into thin, vanishing streamers.

Clyde peered over the open sill and saw Snaper and Hooley. Both crooks lay flat on the floor. They were bound and gagged. Unconscious. It was Hooley who had managed to reach the desk and hurl the inkwell with an awkward heave of his trussed wrists, before he passed out. The evidence lay in the trail of ink on the desk and the black stain on Hooley's hand and sleeve.

Beyond the two limp victims was the cause of the smoke and their unconsciousness. An exterminator's yellow sulphur candle was burning steadily in a corner of the room, sending a steady reek of poisonous smoke into the air.

With a jump, Clyde reached the candle and snuffed out the flame. He threw the deadly little purveyor of death out the window to the courtyard. Then he whirled toward the two men.

He slashed the bonds from their wrists and ankles, but he made no move toward restoring them to consciousness. Fate had given him a golden opportunity and he took immediate advantage of it.

The camera appeared swiftly from his coat pocket. He removed the gloves from the hands of both crooks. Focusing the camera, he dropped on one knee. He took a perfect reproduction of the palms and fingers of Hooley and of Snaper. Magnified, examined by experts, those pictures would tell exactly who these crooks really were and why they had served a long prison term somewhere.

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Clyde had barely returned the bulky shape of the camera to his pocket when he heard a groan from Snaper. He saw Hooley's eyes flutter open. The fresh air was reviving the crooks. For an instant, they stared dully upward at the face of the young reporter who had saved them; then fear swam into their blank faces.

With a bound, Hooley was on his feet. Snaper's gun menaced Clyde.

CLYDE lifted his empty hands above his head. His voice remained calm. He explained what had happened, told how he had managed to get to their room. The only falsehood he told was that he had come to the hotel to meet a friend; had seen smoke filtering into the corridor from the cracks of the door of 829 and had gone immediately to their help by way of the stone balconies.

Snaper lowered his gun, after a sharp glance from his partner.

"You didn't see anything of a man in a brown beard, did you, pal?" he asked in a curious, hesitant tone.

"No. Was he the man who did all this?"

"Yeah. He was the man, all right. Keep your mouth shut about this. We'll take care of the guy in the brown beard, eh, Bert?"

"Right!" Hooley growled. He was watching Clyde suspiciously. Suddenly, his glance dropped toward his own hands and he swore with shrill excitement. He took a swift step toward the reporter and the muzzle of his gun dug into Clyde's stomach.

"What the hell did you do before we woke up?" he demanded. "A wise guy, huh?"

"I don't know what you mean. I did nothing except to throw the sulphur candle out the window."

"You lie! You took the gloves off our hands, you rat!"

"There weren't any gloves on your hands, when I came in," Clyde said, steadily. "You're mistaken. And, anyway, what difference does it make?"

"It makes a hell of a lot of difference! What's that thing in your coat pocket? Stand still or I'll blow your belly apart!"

To his dismay, Clyde saw the camera emerge in the beefy paw of Bert Hooley.

"I thought so! A wise guy! Trying to take pictures of our hands, eh? A finger-print camera, huh?"

He ground the camera to a flat ruin under his foot.

"Kill the louse!" Snaper whispered, his teeth flashing in a murderous grimace.

"Nix! We gotta get outta here. Too much trouble already. A shot would cook our goose."

"Who said anything about shootin' him?" Snaper whispered. He leaped with a tigerish motion to the flat-topped desk near the wall. He scooped up a paper knife and moved back toward the trapped agent of The Shadow. The weapon was poised like a dagger in his hairy fist. The point was sharp and it pricked the skin at the back of Clyde's neck like the touch of a needle.

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"Open his coat," Snaper snarled. "One jab of this in his heart and he'll go out like a light and no noise to bring the bulls snoopin' around!"

Hooley nodded. He caught at the front of Clyde's vest and ripped it open with a jerk that sent buttons flying.

"Hold him tight!" Snaper breathed. "Keep your hand over his mouth, in case he yells."

CLYDE didn't yell. With a sudden twist he tore himself loose from the shifting grip of Bert Hooley. The twist not only freed him, it sent him staggering backward toward the open window. He whirled and went out over the sill like a flash.

Snaper and Hooley darted after him.

But Clyde was too agile to be caught. With one wild leap, he cleared the end of the stone balcony and caught hold of the next. He saw Snaper's gun aim at him and the crook's finger begin to tighten.

Then Hooley struck the weapon upward. He shouted an order to his pal. Both crooks disappeared inside the room.

Clyde made his way as swiftly as he could to the fire escape. He did not try to reenter through the stained-grass window. He knew that Snaper would be waiting inside to grab him. Clyde had heard Hooley's grim order and it gave wings to the scared reporter's feet.

He raced down the fire escape. He had reached the courtyard below and was streaking toward a high board fence when he heard a faint yell above. Snaper's head was peering out the stained-glass corridor window. This time, Snaper fired.

The bullet missed Clyde's head by a scant inch and tunneled a round hole through the board fence. But Clyde was already atop the barrier and dropping to the other side.

He crossed a narrow back yard, opened a gate in a grilled railing and reached the street. He was a block away from the hotel. He began to run toward the corner, oblivious of the stares of pedestrians.

He still had a chance to reach the hotel side exit before Snaper and Hooley came rushing out to make their get-away. He didn't want to intercept them; what he wanted was to watch the cab they grabbed and make a note of the license number.

Clyde figured that the noise of Snaper's gunfire had already alarmed the hotel. The crooks would be afraid to take a chance on a get-away through the main lobby. They'd rush down the stairs and dash away through the short corridor that led to the side street.

Clyde's guess was correct.

Screened by the bulk of a parked delivery truck, he saw the two crooks emerge from the side portal of the Brentwood. A taxi was standing at the curb. They piled into it and it shot away from the curb.

Clyde got the license number. That, and the fact that neither Snaper or Hooley had seen him, filled him with grim content. He had again established the fact that the two blackmailers and the man in the brown beard were deadly enemies, bent on rubbing each other out for the privilege of preying on Arnold Dixon.

By trailing Snaper and Hooley, the identity and the motives of the man in the brown beard would be made clearer.

Clyde was still very much on the case.

CHAPTER VI. MR. TIMOTHY IS PUZZLED

WILLIAM TIMOTHY sat comfortably propped in a wide-armed chair with a soft pillow behind his back. Sunlight streamed through the curtained windows of his expensive Pelham Bay home. The house itself and the grounds surrounding it were nowhere near as pretentious as were Arnold Dixon's five miles to the south along the curving shore of the bay. Nevertheless, William Timothy had done moderately well in his years of practice at law.

Clad in a silken dressing gown, with a bandaged foot propped on a stool in front of him, Timothy smiled as he saw that the upward trend in the stock market seemed to be firm and sustained. Suddenly, he gave a petulant groan and threw the newspaper aside. He reached out and felt his bandaged foot and ankle with wincing care. The foot seemed to be badly swollen.

Timothy shifted his position in the chair. He was taking a cigar from a beautiful copper humidor, when he heard a light step in the hall outside. A knock sounded at the door.

"Who is it?"

"It's Edith Allen, uncle! May I come in?"

The voice was eager. A moment later, a strikingly pretty girl entered the sunlit room.

Timothy beamed, held out his hand.

"Edith! Well, this is a surprise and a welcome one! What brings you all the way out here to see an old codger of a lawyer with a bad case of arthritis in his foot?"

Edith Allen didn't answer for a moment. Tall, slim, blue eyed, with hair almost the shade of the copper humidor on the sunlit table, Edith was the sort of girl to make even an old man's eyes crinkle appreciatively. She was the daughter of Timothy's dead sister. She had an excellent secretarial job in New York City.

Timothy was an excellent judge of expression. He saw instantly that the corners of Edith's red lips were tremulous. There was shadow in the depths of the lovely blue eyes.

"Is there anything wrong?" he asked, gently.

Her voice quivered. "Uncle, I had to see you. I'm I'm frightened. Dreadfully so!"

"Frightened?" He twisted sharply in his chair, unmindful of his bandaged foot. He gave her a steady, searching look. "Are you in danger of some kind, my dear?"

"It's not danger," she said, slowly. "And it's not myself."

"Well, what is it?"

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He could barely hear the name she named. "Bruce Dixon."

Her whole manner puzzled the lawyer. She fiddled with one of her gloves, avoided the searching scrutiny of her uncle.

"You love Bruce, don't you?" he said.

"Yes. I I do."

"Are you worried because you think Bruce doesn't love you?"

"It's not that," she said, unsteadily.

Timothy laughed reassuringly.

"After all," he pointed out, "there's plenty of time for both of you romantic young colts to make up your minds. Bruce has only been home three months since his er trip."

"That's just it," Edith cried out. The flush had faded from her cheeks. They were pale now. "Is he really Bruce? Oh, uncle, I'm so unhappy!"

TIMOTHY sat up stiffly. He sounded incredulous.

"Are you suggesting that you think Bruce Dixon is an impostor?"

"I don't know what to think," she whispered.

"I'm afraid I don't either. First you tell me that Bruce loves you and that you love him. Then you say in the next breath that you think he's a faker. Why? You've known Bruce ever since he was a child long before he left home after that unfortunate quarrel with his father. You grew up with Bruce."

"He seems so different," she said, faintly. "When he was a growing boy, he was mean, selfish, with a nasty temper. We two, as children, used to fight like cats and dogs. Then he went away. He was gone for nearly ten years. And when he came back home, three months ago —"

"Is he so different from the Bruce you used to know?"

"Yes. He's kinder, more thoughtful. It seems a hateful thing to say, but he's been so so sweet to me and to his father that I I can't believe he's the same son. Then, suddenly, he changed again. For the last week or two, he's seemed terribly uneasy. He's broken three dates with me. He he says he loves me, asks me to be patient and he'll explain later. Uncle, could he be a fraud?"

William Timothy laughed. The tension left his shrewd old face. He patted Edith's smooth hand with a gentle, protective gesture.

"You can take my word, he's the genuine Bruce Dixon," he said. "He might have fooled his father. But no fake could have misled me or Charles, the butler. Naturally, we were both suspicious when Bruce returned so ably after years of being away. So we made tests adequate tests that no impostor could have passed successfully."

His voice hardened.

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"We made him strip, examined him physically. And we put him through a memory test Charles and I and his father that no one but the real Bruce could possibly have passed. He even remembered things we had overlooked. Pointed them out to us when we forgot to ask.

"No, my dear, you're being hysterical and imaginative. If Bruce is different better, finer it's simply because he's been tempered by life. He's lost his ugly qualities by those years of rubbing against experience all over the world."

Edith nodded. The haunted look left her blue eyes.

"You're right, uncle," she said, finally. "I'm glad I came to you. What I really wanted was to talk with you and be reassured. You've done that. I I feel ashamed of myself!"

"Forget about it," Timothy advised. "If Bruce is worried and breaking dates with a pretty girl like you, there must be a reason. It's probably something trivial. I'll talk to him as deftly as I can approach the subject, and perhaps I can find out what's the matter. After all, I'm not a bad lawyer."

Edith cleaned forward, kissed him impulsively.

"You're a dear! I must be going now. Be very careful what you say to Bruce. I couldn't bear it if anything came between us, now!"

"Try breaking a date or two yourself. Maybe that will bring the boy to his senses."

TIMOTHY sat for a long time after Edith had left. There was a puzzled frown on his forehead. He hadn't told Edith of the peculiar visits to Dixon's mansion of Hooley and Snaper. Could Bruce actually be in league with them?

Timothy lifted his bowed head.

Instantly, his eyes rounded with terror. He became very still in the wide-armed chair. He was staring at the dull muzzle of a pistol projecting from the curtains of the rear doorway. The gun was in a gloved hand and the face above the hand and gun was rigid with menace.

The gunman was Joe Snaper.

"One yelp out of you, mister," Snaper breathed, in an ugly undertone, "and you'll get it without any noise, see?"

Timothy shuddered as he saw the gun was equipped with a silencer.

Snaper advanced cautiously with noiseless steps. Behind him came another man. Bert Hooley. Both were tense with a sullen rage that made their ordinarily pasty faces as white as waxen masks.

"Don't kill me!" Timothy begged. "Take anything you want but don't kill me."

"You dirty rat!" Snaper growled. "Don't try to pull that innocent stuff! We're not burglars and you know it! Why did you try to kill us in the Brentwood Hotel?"

"I I don't know what you're talking about!"

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"No? You thought you were smart, didn't you? Had a bell hop dope our drinks. Let yourself in with a duplicate key when we were so dazed we couldn't hold you off. Tied us up with ropes and lit your damned sulphur candle. Left us to croak from the fumes before anybody in the hotel got wise and broke down the door. No you don't know anything!"

Sweat appeared in drops on the pale forehead of the lawyer.

"Gentlemen, you're mistaken! I made no attempt to kill you. Are you actually claiming that you saw me in your hotel room?"

"You bet! You had a fake brown beard on. You were wise enough not to do any talking. But we know it was you. It couldn't have been any one else. Dixon put you up to it. As his lawyer, you had to keep the whole thing quiet; you didn't dare to go to the cops and spill the old man's secret.

"So you paste on that damned brown beard the same disguise you had on when you almost killed us the night before outside Dixon's library window and you figure you'll make a clean, quiet murder of it at the hotel!"

Timothy tried to make his laughter sound amused, but it was strident. A thin bleat of fear.

"I couldn't have been the man in the brown beard," he pointed out, tremulously. "Look at my bandaged foot. Gentlemen, it would be agony for me to try to walk, let alone attack you in a hotel room and murder you. I've got arthritis. My foot is so swollen that I can hardly place it on the floor without excruciating pain."

JOE SNAPER'S reply was immediate. He kicked viciously at the bandaged ankle. Timothy screamed, fell from the chair. He lay there, writhing, his face twisted with pain.

"It's an act," Snaper scowled. "Rip off that bandage, Bert. Take a look at it."

Hooley nodded. While Snaper watched the doorway to make sure that no one had heard Timothy's cry of pain, his partner unwound the bandage with brutal haste.

The flesh was exposed. Hooley cursed as he looked at it. Snaper muttered a disappointed snarl. There was no farce about the lawyer's alibi. The skin was stretched tight over the pink, swollen flesh of Timothy's foot and ankle. It was obvious, even to the suspicious crooks, that he had spoken the truth.

Hooley said, harshly, "Okay, wise guy. You win! Lucky for you, too!"

His bald head jutted threateningly at the moaning victim.

"If you want to go on living, pal, keep your mouth shut about all this. We made a mistake, so let it go at that. The guy we want is Arnold Dixon himself. He musta hired the lad in the brown beard."

"You're mad!" Timothy gasped. "Arnold Dixon would never deliberately connive at murder. You're making a horrible mistake!"

The two crooks backed cautiously from the sunlit room. They moved like ghosts, without sound. Timothy lay on the rug where he had fallen, afraid to move or to cry out.

After a long time, he managed to get back into the chair. The fear on his face ebbed away. Color came back into his cheeks. His jaw hardened.

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With a quick gesture, he reached for the near-by telephone. He called the number of his personal physician, said he needed immediate treatment for his leg, that he must get on his feet again as soon as possible.

Tenderly, he moved the aching foot. He gritted his teeth and bit off the groan the motion caused him.

"Very well," he said grimly to himself. "We'll see, Snaper and Hooley, whether you're going to get away with this or not. My guess is that you're not!"

CHAPTER VII. CHEMICAL FIREFLIES

ARNOLD DIXON was standing alone in the front hallway of his mansion, fully dressed in overcoat and hat. He was reading a note, and the expression on his face was ghastly. The note was in red ink; printed in sprawling capitals, it was unsigned.

It was a peremptory demand that the millionaire come alone to a certain road in Pelham that led to a rocky and deserted part of Long Island Sound. His orders were to drive until he came to a deserted house with blue shutters. The house would be further identified by a white handkerchief tied to the doorknob.

That was all the note said. Arnold Dixon shivered. He guessed who had sent it and he was afraid.

A step in the dim hallway caused Dixon to turn his back hastily and shove the paper into his overcoat pocket. The figure was Charles, the butler. He was just in time to see the note vanish. He stared at the overcoat and hat.

"Are you going out, sir? It's rather late."

"Yes, I know. Bring the small car around to the front."

"Are you sure Mr. Bruce would like that, sir? He told me to be sure not to allow you to go out alone after nightfall. Believe me, sir, I don't wish to be impertinent, but —"

"You are impertinent," Dixon replied, shortly. "Where is Bruce? In town?"

"Yes, sir. He's at the apartment of Miss Edith Allen. I believe he has an appointment to take her to the theater to-night."

"Well, keep this to yourself. I don't want Bruce bothered. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," Charles replied, quietly. He watched Dixon draw a handkerchief from his overcoat pocket and dab nervously at his perspiring forehead. A scrap of paper fell to the floor under the console table, but in his excitement the old man didn't notice his loss.

"Your coat, sir?" Charles said, eagerly. "It's all awry. Let me help you adjust it."

He stepped behind his employer, pretended to be busily engaged in helping him with his collar and muffler. But his body bent as he tugged at the bottom hem of the coat. His deft fingers closed over the note that lay on the floor.

Charles's smile was tight with cunning triumph, as he said, "I'll get the small car at once."

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FIVE minutes later, Arnold Dixon was driving down the winding gravel road and out the gate of his estate. He drove with unaccustomed speed. His worry seemed to communicate itself to the machine. In twenty minutes, he had reached the turn indicated in the directions in the note. He took the shore road and presently the black darkness of Long Island Sound came into view.

Arnold shuddered. Something about the cold inky water filled him with forebodings of death.

The road ran along the edge of rocky shore for a quarter mile or so, then curved inward through a desolate region of stunted pine and spruce. Suddenly, Dixon saw the house. It was impossible to miss it. Blue shutters, a handkerchief tied to the knob of the front door. The place looked old and tenantless.

Arnold Dixon turned the knob, discovered that the door was unlocked. He opened it and peered in. A kerosene lamp was standing on the bare floor of the entry. It cast a weird yellow light that threw Arnold's shadow on the dirty plaster of the wall like a gaunt bird.

"Okay, pal," a voice said dryly from an inner room. "Shut that door and get in here!"

The voice was Bert Hooley's. Slowly, Dixon obeyed.

He found himself in an empty, musty room, lighted with a kerosene lamp also. Joe Snaper was there, too. He moved behind Dixon, blocking his escape. Hooley advanced grimly toward the frightened caller.

"What what do these threats mean?" Dixon faltered. "I've tried to play fair with you. I've paid you a thousand dollars twice a month and I'm willing to continue to pay. Yet you've threatened me with death. Why?"

"Because you're a dirty double-crosser!" Snaper snarled, jamming the muzzle of his gun into Dixon's flinching stomach.

"Lemme handle this," Hooley said.

His hands tightened themselves on Dixon's throat. He squeezed remorselessly until the millionaire's tongue jutted from his wide-open mouth. Then he threw the millionaire staggering away with a contemptuous shove.

"Make the rat talk!" Snaper suggested.

"Don't worry." Hooley's paw darted out again. He held Dixon stiffly while his ugly eyes probed him.

"Why did you try to have us killed, pal?"

"I didn't!"

"You lie! We're gonna give you the works unless you tell us the right answers!"

"I'll tell you anything I know," Dixon moaned.

"You know a guy named Paul Rodney, don't you?"

"I never heard of him. Who is he?"

"He's a guy with a brown beard. One of your stooges. He tried to burn us down outside your library window the night you stole your check back from me. We got away from that okay. And we got away from his

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sulphur candle in the hotel room. But you ain't getting away from us until you let us in on what the big secret is!"

"Secret?" Dixon faltered.

"JOE and me think," Hooley told Dixon slowly, his hand still clutching him with a grip of steel, "that maybe we've been suckers takin' your lousy two grand a month! We think there's something big in the wind that we've been missing. Something that might bring us in some real dough!"

"We've been doin' a little sleuthin' ourselves, see? We've found that the lad in the brown beard is a guy named Paul Rodney. He's tied up with a tough little killer named Squint. That much we know. What's Rodney's angle, pal?"

"I don't know," Dixon repeated, monotonously. He pressed his lips together as if afraid more words might spurt out to betray him.

"So you don't know no Paul Rodney, huh?" Snaper grinned.

"No!"

"And you ain't got no big secret? I mean, outside of the little blackmail graft all three of us know?"

"I I have nothing to say. I won't talk!"

In desperation, Dixon tried to aim a blow at Snaper's jaw, but his fist was caught in a smothering grip. His arm was wrenched over his head with a force that made the arm twist in his shoulder socket.

"Take off his shoes and socks, Joe," Hooley whispered.

Snaper leered. This was stuff he understood. In a moment Arnold Dixon was sitting helplessly on the floor, his back jammed hard against the plastered wall, his bare feet extended in front of him.

"Lemme do the burnin'," Snaper begged, his eyes slitted with anticipation.

"Okay. Try him with a match flame first. If that don't work, we'll get really busy with him."

The match made a sputtering sound against the bare wood of the floor. The yellow flame flared. Snaper bent forward, enjoying the terror in the distended eyes of the old man. Hooley kept the squirming Dixon from kicking out with his bare feet.

The flame of the match approached closer to the flesh of Dixon's bare sole. He could feel the heat of it, then the sharp agonized prickle from the tip of the flame itself. Hooley's hand over his mouth restrained the scream that gargled behind Dixon's lips.

His cry went unheard. But another sound echoed in the bare room with startling suddenness.

It was a harsh, sibilant laugh. It seemed to fill every nook and cranny of the cottage. And it came from the crumbling red-brick interior of the ancient fireplace!

SNAPER whirled as he heard it. His jaw dropped with superstitious terror. But, Hooley was made of bolder stuff. The gun in his hairy hand pointed toward the chimney opening. He began to squeeze the trigger.

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A single harsh command made him abandon his purpose.

"Drop it!"

Twin gun muzzles were trained on both crooks from the darkness of the fireplace.

For a second, there was hesitation on Hooley's pasty countenance. Then the weapon slipped from his hand to the floor. Snaper, too, dropped his weapon.

Arnold Dixon, half fainting, shrank back as he saw the figure that was emerging slowly from the brick recess of the chimney.

Black from head to foot, the figure stepped with measured slowness into the room. Nothing was visible about it except for the nose and the restless, deep-socketed eyes. They were like twin pin points of flame under the drooping brim of a black slouch hat.

The Shadow!

He had evidently climbed to the roof and entered the bare room below by way of the ancient chimney. Yet no sound had betrayed his miraculous descent. Nor did his feet seem to make sound as he moved across the creaking boards of the door.

His two heavy guns jerked sideways in black gloved hands. Snaper and Hooley backed slowly against the wall beside the chimney.

The Shadow was measuring them as if debating what to do, when he heard a tiny sound from the shade-drawn window. It brought him whirling about with the swiftness of a black panther. The noise had come from the shade. It had cracked slightly under the push of a cautious finger. Through the bottom of the opened window a face was peering into the room.

Flame spat from a pistol, as The Shadow leaped aside. A bullet whizzed through the crown of his slouch hat and thudded into the plastered wall. Again the gun at the window flamed.

The room became instantly an inferno of confusion. Not once did The Shadow attempt to return the fire. He was aware that Snaper and Hooley were rushing from the room and out the front door. Flat on the floor, The Shadow's gloved hand darted outward. He caught the lamp, drew it close, blew out the light with a quick puff of his thin lips.

Darkness flowed instantly over the room.

The Shadow needed darkness. He wanted not to kill, but to vanish. He had recognized the pale, desperate face outside the window. It was the millionaire's own son! Bruce Dixon!

THE voice of Bruce was clearly audible now in the murky room. He came rushing in through the front door, his feet thumping noisily.

"Dad! Are you all right? Where's the lamp?"

"I'm all right, son. Strike a match quick!"

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A match flared and light flowed back into the room. The lamp was lit. Arnold and Bruce Dixon stared at each other.

"Where are Snaper and Hooley?" the old man gasped.

"They were too fast for me. They got away in a car." Bruce's voice crackled warningly. "Where did that other crook go the man in black?"

Arnold Dixon pointed toward the silent brick maw of the chimney. His son tiptoed closer, peered cautiously upward. He could see nothing but the empty expanse of the flue with a square patch of darkness at the top. He fired his gun upward. Nothing happened. The square at the top remained unchanged.

Bruce turned abruptly and ran from the house. He stared up at the sloping roof. There was no sign of The Shadow. No possible place where a man might cling and remain unobserved.

Bruce's car was still standing where he had left it. He cried a husky warning to his father, as the latter hurried from the cottage.

"Take your own car. I'll drive mine. We don't want any one coming here to investigate the shooting and finding either of our cars here. Drive slowly and keep just ahead of me."

In a moment, both automobiles vanished up the road. They were headed for the Dixon mansion.

So was The Shadow. He had managed to haul himself aloft into the overhanging branch of an oak tree from the roof of the cottage a scant second before Bruce had fired up the chimney. From the tree, The Shadow had seen the two blackmailers flee. They had gone in the same direction that the Dixons were now taking.

The Shadow laughed as he followed the trail.

He found Hooley's car hidden close to the stone wall of the Dixon estate.

The Shadow intended to deal himself another hand in this swiftly changing game of intrigue and treachery. He paused only long enough to do a very peculiar and interesting thing.

He unscrewed the cap of the gas tank at the rear of Bert Hooley's car. From beneath his black robe he took a tiny bottle. The contents of the bottle were colorless like water, but heavier; it dripped like a sticky flow of castor oil as he poured it out. He poured every bit of it into the gas tank.

Then he screwed back the cover and took something else from under his robe. This was a shining instrument, a long, pointed tool. With it, The Shadow attacked the under side of the tank, working carefully so as not to make too large a hole. When he was finished he stood waiting. After almost thirty seconds, a drop of gasoline fell to the leaves that covered the ground. It was a most peculiar kind of gasoline drop. It seemed to glow like a tiny firefly. Another measured wait then another drop fell, phosphorescent like the first.

The Shadow dug a little pocket in the leaves, so that the tiny firefly specks would not be noticed by the returning crooks. It would take a long time for enough drops to fall to be noticeable. The cunningly interlaced leaves above the small pit The Shadow had dug would keep them covered from sight. This was necessary, because The Shadow knew the chemical he had used would retain its glow for a long time.

He moved like a black streak toward the stone wall of the estate. He was up and over it like a creature of the night. Stealthily, The Shadow began to approach the besieged mansion of Arnold Dixon.

CHAPTER VIII. THE CUP OF CONFUCIUS

"ARNOLD, you've got to talk! You must confide in us and allow us to help you."

William Timothy's voice cracked with angry exasperation.

The lawyer ceased his slow, hobbling up and down the room, leaning heavily on the thick cane he was forced to use because of his ailing foot. He stared at Dixon. Bruce was there, too, his handsome face set in anxious lines.

"Father please! This horrible thing that's threatening you must be stopped at once! It can't go on any longer!"

Arnold Dixon's face was pale. He knew that the faithful Charles had found the note he had dropped in the hall from his overcoat pocket. Charles had phoned Bruce at Edith Allen's apartment in New York, catching him just before he left for the theater with the girl. That was how Bruce had been able to arrive so miraculously at the cottage with the blue shutters.

Timothy also had told his story. He recounted his recent narrow escape from death at the hands of Snaper and Hooley.

Arnold Dixon had remained silent.

Now he changed his mind. He began to talk to them in a low, barely audible voice. William Timothy listened as rigidly as a statue. Bruce leaned forward, as if afraid to miss a single word.

There was another listener interested in the millionaire's halting confession. The heavy curtains at the window behind Dixon were parted slightly. The Shadow's deep set eyes peered through, as he listened to Dixon's story.

THE story explained Dixon's fear of Snaper and Hooley. It made clear why he had been willing to pay the crooked pair two thousand dollars a month as the price of their silence.

Blackmail!

It was a sorry story of crime that went back through the years, to Dixon's younger manhood. He had been broke, desperate. He had joined a gang of four criminals. Together with them he had robbed a country bank. The robbery had unexpectedly turned into murder. Pete Spargo, the ugliest of the five, had killed the unfortunate cashier. All five, including Arnold Dixon, had escaped. But all except Dixon were captured.

Spargo and a man named "Trigger" Trimble were convicted of murder and executed. Snaper and Hooley were sentenced to long prison terms. But Dixon, who had used an alias with the gang, managed to get away.

Frightened and repentant at the deadly outcome of his first attempt at crime, he reformed and went straight. He married, prospered, became wealthy and finally a millionaire.

This was the situation that confronted Snaper and Hooley when they were released from prison. By grapevine information they knew that Arnold Dixon was now wealthy and respected. They recognized his picture in a newspaper. They kept silent about him. When they were released they called on him and demanded money to keep their mouths shut.

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Dixon agreed to pay. It wasn't prison he feared, although Bert Hooley had proof that would implicate Dixon in the actual bank robbery. The thing that made Dixon agree to pay hush money was the thought of the scandal and notoriety that would ruin the life of his son, Bruce, if the real story was spread in the headlines of the tabloid scandal sheets. Two thousand dollars a month was nothing to Arnold Dixon. It was a cheap price to pay for security.

"There was no trouble, and no threats of death," Dixon concluded feebly, "until the appearance of this strange man in the brown beard. This man that Hooley calls Paul Rodney. I don't know who Rodney is, or what his game is but Snaper and Hooley are in deadly fear of him. So am I, because I I —"

He gulped, stopped talking abruptly. The tremor of his lips showed that he was holding something back. Something that frightened him more than mere blackmail.

William Timothy sensed it. So did Bruce. They made him continue his confession.

"You sure that you don't know this Rodney?" Bruce asked him, quietly.

"No, son."

"But you do know what he's after!" Timothy exclaimed. He had been watching Dixon narrowly. As an old friend, he was not afraid to talk harshly to the millionaire, to point out to him the absolute necessity of complete candor.

"Have you ever heard of the Cup of Confucius?" Arnold Dixon said a queer, gasping voice.

"Of course."

Timothy's tone was one of puzzled interest. The Cup of Confucius was almost one of the seven wonders of the world. It had its legendary beginning in the ancient past of China. In that respect it was like the Holy Grail. To talk of something like that in terms of two jailbird blackmailers and a killer in a brown beard was preposterous, scarcely intelligible.

"I don't quite understand," Timothy murmured. "What has the Cup of Confucius to do with you, Arnold?"

"I think that's what Paul Rodney is after," Dixon faltered.

"But there isn't any cup," Bruce cried, sharply. "It was burned, destroyed! Years ago!"

"It wasn't burned and it wasn't destroyed," his father told him steadily. Arnold Dixon's eyes were ablaze with the fanatical, almost mad, zeal of an art collector. "The cup is mine! I brought it, paid for it I own it! It's here! Now! In this house!"

"You bought it?" Timothy breathed. "But if it were found, if it really were in existence, it couldn't be bought. It would be priceless! No millionaire living would have money enough to pay for it!"

"He might," Dixon said, steadily, "if the man who had it in his possession was a patriot badly in need of money. I bought it secretly from Sun Wang, the Chinese general who is now waging so desperate a fight against the invaders of his country. It was Wang's bandit troops who sacked the ancient Jade Temple where the cup was preserved for centuries.

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"The temple was burned to the ground but the cup was not lost. Sun Wang himself saved it. I got in touch with him through my Oriental agent, when he sent me a secret bid for its sale. Sun Wang wanted bullets, cannon, airplanes. I wanted the cup. I bought it for a million dollars!"

Bruce's eyes were shining. He turned away for an instant, as if to hide from Timothy and his father the sudden glint that came into them. It was a queer expression. Caution was mingled with fear and a sort of hard anger.

"Where is the cup, now?" Bruce asked.

"In the tower room upstairs. With the rest of my pottery collection. It's standing on a shelf in a plain wooden box."

"But that's madness," Timothy protested.

"Not at all," Arnold Dixon rejoined. "Who is to know it except us three? And even if Paul Rodney suspects I have it, he'd never dream of looking for it in a cheap wooden box standing openly on a shelf alongside a few valueless trinkets. It's safer there than it would be in a bank vault."

Outside the curtained window, The Shadow's burning eyes were riveted on the pale face of Bruce. He paid no attention to his father.

Arnold Dixon, oblivious to everything but the pride of his possession, was talking dreamily, like a drugged man.

"You must know the legend," he said faintly. "Confucius himself created the cup, out of a cracked earthen pitcher presented to him by a pious peasant. He was weary and thirsty and the peasant offered him a drink of cold water after wealthy mandarins had driven the fainting holy man from their courtyards.

"Confucius blessed the pitcher, gave it back. The peasant fell on his knees when he saw it. It had changed to priceless jade, ornamented with nine circles of rare and perfect jewels. A circle of rubies, of pearls, of emeralds, diamonds of the mystic number of nine."

The millionaire's voice rose triumphantly.

"Gentlemen, that is the wonder that now belongs to me mine! in this house! It's crusted with the dirt of centuries, it looks like a smoke-blackened piece of junk. But it is the true Cup of Confucius! Would you like to see it, to touch it and feel the ancient satin smoothness of this priceless relic of old China?"

Bruce said, hurriedly: "I'm sorry, father. Some other time. I've got to leave. Right now."

His father and Timothy stared at him.

"Edith is waiting for me to pick her up at the door of the theater in New York," Bruce explained, doggedly. "I gave her my word I'd meet her after the show."

"But Bruce," his father said "Surely –"

"Edith and I are dangerously close to a quarrel because I've had to break other dates. I wouldn't have left her to-night except for the telephone call I got from Charles. Her love is more important to me than a thousand priceless Cups of Confucius! Good evening, dad."

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He bowed departure to Timothy, who was watching him with a steady scrutiny.

OUTSIDE the curtained window, The Shadow's eyes remained like hidden flame. They observed the two men who were left in the room. William Timothy uttered a throaty exclamation and walked to a table where there was a telephone.

Frowning, he picked up the instrument and called a Manhattan number. It was the number of the apartment of Edith Allen. Timothy talked for a few moments with his niece's maid, then hung up.

"Bruce told the truth," he said, quietly. "Edith's maid says that Bruce and my niece went together to the theater. He left her there alone and is going to pick her up after the show and drive her home, as he told us. I just wanted to make sure."

Arnold Dixon's face flushed with anger. "Was it necessary to make that phone call, William? Do you think my son is accustomed to lie about his movements?"

Timothy shrugged.

"I was afraid he might have received a threatening note similar to the one you got. I'm not worried about the boy's honesty. It's his safety I'm thinking of. A crook might figure the easiest way to extort the cup from you would be to kidnap Bruce and offer to make an even swap his life for the cup! Have you thought about that angle, Arnold?"

Dixon nodded. He turned nervously away, rang abruptly for Charles. The butler came in almost immediately. Timothy wondered if Charles might have been listening outside the door.

"I want the key to the Spanish chest," Dixon said.

Charles handed him a key from a large ring. The millionaire walked swiftly to a carved blackwood cabinet and unlocked it. There was a combination lock on the lowest drawer inside, and Dixon twirled the dial and opened it. He took out another key the key to the tower in the south wing of the mansion. It was in an upper room in this tower that the millionaire's collection was stored.

The moment Dixon looked at the key he gave a faint cry. There were tiny flecks of white on it. Timothy sprang forward, examined the key.

"Wax!" he said, grimly. "Some one has recently taken a wax impression of that tower key." He swung toward Charles. "What do you know about this?"

"Nothing," Charles said. "If you think I tampered with the key, you're mistaken, sir. Only Mr. Dixon knows the combination of the lower drawer."

"Quick!" Dixon cried, faintly. "To the tower room! Come with me, William! You, too, Charles!"

They followed his hasty steps down a long corridor. He fitted the waxed key in a lock and swung open a heavy door. Winding stairs led aloft and the three hurried up. At the top, Dixon produced another key. This was a smaller one, that he produced from under his shirt on a long neck chain.

The door of the treasure chamber flew open under his eager pressure. He sprang inside. Charles and the lawyer remained at the threshold, watching Dixon's quick rush toward a bare wooden shelf in a corner of the room. None of them paid any attention to the glass cases containing the collection of Chinese pottery. They

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watched the shelf where Dixon was standing.

There was no wooden box on that shelf. Dixon was moaning, wringing his hands.

"Gone!" he cried brokenly. "The cup is gone! It's been stolen!"

It was Timothy alone who retained his wits. A glance showed him that the tower window was open. He ran toward it, hobbling awkwardly and leaning on his heavy cane.

He thrust his head out the window and stiffened. His yell was brief. It died in his throat, as his two companions rushed toward the window.

But Timothy blocked them off with his back. He had seen the face of the escaping thief. He knew it was the thief, because the fellow was carrying the missing wooden box strapped behind his back. Both hands were busily engaged lowering himself down the tangled mass of entwined ivy that clung to the wall of the tower.

Moonlight fell for an instant on the thief's frightened, upturned face. It was Bruce Dixon!

He sprang instantly to the ground, ran like a streak into the darkness. He was gone before Arnold Dixon or Charles could peer out the window.

"Who was he?" Dixon screamed, beside himself with rage and grief.

"I don't know," Timothy said, huskily. "He leaped down from the vines before I could see his face."

"Was it Paul Rodney?" Charles asked, in a peculiar tone.

"I don't know Rodney," the lawyer retorted, sharply. "Do you?"

Charles shook his head. "I'm nervous. Excuse me."

They turned back into the rifled room. Arnold Dixon was sobbing in a dry, terrified voice. He stopped Charles as the latter rushed toward the tower stairs.

"Don't notify the police!" he cried, brokenly. "I don't want publicity. The cup would be taken from me by the Chinese government. Oh, who stole it who stole it?"

Timothy avoided the old man's tragic eyes. He threw an arm about him, tried to comfort him, to whisper words of advice. But he didn't tell Arnold the truth about the face he had seen in the moonlight. He remained silent.

Charles, too, was silent.

BRUCE DIXON had almost reached the looming mess of the stone wall that enclosed the estate, when a dark figure rose directly in his path.

The figure was The Shadow. He sprang forward, as Bruce crouched and drew a gun.

The thief had no chance to fire. Before his finger could tighten on the trigger, he was dealt a heavy blow on the jaw that sent him sprawling. The box flew from his grasp and landed a half dozen feet away.

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Instantly, The Shadow had pounced on the treasure. He rose, ready to shoot if Bruce tried another attack.

To his surprise, Bruce did nothing of the kind. He staggered empty-handed to his feet, whirled, fled into the darkness. His sudden change of heart surprised The Shadow. For a split-second, he failed to understand the reason for this very easy capture of the priceless cup.

When he did know, it was too late. The quick rush of feet gave him time to turn, but not to dodge. A blow landed with stunning impact on the back of The Shadow's skull. The treasure box slid from his limp grasp. He pitched forward, unconscious, on his face.

But not before he had recognized the face of the man who had slugged him and the fellow at his side.

Joe Snaper had swung the heavy gun butt. The second snarling assailant was Bert Hooley.

CHAPTER IX. WHEN THE INDIAN IS HIGH

THE SHADOW recovered consciousness in a narrow gravelike vault covered with soft, cold mud. For a horrified moment, he thought that he was underground, buried alive. Then he became aware of the distant voices of men. He could hear Timothy, the lawyer. Arnold Dixon, too. And Charles, the butler.

The Shadow realized now where was. His body was outside the walls of the estate. He had been shoved into a drainage culvert that was built under the road. He could see the flare of electric torches. The three wildly excited men were searching the road, having failed to find any trace of an intruder inside the walls.

The search was futile. After a while, they returned inside the gate and their voices dwindled in the darkness.

The Shadow emerged from his queer hiding place. It was evident to him what had happened. Either Bruce or the two blackmailers had hidden his body there. Perhaps all three of them, acting in concert. The fact that Snaper and Hooley had interfered to save the young man from capture was eloquent testimony to the careful planning of the theft of the fabulous Cup of Confucius.

The Shadow, however, was far from defeated. The cup was not yet lost, if he wasted no time.

He stared clown the road toward the spot where Hooley's car had been hidden. On the blackness of the smooth asphalt, The Shadow detected a tiny gleam like the twinkle of a firefly. It was a drop of the chemically treated gasoline that had leaked from the tank of the fleeing thugs' car.

The Shadow had foreseen such an emergency and had prepared for it. Now his grim care was rewarded. He had a sure way to trail at least two of the resolute thieves of a million-dollar treasure.

His own car began to skim swiftly along the deserted road. The Shadow's deep set eyes watched the onrushing sweep of the road in front. Presently, he passed another of the far-spaced little fireflies. It was infinitely tiny, almost obliterated by evaporation, but he laughed grimly as he roared past it and another and another.

Snaper and Hooley were guiding The Shadow to their hangout without the slightest knowledge that a tiny hole in their gas tank was lighting the way.

The trail ended in an unexpected spot. A curving drive led in through dark grounds to a stately three-story house perched almost on the cliff edge that flanked the dark, wind-tossed surface of Long Island Sound. The

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Shadow drove past the place without stopping. He came presently to an all-night filling station and bought oil and gas. He had removed his black disguise and was again the suave Lamont Cranston.

From the talkative pump dealer he learned that the pretentious house down the road belonged to a couple of wealthy Wall Street brokers. John Piper and Harold McCoy. He smiled as the dealer described them.

Piper was Bert Hooley, without any doubt at all. Joe Snaper was using the McCoy alias. Apparently, they had leased the big frame dwelling only recently.

TEN minutes later, The Shadow was cautiously gliding toward the house, his movements hidden by the restless roar of wind through the wildly tossing trees on the front lawn. Beyond the cliff on which the house was perched The Shadow could catch a glimpse of the Sound. Even in the darkness, the white froth was visible. A storm was roaring up with gale intensity.

The Shadow relied on this fact, as well as his black enveloping disguise, to aid him in getting into the house unnoticed.

He failed to reckon on the presence of a watchdog. The animal was tethered on a long chain to a tree. It began to bark loudly.

The Shadow halted. He was watching the lighted windows on the top floor of the silent house. The shades were drawn, but suddenly the shadow of a man darkened the white square at the left window.

A face peered. For a minute or so it remained, while the dog continued to bark loudly. Then, evidently reassured that the sound meant nothing serious, the face withdrew.

The Shadow had studied that countenance through a pair of tiny binoculars. Before it jerked away he knew exactly who it was. A man who, so far, had not been evident in this strange case at all. A thin-faced, pockmarked little gunman named "Squint" Maddigan.

To The Shadow, the fact that Squint was present in this remote house on the shore of Long Island Sound was a disturbing thing; cause for instant action. For wherever Squint went, there also went Paul Rodney, one of the wealthiest big-shots of the underworld.

The Shadow had hitherto, on the basis of reports received from his undercover agents, decided that Paul Rodney and his evil little henchman Squint, were waging war against Hooley and Snaper for possession of Arnold Dixon's vast wealth. He knew now that the lure was the fabulous Cup of Confucius.

And the criminal conspiracy was deeper than even The Shadow had surmised. It included the two original blackmailers, Dixon's own son and now Squint and his brown-bearded boss.

The Shadow lost no time in forcing an entrance to the mysterious house. He circled it warily twice, then decided upon the cellar.

Five minutes after The Shadow began his patient work at the rear cellar window, he was inside and the window closed softly behind him.

THE SHADOW ascended a flight of boxed-in wooden stairs. He could hear nothing except the faint squeaks of mice in the dark cellar. But The Shadow's feet made no sound on the wooden steps that led to the ground floor.

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He opened the door at the head of the stairs with infinite caution. He peered for a long time before he moved from concealment. He was surprised to discover that every light on the ground floor was now ablaze. He was certain that when he had stared upward from the grounds outside, only the top floor had been lighted.

The slow, scraping sound of descending feet on the main staircase of the house caused The Shadow to back hastily toward the cellar door from which he had recently emerged. He had a partial view of the staircase, and he left the cellar door open a bare inch or so and waited.

That sound from the stairs puzzled him; it was not only the slow thump-thump of descending feet, but a fainter sound almost exactly like the careless drip of water.

His eyes gleamed with comprehension when he saw the figure of Squint suddenly appear on the lower steps of the stairs. The rat-faced little killer was carrying a gallon tin of kerosene. He was spilling the stuff everywhere, sloshing it over the floor wherever he walked. And grinning like a chalky mask of death!

The Shadow was preparing to make a silent rush, when he changed his mind.

Squint had turned his face toward the staircase.

"What do you say, Paul?" he shouted, irritably. "Hurry it up! If we're gonna burn this dump down, we gotta get goin'!"

"Shut up and spill that kerosene! Do as you're told, damn you!"

It was Rodney's voice, vicious with some unexplained rage. His feet came clumping down the kerosene-soaked stairs a moment later.

The Shadow watched the ugly pair through the crack of the cellar door.

There was a crumpled scrap of paper in Paul Rodney's hand and he waved it angrily. This paper seemed to be the cause of his rage.

"Why do you bother with that?" Squint snapped. "It don't mean a thing. They were tryin' to kid us. It's a fake!"

"The hell it's a fake," Rodney replied. "It means something, if only I could figure out what. I've searched the house from top to bottom. The cup isn't here! Those two jailbirds were wise. They've got the thing buried somewhere. But where? that's what I'd like to know."

"That stuff about Indians is the bunk," Squint insisted. "They didn't fight much to keep hold of that paper, did they? That's because it's a bluff. They wanted us to waste time huntin' for Indians while they scrambled with the cup!"

RODNEY opened his mouth to make an angry rejoinder, when an unfortunate thing happened on which The Shadow had not counted. Through the tiny opening of the cellar door darted a small, furry shape. It was a mouse from the rodent-filled cellar. It brushed past The Shadow's leg and ran squeaking across the door of the living room.

Squint jumped nervously and almost dropped the tin of kerosene. Then he laughed with profane relief.

"Just a blasted mouse! The joint is alive with them. It had me scared for a minute!"

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"Shut up!" Rodney's voice was very quiet. "Where did that mouse come from?"

"Why, I guess the cellar door Hey!" Squint's voice shrilled with understanding of what his bearded boss was driving at. "How did the mouse get out here? That cellar door was closed!"

"Exactly," Rodney cried. "And now it's open!"

The Shadow had tried to shut it as tightly as he dared, but he had been unable to do so completely because the click of the catch would have betrayed him.

He sprang from concealment as both crooks darted toward the door.

His gun crashed at almost the same instant Rodney's did. The Shadow was thrown violently backward as his finger pressed the trigger. Rodney had shoved Squint spinning forward into The Shadow. The impact sent both men reeling, but it saved The Shadow's body from the rip of the brown-bearded man's bullet.

Squint squealed with terror. The kerosene from the fallen container splashed in a puddle on the floor.

Rodney tossed a lighted match into the heart of that glassy pool.

Instantly, flame roared upward like an exploding pillar of heat. The Shadow reeled away, beating fire from his cloak. Rodney and Squint fled. The flames were mounting almost to the ceiling, leaping from puddle to puddle with swift fury. So fast had the flames spread across the soaked floor that one half of the room was now impassable. Squint and Rodney were beyond that wall of scarlet.

THE SHADOW threw himself to the floor as lead whizzed at him from the other side of the room. The crooks emptied their guns in final departure. The Shadow could not pursue them. To pierce that pillar of licking scarlet and orange would have been to commit suicide.

Suddenly, The Shadow saw a crumpled square of white on the floor. It lay barely an inch away from the advancing flames and The Shadow grabbed it before it could burst into fire. It was the paper that Paul Rodney had been waving in his angry hand. When he drew his gun, the paper had fluttered unnoticed from his grasp.

The Shadow ran up the stairs with the paper thrust into a pocket. There was no other place to go, now that the flames hemmed him in on all sides. But he had another grim reason for electing to remain a few minutes more in the doomed house. He wanted to find Hooley and Snaper.

He found them on the top floor. Both were lying stark dead in the front bedroom. Their clothing was soaked with kerosene. So was every part of the room.

The Shadow's eyes blazed with fury. Both men's throats had been slashed to a red smear. They must have suffered torture that was hideous, before the final merciful knife slashes had ended their lives.

Snaper's legs were broken. The bones in Hooley's both arms had been snapped. But they had died without revealing the secret of the missing Cup of Confucius. The state of the kerosene-soaked room was proof of that.

It had been torn to pieces. The bed was ripped apart, mattress and pillow slips torn into ribbons. There were even marks where Paul Rodney had tested the door and walls with a pickax in his mad hunt for the vanished treasure.

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The pickax lay on the door, bloody smears on the handle where Rodney had grasped it. Rags showed where he had cleaned his hands before he descended the stairs.

And now consuming flames would burn away all trace of the brutal double murder. Nothing could save the house. The Shadow knew it, as he heard the crackle and roar of flame that was swiftly mushrooming up the wooden staircase. He knew that only a few seconds remained in which to act, if he expected to leave the doomed house alive.

Yet he stood motionless, while his hand drew a crumpled scrap of paper from his pocket. He read it, his piercing eyes intent. It wasn't in code. This was a message in which only the dead pair on the floor could read meaning. It was obviously based on facts known only to the murdered Hooley and Snaper. It read as follows:

When the Indian is high follow his nose and reach under

There was no period mark to indicate whether the cryptic sentence was finished, or had been interrupted by the arrival of Rodney and his squint-eyed henchman. The Shadow had a strong feeling that the note was complete.

Hooley and Snaper must have written this message for their own guidance. They must have done it when they had hidden the treasure, before they were surprised by their murderers. Yet the task of understanding it was well nigh hopeless.

REACH under what? And what could the "Indian" mean? To the ordinary intelligence such a scrap of nonsense meant nothing at all. The Shadow, however, immediately divined the circumstances under which such a note might logically be written.

He had no knowledge whatever of where the Indian was. But the fact that it was to be a "high" Indian and that one must reach down after following his nose, gave The Shadow all the preliminary information he needed.

He was certain that he could find this tragic Cup of Confucius as soon as he decided it was necessary to bring it to light. In the meantime, it was safe where it was.

The smoke in the bloodstained bedroom was now thick and choking. From the hall door came a scarlet blast of flame.

The Shadow darted toward the front window. Down below he could hear the shouts of men, the throbbing of fire engines. Firemen were visible, flitting across the glare of the grounds. The Shadow's chance of escaping unseen from the building was practically gone.

Nevertheless, he tested his chance of flight from the heat-seared bedroom window by raising the sash with a quick gesture and thrusting his head out into the noisy, flame-lighted darkness.

The moment he did so, he heard something below that told him escape from the front of the house was hopeless. Worse than hopeless it was absolute suicide!

CHAPTER X. FIRE AND WATER

THE sound that warned The Shadow he was trapped was the shrill, angry yell of a fireman.

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"There he is! Up at the top floor window! He's one of the firebugs – get him!"

The Shadow stood revealed at the upper window, staring straight outward as if measuring his chances for a desperate leap across space to the blazing branches of an elm tree.

He saw the blue sheen of a policeman's uniform. The copper was glaring upward. One hand shielded his eyes from the fierce heat and flying sparks; the other clutched a pistol.

"Come down out of there!" the officer yelled. "Jump! If you don't surrender, I'll fire!"

The Shadow's only answer was a harsh, sibilant laugh. It was a piercing, eerie sound that carried clearly above the roar and crackle of the flames.

The policeman fired. His bullet spat like an arrow into the burning casement of the window. But The Shadow was no longer in view as a helpless target. He had glided backward into the blazing room.

The bedroom doorway and the hallway beyond were like a writhing lake of fire. The Shadow knew his chance for life rested on speed and nerve. Wrapping his coat about his face, ducking his head low beneath the protection of one arm, he took a deep breath of hot, smoky air.

He held the air like a miser in his expanded lungs. He knew he dared not breathe again until he had passed the spouting volcano of staircase and upper hallway. It was the only route to reach the comparatively safe haven the left rear wing.

The right wing was already an impossible spot for a human being. The fire had breached a hole in the shingled roof and was shooting aloft like a gigantic torch.

AS The Shadow nerved himself for his swift run, he heard part of the roof collapse. Sparks ascended like golden rain. The Shadow knew that the rear wall could not hold together much longer under the crumbling lick of hot flame.

He ran straight through the heart of red chaos. He felt heat envelop him like a dizzy, agonized swirl. But his flying feet never faltered. Leaping a gap where the stair banisters had fallen inward, he swerved sharply in the fog of smoke and raced along the corridor that led to the left wing.

He slammed a door, threw himself headlong to the floor. There were flames in this room, too, dancing like evil yellow serpents along the wood work; but the shutting of the door kept the worst of the conflagration momentarily outside.

The Shadow rolled over and over on the smoldering floor. He managed to smother the sparks that were eating into his clothing in half a dozen places. His hands were inflamed and raw, but he was unmindful of the pain.

Unless he could find a way to escape from a back window in the next moment or two, he was doomed to be roasted to a blackened crisp, like the two unfortunate blackmailers who lay with their throats gashed in the red roar of the front bedroom.

He swung open a window that faced the storm-tossed sweep of Long Island Sound. From his gasping throat came again that grim, determined laugh. The Shadow could see that he had hardly improved his position by his daring plunge through the heart of the blaze.

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The rear window showed him that the house was built on a steep cliff that rose vertically out of the water. Sixty feet below the brow of the cliff was the frothy turmoil of Long Island Sound. The wind that had been increasing steadily all evening had now reached the proportions of a gale. Foam dappled the tossing waves of the Sound as far as the eyes of The Shadow could pierce the gloom.

An ominous crackling drew his glance to the right wing of the house. The Shadow knew what that meant. The flame-gutted wing beyond him was swaying, tottering. In another instant, the wall would fall outward in toppling ruin from the loosening fingers of the ever-increasing heat.

A yell of terror eddied upward from the brow of the rocky cliff that was directly below that swaying wall. The Shadow saw two figures racing away, desperately trying to reach the stone steps that were cut in the outer face of the cliff. These steps led steeply downward to a concrete boat landing at the foot of the cliff.

It was a toss-up for thirty tense seconds whether the two fleeing fugitives would reach the cliff steps before the wall fell. Their blackened, terrified faces were clearly visible to The Shadow at his upper window. He recognized them with a tightening of his lips.

One of the men was the brown-bearded Paul Rodney. The other was his pinched-eyed little henchman Squint.

THE two killers reached the steps and threw themselves flat under a projecting stone. An instant later, with a rumbling roar like a landslide, the whole swaying rear of the right wing of the house toppled outward and down.

It missed the crouched forms of the terrified murderers, but it penned them temporarily at the head of the cliff steps, kept them from reaching the concrete platform far below their feet. The thing that had trapped them was the huge blazing length of an enormous timber that had fallen athwart the descent, rendering it impassable.

In the meantime, The Shadow was wriggling out on the narrow sill of his window. The door behind him had burst from its hinges under an irresistible blast of flame and heat. Fire roared through the opening like the forced draft of a flue in a furnace.

The Shadow's hands caught at the vertical line of a metal drain pipe. He swung away from the licking horror that spouted straight out the window he had just quitted. He slid swiftly down the hot length of the pipe.

His action was obscured from the view of the crooks on the cliff top by the dense roll of greasy smoke. He could see them, however, as they raced like ants along the brow of the cliff, determined to get past the blazing timber that blocked the steps below. They were mad with the desire to descend to that concrete platform lashed by the gale-tossed Sound.

The Shadow knew why when he saw a speedboat tethered there, its bow rising and falling jerkily. Any moment might see the craft dashed to pieces. It was the last hope of Rodney and Squint. A feeble hope, too. The Shadow reasoned grimly as he slid swiftly down the vertical drain pipe to the roof of a rear sun parlor. The extension rested on the cliff top like an eyebrow on the enormous stone head of a giant.

The Shadow crept to the edge of the sloping roof, his clothing whipped by the fury of the offshore gale. His plan was to reach that speedboat below and reach it ahead of the crooks. He had slim chance for doing so, unless he dived headlong to the foaming surface of the distant water.

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Rodney and Squint had managed to crawl along the brow of the cliff and pass the obstruction of the falling timber. In another minute or two, they would reach the boat and cast off.

THE SHADOW'S calculation for a successful dive was practically an instantaneous process of thought. He realized that he had to clear the cliff top itself by a ten-foot outward leap. In addition to that, he had to fall sixty feet through empty space to the torn surface of the water. And he had no proof whether the depth was sufficient to take up the tremendous impetus of his whizzing body.

The formation of the cliff decided him. Only fairly deep water could lap the rocky ramparts of such a cliff.

The Shadow dived outward and down through space.

He missed the brow of the cliff by a clear six inches. Down down – wind roaring in his ears. Then he struck the surface in a clean, knifelike dive and the cold bite of the water was like a healing poultice on his scorched body.

His hands swept upward and curved him toward the surface. His knee grazed a submerged granite shelf. It ripped his trousers leg as if a sharp knife had slashed through the cloth from ankle to knee. But The Shadow disregarded it in his grim, gasping effort to swim to the speedboat unseen.

The Shadow's head emerged. Spume blew in his face as he struck out for the boat. He dived below the keel and reached it from the windward side.

Rodney and Squint, almost at the bottom of the cliff steps, were unaware that at this moment, The Shadow was wriggling like a huge eel across the wet gunwale of the craft.

The peak of the bow hid his body from the onrushing killers. Quickly, he had squirmed head-foremost under the protection of the decked-in space. A tarpaulin had been left there to keep the craft from flooding under the wild fury of wind and wave. The Shadow spread it over his hunched body, and waited for the next development of this wild night of peril.

The Shadow was puzzled by the peculiar flight to the boat of Rodney and his henchman. He knew that it would be impossible for a frail craft such as this to make a trip across the raging Sound without capsizing. Where were the crooks really going?

The Shadow waited.

Soon feet thumped hastily aboard the craft. It began to rock crazily with a wild, spinning motion. The Shadow knew that one of the fugitives must have slashed the rope that held it. The sudden snarling roar of the engine stopped the crazy gyrations of the boat. It began to nose forward into the heaving waves.

The voice of Squint and Paul Rodney became faintly audible over the whine of wind and the surge of water. "Hug the shore, Paul! Do, you think we can make it?"

"Hug the shore, hell! Do you want us to pile up like a spilled box of matches on those damned rocks? Keep your head and leave this job to me. In five minutes we'll hit smooth water and then we're set!"

Rodney laughed hoarsely. Evidently he had some better scheme in mind than the hopeless task of trying to cross the Sound to the distant Long Island shore.

Squint's frightened yell justified The Shadow's deduction.

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"Do you think we can make the cove okay?"

"You bet! Here's the headland now! We're slipping inside the breakwater!"

THE SHADOW could feel an instant change. The craft raced along without that horrible pitching and tossing that had threatened at any moment to capsize it.

The motor stopped. The speedboat drifted slightly. Then there was a faint, scraping bump. The Shadow had no idea of what was going on. He could see nothing, hidden by the bow of the boat and the enveloping covering of the water-drenched tarpaulin.

"What'll we do with the boat, Paul?" Squint whispered.

"Sink it, you fool! I'm gonna scuttle it, right now! We can't afford to be traced to this cove. Out with you jump!"

The boat heaved as a body jumped from the gunwale. The Shadow knew the craft was a long way from the shore of the cove. Nevertheless, there was no splash when Squint jumped.

Then there was another heave of The Shadow's marine prison. The Shadow lay quietly where he was. Water began to run along his legs. He felt the boat fill rapidly. It began to settle.

Rodney had kept his word. He was scuttling the craft in the middle of the cove.

Still The Shadow remained quiet. He felt the water rise above his chin, his mouth. He tightened his lips, his lungs filled with air, and he waited coolly to go down with the sinking boat.

It happened almost instantly. There was a curious forward lurch, then a sickening plunge backward. The stern with its heavy engine slid below the surface. Water gurgled and roared in The Shadow's ears.

He whipped the tarpaulin away and stroked free of the sinking craft. His head broke the surface in the darkness. He could see a huge birdlike shape on the water and two men scrambling like ants along a broad wing. He knew now why Paul Rodney had been so confident of his ability to cross the Sound.

The thing was a seaplane!

Once more, The Shadow dived. His appearance on the surface had been only a second's duration. He swam below the shadow of the seaplane; allowed himself to drift upward between the flat, air-buoyed floats.

He was just in time. The plane's motor began to cough.

It deepened to a sullen roar. Like a darting bird, the seaplane swept in foam along the dark surface of the sheltered cove. It lifted with a swift jounce then it was aloft, circling higher and higher in the air.

Underneath, clinging desperately to the taut supports that connected the wet pontoons, hung the twisting figure of The Shadow.

He had no time to jam his body into a secure spot. He was hanging straight downward by only the power of his wrists and clenched hands. His legs described a jerky arc in the air as he fought to keep himself from falling hundreds of feet to the lashing surface of the gale-torn water.

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He managed to draw up one dangling leg and hook it precariously around the slant of the support. Yet he was still in a dangerous position. He was hanging too far to the left of the center. The weight of his dangling body would become noticeable to the murderers in the cockpit above him. The starboard wing was dipping. He'd have to move inch by inch toward the center or have the crooks discover that they were carrying an extra passenger.

The Shadow's sliding right hand moved along the wet wire. It slipped, clutched wildly closed on empty air!

CHAPTER XI. LUCKY KITTEN

It seemed as if The Shadow were doomed. The only link between his dangling body and the strut that joined the floats was the remaining grip of one desperately slipping hand. The sweep of the gale heeled the seaplane far over on a wing-tip.

The Shadow's body jerked dizzily back and forth over empty space. The gale threatened to tear him loose and send him hurtling downward to death in the foaming water far below.

But the very fury of the gale was The Shadow's salvation. It threw him almost horizontally against the undercarriage, as he clung by one slipping hand to the cross-support. His legs wound around a knobby strut. He held himself there, breathless, both hands clinging now with a death grip.

He was almost in the exact center of his dangerous hiding place. The tortured plane now roared straight through the windy darkness on an even keel. The only threat to The Shadow's life was the occasional up and down plunge that signaled the presence of air pockets. He withstood these sickening jerks, although once or twice it seemed as if his arms might be wrenched out of their sockets.

Both legs were firmly anchored. The Shadow managed to twist so that most of his body was above, and not below, the slippery length of the horizontal strut.

He felt the seaplane's speed slacken after a few minutes more of this nerve-racking skyride, and he stared watchfully ahead. The outline of the Long Island shore was dimly visible, rushing closer and closer with frightful speed. The engine of the plane ceased its harsh droning. In long sweeping circles the plane descended.

Its goal was a small landlocked harbor that looked like the water entrance to a private estate. Sandy hills swept out from the shore, almost meeting in a narrow inlet. Water boiled and thundered outside the opening, but within the harbor the water was calm except for the flat rollers that raced toward the sandy beach.

The seaplane descended to the surface of this tiny harbor with a beautiful glide. Evidently, Paul Rodney was a calm and resourceful pilot. He landed with a smother of spray, swung the nose of the ship expertly around, and taxied toward a building that proved to be a private marine hangar.

The seaplane drifted closer and closer to its entrance. Squint took a long leap from the bobbing top of one of the floats and scrambled ashore. A moment later, the huge door of the hangar slid open by concealed machinery. Lights were visible, staining the black water with a glow like yellow daylight.

Rodney himself was furiously busy, working with tools on the wing-tips. Squint joined him and both wings were folded back into place. The ship was now like a bird with clipped plumage. It was ready to drift through the water entrance of the hangar and be securely lashed to its snug mooring.

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THE SHADOW saw only the latter part of these maneuvers. The landing of the ship on the tiny bay had plunged him completely under water. He held on, his lips grimly closed against the bubbling flow of salt water until he felt the vibration overhead cease and knew that the seaplane had come to a halt.

Then he inverted his submerged body and made a deep surface dive.

The dive took him far away from the black shadow of the plane. When The Shadow's head broke the surface, he was close to a corner of the hangar. He lay there in the glassy water, his face barely awash.

He didn't move until the heavy door of the hangar clanged shut, hiding from view the squat shape of the seaplane with its folded wings.

Then The Shadow swam slowly and noiselessly toward the shelving beach that curved inshore past the angle of the hangar's side. He divined that he had now reached Paul Rodney's private hangout.

The Shadow was certain of it when he waded ashore. He surveyed the land and a distant house that showed faintly in the darkness atop a small sandy bluff. A path led upward, winding in and out among worn boulders.

Rodney and Squint were just disappearing around the last bend in the ascent when The Shadow reached the beach. He didn't follow them. Instead, he retraced his steps along the shore to the rear door of the hangar.

The door was shut, but it was not locked. The Shadow had counted on this lack of vigilance on the part of the weary crooks.

The Shadow explored the hangar, found things he had hoped to find. A shallow closet yielded a jar of salve, which The Shadow rubbed into the aching flesh of his burned hands.

In an open clothes locker, The Shadow saw a suit of dungarees hanging limp from a rusted hook. He slipped out of his own charred and water-soaked clothing and put on the dungarees. He smeared his face with grease.

A bit of exercise sent a warm, reviving heat through his chilled body. His teeth ceased to chatter. With a firm step, he left the hangar and ascended the winding path to the top of the sandy bluff.

THE house was well in from the edge. It was built of fieldstone heavy, irregular chunks of rock joined together with colored cement in the modern manner. A peaked roof covered with red and green slate completed the picture. Evidently Rodney had bought this new house of his recently, and had spent plenty of money for it.

It was dark, except for the light that shone out the windows of the living room on the ground door. The Shadow glided closer, his footsteps masked by the moan of the wind. A spat of rain began to fall. Peering, The Shadow saw two men seated at a table, talking fiercely together, although it was impossible to hear a syllable of what either man was saying.

Rodney looked grim and threatening. Squint was badly frightened. He kept moving a thin, clawlike hand in a nervous, placating gesture.

The Shadow waited to see no more. He was turning away, prepared to find some quiet method of entering this house, when a freak action of the storm upset his calm plans.

The Shadow had heard the low rumbling mutter of thunder, but had paid no attention to it. Thunder meant nothing important at this cold time of the year. Yet, as he turned away from the window, he was startled by

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the totally unforeseen flash of a jagged streak of lightning. It darted without warning across the black sky, lighted up objects on the ground with dazzling suddenness.

A cry came from within the house. Squint had uttered that yell of amazement. He had leaped to his feet. His finger pointed toward the window. It pointed toward the grease-smearred face and the overall clad body of The Shadow.

Squint had recognized the powerful beaked nose of the man outside the window. He remembered the deep-set piercing eyes. It was a man that Squint was confident had been left to roast to death in a burning inferno on the other side of storm-tossed Long Island Sound.

Yet here he was alive, menacing staring through the rain-pelted window like the vague embodiment of a ghost.

"The Shadow!"

SQUINT'S scream was clearly audible above the moan of the gale. It was followed by an oath from Rodney and the smash of a bullet through the glass pane of the window.

The Shadow ran into enveloping gloom. He reached the road outside the low-hedged lawn with swift ground-covering strides. As he turned into the road, he could see Squint and the brown-bearded Rodney spring from the porch.

Bullets raked the hedge over which The Shadow had leaped. He ran swiftly down the black asphalt road, after a single glance east and west to determine his best course.

For reasons of his own, The Shadow did not want to make a fight of it with them at this time. The Shadow had a plan that he hoped would be instrumental in disclosing the actual identity of this mysterious "Paul Rodney." He knew the brown beard was merely a useful disguise, covering a personality that had not yet been brought out into the open in this strange case of intrigue, theft and murder.

The Shadow fled with one urgent thought in his brain. He had to elude these two men and find the nearest real estate office!

Rodney's howl was like a trumpet call of rage through the rain.

"Where did he go? After him, Squint! Kill him!"

"Get the car out!" Squint shouted. "He can't get far on foot! There's no place where he can hide!"

"Right!" Rodney bellowed.

The Shadow heard no more. Racing down the road, he managed to elude his pursuers by hiding in bushes off the road. When he finally saw them get off the trail by taking to a side road, The Shadow continued along the way he had headed originally.

After The Shadow had covered better than two miles at a dogtrot, he passed a cluster of houses and stores. One store in particular drew his keen attention. He read the sign on the dark window with a sibilant laugh: "John Honeywell Real Estate." The telephone number was also visible in white letters on the lower corner of the window.

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The Shadow wrote down both the name and the telephone number with a stub of pencil he found in the greasy pocket of his stolen overalls. His note paper was a scrap of newspaper he fished from an ash-barrel. Then he found a shallow doorway and waited, his eyes watching the road for signs of a speeding car.

Presently, headlights glowed. The Shadow listened and watched for a moment, then he stepped boldly from concealment. He was certain that the lights were not those of Paul Rodney's murder car.

It proved to be a milk truck. The Shadow made a thumbing motion and the truck stopped, gave him a lift. Then it ambled down the highway in the direction of New York City.

CHAPTER XII. ENTER, MR. PERDY

THE SHADOW, again in the guise of Lamont Cranston, sat in a comfortable chair, smiling faintly as he glanced at the telephone on a small table. Morning sunlight flooded the room with cheerful splendor. The room was part of an expensive suite maintained by Lamont Cranston in New York's exclusive Cobalt Club.

The Shadow had risen late after an exhausted, dreamless sleep. No one knew why Cranston had returned to the club at such an early hour in the morning. The attendant on duty at the club desk had noticed nothing strange in the behavior or appearance of the millionaire clubman when he arrived.

The reason was simple. The Shadow had left the milk truck in Brooklyn and had returned to Manhattan by subway. Then he had made his way to his secret sanctum hidden away in an old building in midtown New York.

The Shadow had immediately gotten in touch with Burbank, his contact man, and had given brief clipped orders for all his agents. Then The Shadow had changed from his dirty dungarees into the well-tailored clothing that befitted the suave Lamont Cranston.

It was as such that he had made his early morning entrance through the portals of the Cobalt Club.

Again The Shadow smiled toward the telephone, then lifted it to his ear, called a number in suburban Long Island. His voice was changed so that it resembled none a club attendant might have identified. He was calling the real estate man whose name and telephone number he had scrawled on a scrap of newspaper.

"Mr. John Honeywell?... This is Peter Stedman. I'm interested in buying a home on Long Island."

"Yes, sir." Honeywell's tone was pleasant, crisp. "We have many such houses –"

"I'm interested in a particular house. I saw it a week ago, when I was driving past on the shore road. It's called Cliff Villa. Is it for sale?"

Honeywell's voice became apologetic. "I'm sorry, sir. I know the house you mean. I sold it, only recently. I'm afraid the owner wouldn't consent to sell."

"Who owns it? Perhaps I can offer him a good profit on the deal."

"It's owned by a Mr. Donald Perdy. Profit wouldn't interest him, I'm afraid. He's quite wealthy. Has a photographic art studio on Fifth Avenue. Owns his own plane. I'm sorry, Mr. Stedman, but I assure you I have other houses equally as lovely."

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"I dare say," The Shadow murmured in his disguised voice. "Perhaps I'll drop in your office some time and investigate. Good day, sir."

He hung up. His laughter eddied ominously in the sunlit room.

TWENTY minutes later, The Shadow entered the photographic studio of Donald Perdy. He gave Lamont Cranston's card to a girl at a desk and desired to see Mr. Perdy personally.

Lamont Cranston's wealth and social prestige brought Perdy out of his private office instantly, with a polite smile and an extended hand.

The Shadow expressed in Cranston's suave voice a desire to have his portrait taken at some later date. He was deliberate in his talk, vague about just what type of portrait he desired. All the while he talked, he was studying this Mr. Perdy unobtrusively.

A clean-shaven man, the photographer was, with a strong, square face and high cheek bones. The cheek bones and the eyes were proof enough to The Shadow that his visit had been successful. The eyes were hard, black, rather coldly sullen, in spite of the fact that Donald Perdy was putting on a beautiful, well-bred act for the benefit of his wealthy visitor.

But The Shadow was not deceived. Mentally, he placed a brown beard on that smooth, hard countenance. He added a rasp to the cold voice, placed mentally a gun in that muscular hand.

Donald Perdy and Paul Rodney were one and the same!

The Shadow turned, pretended to see for the first time a large photograph in one of the display cases. It was a portrait of Bruce Dixon.

"I see Arnold Dixon's son is one of your clients," he murmured. "His father is an old friend of mine."

"Really?" Perdy's eyes narrowed by the merest flick.

"Yes. He and I are both interested in the same things. He has a wonderful collection of ancient Chinese pottery. I've been to his home to see it."

Perdy had recovered his poise that had vanished momentarily at the mention of Bruce Dixon and his father.

"Of course," he said smilingly. "I remember now. Bruce told me you had been there. As you say, his father has a most wonderful collection." He laughed and his voice became very casual. "Too bad he hasn't the prize item of the lot. If only he had the Cup of Confucius, eh?"

His dark eyes were like gimlets, boring into Lamont Cranston as though seeking to read the thoughts behind his visitor's mind. But The Shadow merely yawned.

He said in a bored tone: "The Cup of Confucius? I don't believe I've ever heard of it. But then, I'm merely an amateur at this collecting hobby. It sounds like a rare and very old piece."

"It is," Perdy said, his eyes still alert.

"About the photograph," The Shadow said with a shrug. "I'm sure you can arrange to take one that will please me. Suppose I call back in a week or so and arrange for a sitting. Would that be satisfactory?"

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"Anything you say, Mr. Cranston," Perdy said. His grin expanded suddenly so that his teeth flashed for an instant. The teeth were small, regular, very white almost like a woman's. The same teeth that had grinned at The Shadow when he had been attacked so savagely outside the library window of Arnold Dixon's mansion.

They shook hands again and The Shadow took his departure.

AS he walked up Fifth Avenue and hailed a bus in the morning sunshine, the face of The Shadow was grimly taut.

He was convinced now that Donald Perdy, alias Paul Rodney, was the supercrook whose presence he had suspected since he had first read the brief newspaper item about "Trouble at Shadelawn." Perdy must be the man who had sent that mysterious burglar "Spud Wilson" on his mission to the millionaire's home.

No one but Perdy could have blown up the unfortunate Wilson in that parked car outside the vacant lot. Perhaps Wilson had tried to double-cross his criminal overlord. If he had, his death had been prompt and horrible. Like the savage deaths that had been handed to the two blackmailers, Snaper and Hooley.

The Shadow had long since eliminated those latter two from the case. They had been cheap crooks, blundering into something far more sinister than their demands for hush money. They had paid the price in that flaming house on the rocky cliff above Long Island Sound.

From now on, the struggle was between Perdy and The Shadow. Not only Perdy! Bruce Dixon, too! The old man's son had stolen the Cup of Confucius. He had been waylaid and deprived of it by Snaper and Hooley. The priceless cup was now missing.

The only clue to its whereabouts was in The Shadow's possession. But Bruce's guilt was becoming clearer. Arnold Dixon's son was leagued with the sinister Perdy in an effort to recover the cup and perhaps murder his own father!

CHAPTER XIII. THE MAN IN THE GARAGE

WHILE The Shadow was riding slowly northward atop a Fifth Avenue bus, Bruce Dixon was listening intently to the hoarse, frightened voice of his father.

"I tell you, my mind is made up, Bruce," the older man said. "It's the only way! By changing my will, I can check, at one stroke, the criminal designs of whoever is trying to kill me and get hold of my fortune."

He stopped short, his arm flung out in a nervous gesture. Then he resumed his worried pacing of the room.

"I think you're overestimating the importance of these attacks," Bruce said. His face was pale. He choked, seemed to have difficulty in speaking. "I refuse to have the will changed in my favor! There's no especial need for it, dad."

There was no depth in his hesitant tone. Yet his father, alarmed by the events of the past few days, took no especial notice. A stroke of the pen would make Bruce his father's sole heir, as he had been before he had left home, following the quarrel over his evil ways that had made him a wanderer for ten long years. From his words, it appeared that he did not want to be made heir. Yet his manner, the sidelong glance of his eyes seemed to indicate otherwise.

"No especial need?" his father echoed. "How can you say that, when my home has been invaded and the Cup

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of Confucius stolen!"

"True enough," Bruce admitted, with that same queer hesitancy in his speech. "I only wish I had been at home when it happened. Did Mr. Timothy really catch a good glimpse of the thief?"

"No such luck," Dixon groaned. "All he saw was the fellow's back as he leaped from the vine-covered wall and made his escape with the box that contained the cup."

"Surely Timothy must have seen something of the thief's face," Bruce persisted. "He's a lawyer. He's accustomed to using his eyes and his ears. It seems strange he could get no no description of the thief."

"Not so strange," Arnold Dixon said, hollowly. "The night was dark. The fellow ran like a deer. Timothy thinks he must have been a young man. No older man could have escaped with such uncanny speed."

"It might have been Snaper, or perhaps Hooley."

"Nonsense! Both those rogues were too old. Besides, they had no idea that I possessed the Cup of Confucius. All they're interested in is blackmail. I've already told you the reason for their visits twice a month."

"So you did," Bruce replied, evenly. "I wonder what's become of them. Have you heard anything further since they tried to torture you in that shack over near the Sound?"

"Not a thing. I probably won't be bothered by them until it's time for the next blackmail payment."

"BY the way," Bruce murmured. "Did you know there was a bad fire up the shore, last night? I saw the glare from my window. This morning's paper says it was the old Carruthers place. Owned by a couple of Wall Street brokers, I believe."

Arnold Dixon nodded. He wasn't much interested in news of the fire. "I hope the owners escaped," he said, dully.

"Luckily, they did," Bruce said in a low tone. "According to the morning paper, there was no one home at the time of the fire except a tramp who was seen at an upper window before the floors collapsed. The two brokers are apparently out West, traveling. The fire was obviously an arson job. Perhaps it's just as well the tramp was burned to death."

"Perhaps. Now about this will –" Dixon's jaw set itself in stubborn lines. "Why do you object to me making it in your favor?"

Bruce forced himself to smile.

"You forget, father. I've only been home three months. I still remember the occasion of my leaving and the perfect right you had to cut me off." His face became paler. "I want you to be quite sure that I've reformed before you decide to will everything over in my favor."

Arnold Dixon laid his hand gently on the young man's arm.

"I don't want you ever again to refer to the unfortunate past," he said. "That's a closed chapter in both our lives. Thank God, you've come back to me in my old age! I'm satisfied you've reformed. No son could have been more thoughtful and kind than you have been in the past three months."

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"I have two excellent reasons for my will decision," Dixon continued, "regardless of my own fear. I want the money to stay in the family and not be dissipated by bequests to charity. You're in love with Edith Allen, my son. Are you not?"

"Yes. I am."

"I want you to marry her. She's a sweet, lovely girl. You're the last of the direct Dixon line. I want the name perpetuated. But more than that, once the fortune is legally willed to you, I have a feeling that the attempts on my life will cease. Are you convinced now that I'm doing the wise thing."

Bruce shrugged. "Whatever you decide suits me," he said, huskily. There was perspiration on his face. He wiped it away surreptitiously, as his father strode to the telephone and summoned William Timothy to the mansion.

It was the son's turn now to become restive. He walked impatiently up and down the room while he waited for the arrival of the lawyer.

WILLIAM TIMOTHY came in with a brusque, springy step. It was evident that the news over the wire had disturbed him. He gave a quick glance toward the table where Bruce sat in shadow, but he was unable to catch the son's eyes.

Bruce had picked up a magazine and was pretending to read it. He took no part in the angry discussion that followed.

"You can't do this, Arnold," Timothy spluttered. "It's ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous, hey?" Dixon rejoined. "I've a right to will my own money where I like, haven't I?"

"Of course! But things have been so unsettled. You've been threatened with death. There's been a bold and amazing robbery right in your own home!"

Again he stared covertly toward Bruce, but was unable to find any change of expression on the young man's face.

In the end, Arnold Dixon settled the whole argument with a stubborn exclamation.

"Very well, William. If you won't attend to your legal duty, I'll hire a lawyer who will!"

Timothy shrugged. "In that case, there's nothing to do but sign the new document."

He drew a lengthy typewritten paper from his briefcase.

"This is an exact copy of the original will, the same as it was before Bruce left home and you altered its provisions. I've dated it to-day. It leaves the house, your securities, your art collection, and every penny of your private fortune to Bruce. Is that what you want?"

"That's what I want," Arnold Dixon said.

"Very well. Sign here. We'll need two witnesses. Bruce, will you witness this document?"

"Why not?" His voice was like ice.

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He rose, watched his father affix his signature with a tremulous movement of the pen. Then Bruce signed his name without a quiver. Charles, the butler, hastily summoned, became the other witness.

Timothy, who was still angry at the way in which his advice had been disregarded, took his leave, refusing a glass of port which the old man offered him as a peace gesture.

AS soon as the door closed behind the fuming lawyer, Arnold Dixon shivered. The quarrel had been a tax on his strength. Feebly, he said he'd go upstairs and lie down.

Bruce read his magazine with unseeing eyes for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then he summoned the butler, had him bring his hat and coat.

"I'm leaving for town," he said, softly. "You needn't tell my father about this. Let him sleep. I may telephone him later, from town. If he should wake before I phone, tell him I had some important business that may clear up certain difficulties. Good day, Charles."

"Good day, sir."

Charles hurried to the window the moment he had closed the door behind his employer's son. He was surprised to see that Bruce did not go back toward the garage. Instead, the young man walked along the gravel path for a few yards and then turned off into the shrubbery. He seemed to be examining the grounds with peculiar interest.

After a while he vanished from view and Charles saw him no more, although he waited at the front window for a considerable time.

Frowning, the butler went to the rear of the house and continued to clean silver, from which duty he had been interrupted. Charles had been at his task for nearly an hour, when he chanced to glance through the curtained window of the pantry.

The garage was directly in his line of vision.

His jaw sagged as he saw a familiar figure skulking close to the garage entrance. The figure was inserting a key in the locked door. The door swung open swiftly. The man appeared to be hasty, anxious to avoid being seen. But Charles recognized the pale profile that was turned momentarily toward him.

It was Bruce Dixon! The young man who had left his father's house nearly an hour and a half earlier on the pretext that he was going to town!

Charles dropped the ornate knife he was cleaning. He ran instantly toward a side door that was concealed by a wing of the house from a direct view of the garage. He slipped through the protecting bushes that lined the gravel drive. A moment later, he had reached the flank of the garage and was up on a box, trying to peer into the high side window above the level of his eyes.

By straining upward on his toes, Charles was able to look through the glass pane. He saw Bruce working busily with a shining steel instrument. The automobile he was working on was the small car that Arnold Dixon always used when he drove alone. And Bruce was deliberately tampering with the steering mechanism!

The sight unnerved the faithful butler. He gasped, rose higher on his toes to see better and the box under his feet shifted and collapsed with a noisy crash as it broke under the butler's weight.

CHAPTER XIV. THE QUARRY ROAD

INSTANTLY, Charles turned to flee. He dived headlong for the protection of the circling bushes, hoping to slide out of sight before Bruce could rush from the garage and intercept him.

But his hope was in vain. Charles was too old to compete in speed with the long legs of the younger man. He had taken barely three steps when Bruce came racing from the garage and sprang in front of him.

The cry that bubbled on the butler's lips was cut short by a blow from Bruce. Dazed, barely conscious, he was lifted in a strong embrace and carried swiftly back into the garage.

There was no sound from the silent mansion. Bruce waited a second to make sure that his attack on the butler had been unobserved. Then he closed the heavy garage door and the sound of his laughter was ugly. He kicked Charles brutally in the ribs until the slumped servant stirred and groaned.

"You dog!" he snarled. "You cheap snooping rascal! Thought you'd do a little spying, eh? Well, you've just sealed your death warrant!"

Charles was staring in terror. A new car that he had never seen before was parked in the front space of the garage. Directly opposite it was Arnold Dixon's personal car, whose mechanism Bruce had just finished tampering with.

"Where where did that new car come from?" Charles gasped.

"I drove it in here, you fool! It's going to carry both of us, when we leave here presently."

"You're kidnapping me?" Charles whispered.

"I'm doing better than that. I'm killing you!"

It was hard to believe that this was the same young man who had left the mansion by the front door only an hour and a half before. His good-looking face was stiff with rage. His lips were a thin murderous line.

"You're not Dixon's real son!" Charles cried. "I was right! I warned Mr. Timothy! Help! Murder!"

Bruce covered the cry with the pressure of his palm. A blow on the head ended all chance for the butler warning the old man in the silent mansion a few hundred yards away.

DAZED, Charles saw his captor lift the garage telephone from its hook. He tried to shout, but his vocal cords were paralyzed. He heard the young man call his father's phone number the private one in his father's room.

"Hello, dad!" He was deliberately making his voice urgent, almost terrified. "This is Bruce. Dad, you've got to come to me at once! I'm in New York!" His voice dropped to a purring whisper. "I've found out who stole the Cup of Confucius!"

There was a pause, thinly filled by the squeak of his father's voice on the wire. Then again Bruce was speaking racing words, lying words, into the instrument. He gave an address in lower New York.

"There are two of them in the apartment. The crook in the brown beard and a henchman of his. I'm calling from a drug store across the street. And they've got the cup with them, dad I saw them carry it in!"

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"What shall I do?" Arnold Dixon's voice shrilled in far-away excitement.

"Get your car. The small one. Drive as fast as you can to New York. I'll meet you in the drug store on the corner, opposite the address I've mentioned. And dad don't take the regular road. It's too crowded with traffic; the thieves may get away from me before you arrive."

His eyes were cold slits.

"Take the winding road the shortcut that runs past the stone quarries. You can make faster time, that way. I I can't talk any longer. I'll be waiting!"

Bruce hung up the receiver with a click. He heaved the fainting butler into the new car that was waiting with its motor purring softly. A moment later, the garage door opened and the car emerged.

Bruce backed up and made a quick turn. With his eyes alertly on the rear of the mansion, he drove off along a weedy lane that traversed the back of the sprawling estate. It led to a wooden gate that opened on a back road.

The road was unpaved, but Bruce stepped recklessly on the gas and sent the car hurtling along at a furious pace. Presently, he came to an intersection and took the left turn.

The only vehicles that used this dangerous, winding road were the trucks that formerly ran to and from the quarry pits a mile or two onward. Now the pits were deserted, because of the business failure of the contractor who had owned them.

Bruce slowed his reckless speed. He had to or risk the plunge of his car and himself down the steep chasm of a deserted quarry pit. The road made a sharp S at this point as it wound past the enormous excavation in the earth.

THE sweating son of Arnold Dixon drove around the first sharp swing of the S. He brought his car to a halt in the shadow of scraggly scrub oak and pine that lined the steep hillside opposite the quarry excavation.

On the inner side of the curve was a frail wooden guard-rail painted white. It was the only protection against a dizzy plunge to death. Bruce laughed as he saw it.

He roped Charles's ankles and wrists and tossed the moaning butler into the weeds behind the shadow of his halted car.

Charles made no outcry. His head lolled like a dead man's. He had fainted.

That suited Bruce perfectly. Seizing a large tin of oil he ran back along the deserted road to the point where the concealed curve commenced. He spread a thick, wavering line of oil along the hard surface of the highway. Bruce's plan was simple.

A car, racing along at high speed, would be forced to brake for the sharp turn. The oil under the wheels would cause an instant skid. The car, swerving toward the low wooden railing, would be doomed unless the driver, by a desperate wrench of the steering wheel, succeeded in easing it out of its skid.

One such tug and the tampered steering mechanism would snap.

Bruce had one more detail to take care of any unforeseen hitch to his murderous plans. A light rifle lay on the floor of his own hidden car. Stationed out of sight behind the sweep of green leaves, he intended to put a

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bullet into the front tire of his father's automobile and explode it to a flat pancake.

But only in case of emergency. He didn't want any bullet holes showing in the wrecked car. The oil on the road would be an impossible clue for a coroner's jury. Oil might mean carelessness, a leaky truck – almost anything. The jury would find the smashed bodies of Charles Bruce intended to throw the butler's body after the car and Arnold Dixon and return a verdict of accidental death caused by reckless driving.

Such were the grim thoughts of the youthful killer as he reached into his parked car beyond the first curve and picked up the light rifle he had secreted there.

Suddenly, a warning thought struck him. He turned, glanced toward the sheltered spot where the unconscious body of Charles had lain. He uttered a frightened oath as he saw that the trampled grass was empty.

Charles was gone! He was not unconscious, as he had pretended to be. The hasty cords that had bound his ankles and wrists were lying under the bush where the butler had been trussed.

HARDLY had the significance of this disaster flashed on the mind of Bruce when a sound from the road itself made him whirl about. It was the noise of an automobile approaching the curve at high speed.

That distant roar was echoed by a shriller sound; the scream of a man desperate with determination. It came from the wide open throat of Charles. He had leaped suddenly into the road, was racing at top speed toward the bend of the curve, waving his arms high above his head. Screaming a warning

It was remarkable how the old servant could run. Before Bruce had time to squeeze his rifle trigger, Charles had turned the curve and was hidden by the steep shoulder of the slope that formed the outer side of the hairpin.

Bruce raced after him.

A louder sound drowned out the piercing yells of Charles. It was the squeal of tortured brakes. The motor of the approaching car had been cut off. It was sliding with locked wheels to an abrupt stop on the unseen straight-away that preceded that first sharp curve of the quarry highway.

Bruce Dixon dropped panting to one knee. His face peered around the boulder that marked the bend in the road. His rifle leaped to his shoulder.

The speeding car had already jerked to a halt. Broad black tire-marks on the pavement behind it testified to the sure power of those brakes. Only the steering gear was damaged, and the straightness of the approach had given no occasion for Arnold Dixon to twist the weakened wheel.

He was already leaping from the stalled automobile, his face set in frightened lines. Charles was still out in front, waving his arms like a madman.

His voice echoed clearly to the hidden murderer.

"For God's sake, don't get out! He means to kill you! He's got a rifle! It's your own –"

Bruce's finger tightened on the trigger. He knew what Charles was about to yell. That yell would end his hope for profit forever. Charles was trying to cry out: "It's your own son Bruce!"

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But the final words were never uttered. The rifle cracked with a report that echoed among the circling hills. Charles's waving hands jerked high above his head. They remained stiffly upright for a horrible instant, then the butler plunged forward on his face in the road.

ARNOLD DIXON was barely a step away when his faithful servant died. He saw the gaping hole in the back of the prone butler's skull. He stood rooted in horror, his eyes glaring at the turn in the road from whence the murderous bullet had whizzed.

He was an easy target. But the fear of discovery that was in Bruce's heart saved the old man's life.

Bruce didn't dare run the slightest risk of recognition. He could see Arnold Dixon's eyes staring straight toward him and, with an oath, he sprang back out of sight. He jerked a handkerchief from his pocket, knotted it over his nose and the lower part of his face so that only his sullen eyes showed.

Quick as he was, his victim had vanished when again he raised the rifle to his shoulder.

But a loud report revealed the whereabouts of the resolute Arnold Dixon. He was crouched behind his car, firing with an automatic pistol.

The sound of the firing was sure to bring help almost immediately. Again, Bruce changed his plan. He swung the muzzle of the rifle sideways and concentrated on a new target. There was an explosive report from the left front tire of the stalled automobile. The tire blew out with a bang.

Bruce had failed in his primary purpose, but he had preserved his anonymous identity. Charles could never betray him now. Arnold Dixon would have only a handkerchief-swathed face to recall when he tried to remember details of that murderous ambush. And it was now impossible for Arnold Dixon to pursue the death car and try for a glimpse of the license plate.

Bruce fled like a deer. He backed his own car out of concealment far down the road. It began to roar away at top speed.

Arnold Dixon had rounded the bend, was racing on foot past the steep brink of the quarry. He made no effort to shoot the automatic pistol that wavered excitedly in his upflung hand. He was leaning forward, trying to establish the identity of that fleeing car.

The distance was already too great for any one to read the numbers on the smudged license plate. The car rounded a turn. Another and another

Bruce sighed. He slowed to a more sensible pace. The sound of his oath was unpleasant.

He was now safe. He drove steadily toward the city, as though in a hurry to reach a certain destination. Once he glanced at his watch and his eyes lifted toward the pale sheen of the afternoon sun. He still had ample time before the day would dwindle away into darkness.

CHAPTER XV. MILLION-DOLLAR BAIT

THE lights were on in the home of William Timothy. Outside, a cold gale blew with a mournful sound. It ruffled the parted curtains and roared through the bare branches of the elms outside the house of the lawyer.

He shivered and walked to the window. Outside, the darkness was profound. With a clipped exclamation,

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Timothy drew the curtains and faced his visitor.

His visitor was Edith Allen, his niece. She was playing nervously with a tiny lace handkerchief in her hands. The loveliness in her face was deepened, rather than blurred, by the evident terror that filled her.

"What what are we going to do?" she whispered.

Timothy was silent. He rubbed his chin as if doubtful what to say or do.

"Have the police found any trace of the assassin?" Edith breathed.

"None," the lawyer replied, dully. "They combed the roads. The trouble is there is nothing in the way of a clue. All the police have to go on is the dead body of poor Charles and the confused story of Arnold Dixon."

Again he hesitated. He seemed to be afraid to ask the next question.

"You think that Bruce is mixed up in some way with this ghastly plot against his father's life?"

Edith wrung her slim hands, cried, "Bruce isn't a killer! He can't be he can't!"

"Suppose he is. What then?"

"That's why I'm here," Edith replied, drearily. "I've got to know! This doubt, this suspicion is slowly killing me. I have a horrible feeling that the whole thing is coming to a climax to-night! Unless you and I do something to save him, Arnold Dixon will be killed! That's why I drove here at top speed after after Bruce acted so queerly!"

SHE amplified her statement, while her uncle stared at her attentively. Bruce had visited her late that afternoon, just before dusk. His manner was strained. He acted as though he regretted having an appointment to take Edith to dinner, although he himself had suggested it. He explained that it was again necessary for him to break his date.

He made a glib excuse that was completely unconvincing. But the girl accepted it, as she had accepted similar excuses in the past fortnight.

This time, however, she determined to test Bruce's truthfulness. She followed him to the street. He had told her his business was taking him immediately downtown. It was a lie. He got into his car and drove rapidly away uptown!

Edith signaled a taxicab and followed. The chase continued steadily north through the Bronx. It was in the Bronx that Bruce became aware that he was being trailed. His car ducked in and out of streets, finally shook off the pursuing taxicab.

"And you think —" Timothy prompted Edith, slowly.

"I don't think, uncle. I know! He was taking a route that would bring him to only one spot the home of his father in Pelham!"

"Nothing very strange about that," the lawyer said.

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"But there is! I called Arnold Dixon, asked to speak with Bruce. His father said that Bruce wouldn't be home to-night, that he was spending the night in New York. I asked him if there were police on hand to guard the mansion in the event of another attempt against him. He laughed you know how stubborn he is and said no. He said that a loaded gun would be his best protection."

Timothy's jaw set in a sudden hard line. He slipped into his overcoat, donned his hat.

"You wait here," he told Edith. "I'll go over to Shadelawn and see if I can persuade Arnold Dixon to hire guards."

"I'm going with you," Edith asserted.

"Don't be silly!" he snapped. "To-night may turn out to be very dangerous."

Her answer was to walk stubbornly with him toward the doorway.

Timothy hesitated a moment, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said, a touch of fatalism in his voice. "I've warned you of the peril we may run into. I wash my hands of any consequences!"

THE lawyer's car swung into the road. It made the short run to Dixon's mansion in a few minutes. All the lights on the ground floor were extinguished, but there was a light in an upper bedroom Arnold Dixon's room.

Timothy was about to ring the bell when a cold hand on his wrist restrained him. Edith had backed a few paces from him. She was staring around the silent corner of the house. Her expression was one of amazement and fear.

She pointed silently. Timothy gave a faint exclamation under his breath. A figure was attempting to enter a ground-floor window of the mansion. The window was wide open and the man was raising muscular hands to swing himself through the square aperture.

Faint as the lawyer's exclamation was, the figure heard him and whirled suspiciously. His face was a white blur in the darkness, but Edith and her uncle recognized him at once.

It was Bruce Dixon.

While they stared, unable to determine what to do, Bruce approached them.

Edith shrank back as she saw his face at close range. It was twisted with apprehension and fury. The lips were drawn back from the teeth. If ever murder glittered in a man's eyes it was visible in the narrowed glance of Bruce Dixon.

A gun menaced Timothy and his niece.

"Hands up!" Bruce snarled harshly under his breath. "If either of you make a sound, I'll kill you!"

Edith uttered a low moan. "Oh, Bruce Bruce!"

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"Look here," Timothy gasped. "You can't do a thing like this! It's your own father you're plotting against! You can't –"

"Oh, can't I?" Bruce's laughter was like the crunch of frozen pebbles.

His gun forced them to turn, to walk silently past the shadow of the house. He made them proceed to the rear of the grounds. In the darkness, the squat shape of a toolhouse became visible.

Bruce unlocked the door, flung it open.

"In!" he growled. "Both of you!"

Timothy obeyed. But Edith made no move to follow. Instead, she faced her captor with a low, pleading cry that seemed to come from her very heart.

"Bruce! Are you mad? I love you! You love me! Or is it all a lie?"

"Love you?" His voice was like steel. "I'll kill you, if you don't do as you're told!"

Ruthlessly, he sent her spinning forward into the pitch blackness of the tool shed. The door shut, and an instant later the key turned.

BRUCE waited to make sure that his prisoners' cries could not be heard far from the shed.

Satisfied, Bruce hurried through the silent grounds. He retraced his steps toward the open window where he had been surprised by the unexpected arrival of the girl and her uncle.

Everything was exactly as he had left it. The sash was still lifted halfway. The room within was black and utterly silent.

Bruce replaced his gun in his pocket, took something else out. It was a blackjack. Bruce didn't anticipate further trouble on the ground floor of the house; but if trouble came, he was prepared to deal with it silently. He wanted no betraying noise to alarm the old man in the lighted bedroom upstairs.

Bruce climbed through the window. The rug masked the sound of his advancing feet. He began to move toward the door that led to the corridor and so to the floor above.

Halfway to the door, he stopped. His sharp ears had heard a faint creak. It came from a corner of the room where the tall shape of a highboy was barely visible in the darkness.

A tiny funnel of light shot from a flash in Bruce's left hand toward the corner of the room. It lighted up the dark outline of a figure that had stepped from behind the highboy. The figure moved slowly forward along the beam of the brilliant torch.

For an instant, Bruce quailed. There was something unreal, eerie about the slow, silent approach of that black-cloaked figure with the flaming, deep set eyes.

"The Shadow!" Bruce gasped.

The sound of his own voice restored his shaken courage. He leaped forward, grappled with The Shadow.

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A STRANGE duel followed a furious battle between blackjack and clubbed gun. For The Shadow made no effort to fire. He merely used his weapon as a parry to ward off the furious blows that rained at his skull from the whizzing blackjack.

The electric torch had fallen to the floor. Its beam still sent a narrow patch of radiance across the room.

The feet of the two antagonists made no sound on the soft rug. The Shadow kept giving ground, foot after foot. Once, he had a good chance to smash Bruce's skull with a quick blow of his gun butt. But he contented him with that same peculiar defensiveness a slow retreat.

He was almost at the open square of the window when the chance came for which he had been watching. The Shadow swerved. His free hand darted like lightning to the hollow of the young man's collar bone. He dropped his gun and clamped the other black-gloved hand on Bruce's forearm.

It was perfect jujutsu, but The Shadow did not apply pressure enough to cause his foe to scream with agony. He merely threw Bruce backward so that he sprawled full length on the soft rug.

The Shadow immediately bent and recovered his own dropped gun. As he did so, he made an intentionally awkward movement. A scrap of paper fell from his pocket to the floor. The Shadow took no apparent notice of his loss.

With a gasp of simulated terror, he escaped through the window. It was the only cry he had uttered during the whole strange combat and he took care to keep it low-toned.

By the time Bruce reached the window, The Shadow had fled into the darkness of the grounds.

Arnold Dixon's son turned away with a snarl of triumph. He had beaten The Shadow at his own game. He was free now to press his criminal plan to completion. He was certain that his father had heard nothing of the silent fight down here on the ground floor.

But as he turned to hurry to the staircase, he saw the scrap of paper that had fallen from The Shadow's pocket. It lay in the light of the electric torch, crumpled and white. Bruce's eyes gleamed as he saw it.

He picked it up, smoothed it with trembling fingers. It seemed to be the identical paper that The Shadow had obtained when Paul Rodney dropped it in the house of the dead Snaper and Hooley.

Bruce read the awkward printing of the first two lines with eager attention. He didn't know it, but the lines were a perfect reproduction of the original; a photostatic copy:

When the Indian is high follow his nose and reach under

It wasn't the cryptic sentence that made Bruce's eyes gleam. It was the typewritten paragraph that followed:

Memo: The "Indian" is a rock formation at the base of the cliff below the house that was burned. It is only "high" when the low tide exposes it. By sighting in a straight line from the nose, a spot is reached on the surface of the water that covers the entrance to a submerged tunnel leading inside the cliff itself. Reaching under at this exact spot will disclose the existence of the tunnel. It must logically lead to the place where the stolen Cup of Confucius is buried.

Bruce read the typed memo with a hissing intake of his breath. He darted to the open window and sprang out. His form disappeared in the blackness outside.

It was exactly what The Shadow had wanted him to do. Bruce had swallowed the bait and was off to retrieve for himself the million-dollar treasure from the ancient past of China.

Crouched close to the ground, The Shadow watched the panting young man flee.

CHAPTER XVI. CHANGED ORDERS

A MAN was crying out bitter words in the lighted top-floor room of the Dixon mansion. The man was Arnold Dixon himself. He sat bound and helpless in a chair, glaring at two other men who sat a few feet away from him, guns in their alert hands.

One of these silent captors was Clyde Burke, of the Classic, famous New York reporter and a loyal agent of The Shadow. His companion was Harry Vincent, another agent, who was also there by orders received over the telephone from Burbank. It was those orders that had resulted in the tying up of the millionaire by these resolute intruders.

Clyde and Vincent had been told to guard Arnold Dixon and prevent, by whatever means they thought necessary, his leaving the house. They were to stay with him, their guns ready to repel an attack, until they received orders from The Shadow.

"You're liars!" Arnold Dixon cried. "You're not trying to help me. You're here to rob me, to kill me!"

"You're mistaken, Mr. Dixon," Harry Vincent told him, curtly. "We're neither thieves nor murderers. We're here at the orders of a man you have every reason to thank for being alive and unharmed at this very minute!"

"Who?" Dixon demanded.

"The Shadow!"

Dixon's eyes bulged. He seemed struck with awe. He started to reply, and stopped short.

The reason was the quick palm of Harry Vincent that flung itself across the millionaire's mouth, stifling his words. Into the trembling millionaire's ear he whispered a swift command:

"Quiet! Not a sound, if you value your life!"

Clyde Burke had turned so that he was watching the door of the chamber. At a sign from Vincent he backed noiselessly away, so that the opening door would hide any trace of himself or Vincent from whoever was creeping up the stairs of the old mansion.

It was obvious to both agents of The Shadow that some one was creeping up the staircase outside.

Arnold Dixon remained silent in his chair, his eyes watching the white knob of the door.

Slowly, the knob began to turn. The door moved inch by inch. It was opening!

A face peered cautiously. Dixon cried out in hoarse terror as he saw a clipped brown beard and hard, pinpoint eyes. It was Paul Rodney.

"QUIET!" Rodney snarled. "One more yelp like that and you get it for keeps, old man!"

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His foxy glance convinced him that except for the trussed Dixon in the chair, the room was empty. He was unable to see Harry Vincent and Clyde Burke, hidden by the barrier of the open door. Even had he peered past it, the two agents of The Shadow would still have been invisible, for they had backed into the opening of a deep closet.

Rodney laughed suddenly. "Okay, Squint. Come on in! Somebody's been here ahead of us. Did us a favor by tying the old boy up. They must have heard us sneaking in the window downstairs and scrambled."

Squint crept into the room. His beady eyes wrinkled with pleasure.

"How about a little torture stuff, first?"

"That's out! Torture is all you're interested in, you little devil!"

It was Dixon who betrayed the hidden agents of The Shadow. He didn't mean to. He did it unconsciously by the fixed glare of his frightened eyes. Squint whirled and uttered a quick yell of warning.

Both crooks fired at the open closet.

There came answering bullets that made the two thugs skip backward hastily out of range. Vincent and Burke had thrown themselves prudently to the closet floor as Squint yelled.

They sprang out now, determined to save Arnold Dixon from death. Their very boldness turned the tide of battle. Rodney, not knowing how many enemies he had to deal with, and worried by the thought that the house might be surrounded by police, backed swiftly toward the door, his gun jetting scarlet.

Squint had already beaten his boss to safety. But Rodney lingered a moment in the doorway, braving the spurt of lead that boomed from Vincent's gun and splintered the casing all about him.

Vincent's poor aim was due to his jerky movements. He was leaping away from the trussed millionaire in the chair, hoping to draw Rodney's fire and save the life of the hapless man.

Burke darted across the room and sent the chair toppling backward to the door. His action was all that kept Dixon from receiving a bullet squarely in the forehead.

Rodney's last shot was timed with a quick motion of his free hand to his pocket. His arm jerked and a small object fell to the floor and exploded. There was no sound except a glassy tinkle. Instantly, streamers of white vapor shot into the air. It spread in a dense fog, obscured the crook in the doorway.

Tear gas!

COUGHING, Vincent crept on hands and knees to the door. His outflung arms met only vacant air. Rodney had fled under cover of his gas barrage. His feet thundered down the staircase. Vincent made no effort to follow him, although his whole body burned with the grim desire to overtake and capture Rodney and his ugly little henchman.

Duty to the stern commands of The Shadow kept Vincent in that room. He could not leave the room until the orders were changed. So he staggered to his feet and helped Burke throw open the window and dissipate the thick, choking fumes.

The fallen Dixon was moaning faintly in his overturned chair.

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"Are you hurt?" Clyde Burke cried.

"No, no! Lift me up. My arm's doubled under me. I'm afraid it's broken!"

The two agents of The Shadow righted the chair with a quick heave between them. Their faces were grim.

Clyde and Harry reloaded their guns. The first attack had been beaten off, but there might be another.

DOWN in the tangled shrubbery of the grounds, Squint and Rodney fled toward the road. Squint, the faster of the two, was in the lead. It was he who swerved with a startled cry.

He saw the same black-cloaked figure that Bruce Dixon had seen earlier. It rose like an ascending wraith from the dark surface of the ground.

Squint dodged as black-gloved hands reached for his throat. Gasping, he tripped over an unseen root and plunged heavily on his face.

His mishap gave The Shadow time to deal with the more resolute Rodney. He closed with the snarling killer and disarmed him with a quick jerk of his wrist and hand. The gun flew off in a tangent and vanished.

Rodney fought furiously, and for an instant seemed to be conquering The Shadow by the very fury of his fists. The Shadow gave ground, seemed to falter. But it was only a momentary weakness, and it changed to strength in the twinkling of an eye.

The Shadow had seen Squint rising to his feet. He threw Rodney aside with a tremendous shove and whirled to meet this new menace.

Squint was no match at all for The Shadow. He screamed as his arm bone scraped in the socket of his shoulder. The gun he had tried to fire slipped from his pain-loosened fingers. Moaning, he reeled backward, intent only on getting away from this black-robed wraith that had risen to block his escape.

The Shadow wanted Squint to flee. It left him free to deal with Rodney, who was again charging like a clumsy bear. The same thing that had happened when The Shadow fought his battle with Bruce Dixon was now repeated. He began to fight defensively, as if he had lost heart.

Rodney thought he had The Shadow at last. But The Shadow, slipping suddenly away, ran like a deer in a direction opposite to that taken by Squint.

As he ran, a paper fluttered to the ground.

Paul Rodney, who had eyes like a cat, saw the paper fall and abandoned his plan to pursue his antagonist. He reached, scooped up the paper. Hastily scratching a match, he read its contents.

Laughter issued from his throat. He was staring at an exact duplicate of the paper that Bruce Dixon had found.

RODNEY whirled, followed the path Squint had taken. It took him to a gate in the stone wall. He darted through, raced toward the car where Squint was already behind the wheel. The car's headlights were dark, but the engine was throbbing harshly under the hood.

"You rat!" Rodney cried, fiercely. "Were you going to scam and leave me here?"

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"Hell, no!" Squint whispered. "I wanted to be all set for the get-away. Get in, quick! We're licked if we don't scam in a hurry!"

"Licked nothing," Rodney purred. "I got something to show you, as soon as we're on our way. Drive straight for the Carruthers house that burned-down dump where we croaked Snaper and Hooley."

"Why there? That's a devil of a place to hide out."

"It is? It's the best place in the world to find the Cup of Confucius! The Shadow made a bad mistake to-night. He tipped his hand!"

While the car rocked along, Rodney held a scrap of paper before Squint's eyes so the ugly little chauffeur could read it.

The car increased its speed. The whine of the rubber tires on the dark highway was like an ominous croon of death.

UPSTAIRS in the Dixon mansion there was tense quiet. Arnold Dixon's hands were no longer bound. He trusted Harry Vincent and Clyde Burke now. His beseeching eyes seemed to implore them not to leave him.

Vincent watched the square outline of the open window. Clyde kept his attention riveted on the door. They were armed and ready. They had heard sounds of a furious fight taking place somewhere below in the estate.

It might mean a renewed attack from the staircase or from the sheer surface of the ivy-covered wall. Vincent knew that a determined man could climb that wall, if he were desperate enough. He gave it tense, undivided attention.

The stone that flew without warning through the open window almost struck Vincent's hunched shoulder. It landed with a thump on the floor, rebounded against the wall.

Vincent pounced on the object before he saw clearly what it was. His first thought was that it might be a bomb. But it was a plain, jagged stone. A sheet of paper was wrapped about it, tied securely in place with a tight loop of cord.

Harry Vincent ripped the cord loose, spread the paper flat under his eager eyes. He uttered a low exclamation.

The paper contained a hasty scrawl in a hand that was familiar to Harry. There was no doubt in his mind but that The Shadow had written this message.

The note was terse. Vincent frowned, but Clyde Burke's eyes gleamed when he read it:

Vincent remain with Arnold Dixon. Do not leave under any circumstance. Burke report immediately to burned house on shore road. Signal sparrow chirp. Speed.

Clyde Burke whirled, his face aglow with delight. Vincent showed no sign of the disappointment that filled him. He merely extended his hand, said "Good luck!" and watched Clyde race from the room. He heard Clyde depart on the motor cycle on which he had come out from New York.

CHAPTER XVII. THE INDIAN'S NOSE

IT was pitch dark in the tool shed where Bruce had so callously thrust William Timothy and his niece. The lawyer couldn't see Edith Allen, but the sound of her shrill scream made his ears tingle.

"Quiet!" he told Edith. "Screaming won't help us get out. I have the means of escaping from here in less than five minutes!"

His sharp whisper was confident. Edith became silent. In the darkness, she could hear the scratch of a match. Light flared. Timothy was holding the match high over his head. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction when he saw the vertical wire of an electric droplight.

There was a click and the windowless prison of the tool shed became bright with illumination.

"Search the shelves," Edith cried, eagerly. "There must be a chisel, or something."

"A chisel won't help a bit," Timothy replied, evenly. "I know the strength of that door and the strength of the lock, too."

His smile deepened.

"Luckily, I was suspicious about what we might run into here to-night. I came prepared for an emergency."

As he spoke he fished a circlet of keys from his pocket. They were skeleton keys. He knelt at the keyhole of the door and began to manipulate them with trembling fingers. Then he left the door abruptly and began to rummage along the shelves at the back of the shack. He was looking for a length of stout cord and he found a piece that satisfied him.

"Cord?" Edith inquired in a puzzled tone. "What's that for?"

"For you, my dear," the lawyer cried, softly and sprang at her.

TIMOTHY was gentle as possible, but Edith was unable to elude the firm grasp that caught her and held her helpless. The cords were tied swiftly, in spite of her furious efforts. He laid her on the floor, surveyed her with a panting apology.

"I'm sorry," he muttered in a shamefaced tone. "It's for your own good, Edith. This is the safest place you can be to-night, and I mean for you to stay here."

"You're afraid to trust me," she sobbed. "You think I'm still in love with Bruce!"

He nodded. His hands shook. But there was no relenting in his steady eyes.

"It will take all my nerve and energy to protect myself," he muttered. "I can't be bothered with the presence of a woman."

He sprang back to the door. One of his skeleton keys had really fitted the lock, although Edith had been unaware of it at the time. Timothy threw open the door, quickly slipped into the darkness.

He ran noiselessly toward the mansion. As he darted past the side wing, he glanced warily up. The house

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itself was in darkness except for two lighted rooms. One was on the upper story: the bedroom of Arnold Dixon. The second lighted room was on the ground floor.

The lawyer approached this latter spot. The frame of the window showed unmistakable signs of a forced entry. The rug on the floor looked rumpled and scuffed as if a furious fight had taken place within at some recent moment. Yet there was no sign of a human being lurking within.

Timothy crouched back from the window, wondering uneasily what he ought to do. As he stood there, half turned to protect himself from a sudden attack at his rear, his startled glance saw a tiny square of white paper lying on the grass. It was visible because of the slanting rays of light that issued from the window.

Bending swiftly, the lawyer snatched it. He read the note on it with incredulous amazement. It was the same bait that The Shadow had left with Bruce Dixon. Bruce had dropped it as he sprang swiftly from the room after his rather easy "victory" over The Shadow.

The lawyer realized the significance of his find as quickly as Bruce had before him. It was obvious that some one just who, the worried lawyer found it impossible to decide had unearthed the secret hiding place of the missing Cup of Confucius.

The typed memo under the cryptic lines above was proof of that. And the memo made the whereabouts of the cup ridiculously clear. All that was needed now was resolute determination, and speed.

WILLIAM TIMOTHY hastened away through the darkness, unmindful of the painful limp that came from the partly cured arthritis in his foot.

He found his car where he had left it and drove swiftly along the deserted road that led to the blackened ruin of the old Carruthers house. He drove past it and parked his car in a branching lane that cut inward through pine and spruce, away from the direction of the near-by Sound.

When Timothy returned to the Carruthers property, he was on foot and his movements were cautious. The house had been almost completely obliterated by the roaring flames that had consumed it. The only remnants were a few charred ends of beams that protruded from blackened foundation walls.

Timothy's watchful eyes gleamed as he saw a patch of blackness on the earth midway between the ruin and himself. The black patch had seemed to move slightly. It was almost the exact size of a crouching man a man who might be wearing a dark, concealing cloak and a wide-brimmed slouch hat drawn low over burning eyes and a hawklike nose.

The Shadow!

Timothy drew his gun, a small glittering automatic. The patch was no longer moving. He circled cautiously, approached from the rear. Suddenly, he gasped. The thing had been a trick of Timothy's overwrought imagination.

Starlight had made that patch of blackness seem to move. It was merely a small area of charred ground where a blazing timber had fallen and burned away the grass to a blackened bald spot.

Chuckling with relief, Timothy circled the ruin and approached the brow of the cliff that overlooked Long Island Sound. He descended the stone steps cut in the face of the cliff.

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A FEW moments after the lawyer had vanished, there was a faint pop-pop from down the road. A motor cycle approached, its motor muffled. Clyde Burke dismounted hastily, wheeled the machine out of sight. He hurried to the ruin of the Carruthers house.

He pursed his lips. The sound of a chirping sparrow filled the smoky air with brief clarity.

It was answered from the foundations of the ruined house. A black-gloved hand beckoned. Calm lips issued orders. Clyde listened attentively to the words.

When The Shadow had finished, Clyde was in complete knowledge of what was required of him. He nodded to show that he understood. There was utter amazement on his face. The Shadow had told him things that seemed completely incredible. But knowing The Shadow's methods, the absolute logic of his thoughts and actions, Clyde was ready to obey him.

The two hurried to the brow of the cliff and descended the stone steps to the platform at the water's edge. There was no sign of William Timothy. The Shadow's gloved hand pointed to the cliff wall two or three feet above the tide mark where the restless waters of the Sound lapped the foot of the rocky precipice.

Exposed by the low tide was a perfect replica of an Indian's head. The freak rock formation was in profile and the face pointed away from the float on which Clyde and The Shadow stood.

The Shadow held a length of rope in his hand. The end was directly over the bold outline of the Indian's nose. Clutching the loose end of the rope, Clyde lowered himself into the water and swam slowly away. The rope straightened. It touched the black surface of the water a dozen feet to the left of the platform.

Clyde's hand dipped beneath the surface at this exact point. His groping fingers felt no rock. There was a hole in the cliff below the water. It was the entrance to a submerged tunnel.

Clyde drew in a long breath of air. He dived. Relying implicitly upon the instructions that The Shadow had given him, he swam through a long gallery filled completely with salt water from floor to roof.

THE floor of the tunnel swerved sharply upward and The Shadow's agent emerged gasping into air-filled darkness. He had been given a tiny flashlight and he sent its beam into the gloom. The gallery continued upward for a few yards farther. Its stone floor was dry.

There were muddy footprints, showing that some one had preceded Clyde into this queer crypt within the cliff. Perhaps more than one, if The Shadow's warning had been correct. Other footmarks had evaporated. Only Timothy's still showed.

Clyde was very careful with his tiny light, as he moved onward. He descended a suddenly steeper slope to what looked like a natural doorway in the rock tunnel. The round hole was open, but the means for closing it was close at hand.

A rounded boulder was propped against the wall, midway down the slant. Beside it rested a rusted crowbar.

Both boulder and crowbar were relics of an earlier day of criminal activity. This cliff and the house above it had been the headquarters of a powerful gang of rumrunners. The Shadow had uncovered the story from backfiles of newspapers, after he had penetrated to the secret of the underground cave.

It had once contained barrel upon barrel of contraband liquor. Now it hid men who were feverishly searching for a million-dollar cup a priceless relic from the ancient civilization of China.

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With the crowbar, Clyde pried the boulder loose. The incline took care of the task of shifting it. It rolled downward with a faint rumble on the smooth floor of the slanting tunnel. It struck the opening in the rock and wedged itself there. No man within could budge it without tools.

The exit of the lawyer and those who had preceded him into that underground labyrinth was now definitely closed. There was another entrance, but only The Shadow knew of it. He alone had explored every nook and cranny, on a previous visit.

The last act of the drama was now about to commence.

Clyde again filled his lungs, dived into the water-filled gallery and swam back to the dark ripple of the Sound.

He followed The Shadow up the cliff steps to the brink of the sheer precipice. The two disappeared into the blackened ruins of the foundation walls where the Carruthers house had once stood.

For an instant, their creeping figures were dimly visible. Then there was no movement at all. Both men had vanished.

CHAPTER XVIII. EDITH TAKES A HAND

EDITH ALLEN lay stretched on the floor of the tool shed, where her uncle had left her bound hand and foot.

She was working tenaciously to free her hands from the loops of twine that fettered them. In this activity, she had more than a mere forlorn hope. When her uncle had jumped at her, she had a second's warning of his intent by the look in his eyes.

Wisely, she had made no effort to struggle. But she held her hands together in such a way that the wrists overlapped slightly. Timothy had not noticed the girl's stratagem. But the trick had given her a precious fraction of an inch in which to slide her wrists back and forth.

She had slim, supple wrists, muscular from golf and tennis. The cords bit deeply into her flesh as she worked to loosen them. She gritted her teeth and tried to forget the pain. Already, one of her wrists was almost free. In another moment, she gave a sobbing cry. The cord fell to the floor. Bending, she untied her ankles with scarcely a pause.

She had a definite plan of escape in mind. Unlike her uncle, she had had ample time, while she lay straining on the floor, to notice the formation of the tool shack. The front and sides were a formidable obstacle to freedom. But the rear was a different story. Behind the shelves that lined the rear wall, the planking was very thin.

She concentrated her efforts on a single plank. It was rotted by rain and moisture, and field mice had gnawed part of the crumbling wood away. Edith hooked her fingers into the tiny aperture and tried to rip the board away. But the task was too much for her strength.

She got to her feet, ran desperate eyes along the length of the shelves. Suddenly, she saw the glint of a hammer-head. She seized the implement and went grimly back to her task.

It took several hard blows before she was able to split the crumbling plank. It was thin enough to split in several places. She was able now to rip it out, piece by piece.

THE CUP OF CONFUCIUS

A nail gashed a furrow in the flesh of her neck as she crawled through, but she paid no attention to the sharp pain.

She ran toward the home of Arnold Dixon. The thought of the old man's peril was like a draft of cold water. It steadied her pounding heart.

LIKE her uncle, the first thing Edith noticed was the open window on the ground floor of the silent mansion. But approaching it, she made an additional discovery. A gun lay in a patch of trampled grass. She picked it up, examined it, found that it was loaded.

Clutching it with a repressed sob of determination, Edith climbed swiftly through the open window and crept like a noiseless ghost up the broad staircase of the mansion.

So gently did she ascend that she reached the upper floor without disclosing her presence to whoever was in the lighted room at the end of the corridor. The door was partly open, but it was impossible for the girl to see who was within.

That some one was inside with Arnold Dixon, she was certain. For she could hear the faint groaning voice of the millionaire, and another voice she had never heard before.

A cautious glance at the crack of the door showed her the profile of a stranger. He was whispering grimly to Dixon. But Edith had no knowledge that this was Harry Vincent, an agent of The Shadow. She didn't realize that Harry's presence here was to defend Dixon from his own foolhardy impulses.

Edith sprang through the doorway without warning. She had the drop on Vincent before he was aware there was any one inside the house except himself and his frightened host.

"Drop your gun!" Edith cried. "If you move an eyelash, I'll shoot to kill!"

She meant it. Her taut eyes warned Vincent instantly that a move meant death. He did the only thing possible. The gun slid from his fingers and thumped to the floor.

"Back up!" Edith commanded. "Against the rear wall! Turn your face to the wall! Palms flat!"

Dixon cried hoarsely from his chair: "Edith! Don't be a fool! This man is not a crook! He's here to help me!"

The girl paid no attention. Dixon, she thought, was merely repeating something the desperado had taught him under pain of death if he refused.

Also, her eyes saw something that made them harden like ice. She moved quickly toward the bureau where a small stone lay, partly covering a piece of paper. Her gun was ready to kill Vincent, if he changed his helpless pose against the rear wall of the room. She snatched the note, backed toward the open doorway.

Holding the paper over the barrel of her gun with a free hand, Edith was able to read it with a lightning glance. It was the same note that The Shadow had hurled from the ground through the open window, ordering Clyde Burke to join him at the fire-blackened ruin of the Carruthers house.

Edith uttered a clipped cry of comprehension. She darted swiftly from the room.

"Stop!" Harry cried. "Don't go! You'll be killed!"

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Arnold Dixon added his shrill cry to the warning of Vincent. Harry ran to the hallway, but Edith was already on the floor below, racing away with every atom of speed in her lithe, young legs.

Had Vincent been free to rush from the house and pursue the girl through the grounds, he might easily have caught her. But he dared not stir a step outside. The Shadow had ordered him to remain on duty at the side of the threatened millionaire.

"Stop her, before it's too late!" Dixon shrieked.

Vincent shook his head.

"It's too late already," he murmured, quietly. "Her only help now is the brain and strength of The Shadow."

THE SHADOW, at this moment, was no longer on the surface of the ground.

He had lifted a small link of copper imbedded in the stone of a square flag in the center of the cellar ruins of the Carruthers house. The stone had lifted slowly, ponderously. Through the opening descended The Shadow, followed by the agile body of Clyde Burke.

The Shadow used his tiny flashlight sparingly. When it shone, it was a mere flicker of light. These tiny firefly glints were all the guidance The Shadow needed on his silent journey through twisting underground corridors that led to the hollowed-out chambers in the heart of the cliff.

The Shadow had been through these passages before. He knew exactly what lay ahead. He knew, also, the exact whereabouts of the Cup of Confucius. The whisper of his grim laughter echoed softly from the rocky walls.

Occasionally, a side passage radiated off from the main corridor. Some of these passages were mere offshoots, smaller caves filled with dust and musty odors. But from one of them a faint groan sounded, as The Shadow's light winked briefly. The groan was barely audible, but The Shadow heard it and motioned to Clyde to follow him.

It was with difficulty that Clyde repressed a cry, as he saw the gagged-and-bound figure. The Shadow's hand grasped Clyde's in a warning gesture. Clyde clamped his lips together and made no sound. He followed The Shadow back to the ever-descending slope of the winding passage.

Another opening appeared on the left. It was similar to the one in which the gagged figure had lain. But there was no human being in it. It had evidently been used as a storeroom by the bootleg gang of the past. Its contents were grimly ominous. Boxes were piled up in a narrow tier along the cobwebbed wall. The lid was off one of them.

Dynamite sticks! Packed loosely in a protecting matrix of slightly damp sawdust.

Something equally dangerous more so, in fact was visible in other cases across the damp floor of the dungeon. The calm finger of The Shadow pointed; his faint whisper breathed at Clyde's ear.

"Mercury fulminate of mercury!" Clyde repeated, his eyes round with wonder.

He knew the explosive force imprisoned in those innocent little objects in the open case. They were detonating caps. Made of sensitive chemical gelatin, they would explode from the tiniest impact. A single one in the hands of a careless man could transform him instantly into bloody tatters of flesh and rags.

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CLYDE'S hair prickled on his scalp, as The Shadow drew him out of the storeroom and led him silently onward into the rocky heart of the cliff.

The corridor was widening, spreading into a huge underground cave. In size, the place was enormous. But the size was not readily apparent because of the odd way in which the cave was broken up. Huge stalactites like enormous stone icicles hung from the damp roof of the chamber. They had been formed by the slow drip for centuries of water that had seeped through the rock.

Each drop left its deposit of carbonate of lime. The result was these crusted monsters of stone hanging like pointed pillars from the roof, dividing the cave into a network of smaller chambers.

Clyde Burke stood perfectly still. The finger of The Shadow was pointing. A light glowed in the midst of this underground maze. To the sound of dripping water was added still other sounds the clink of a pickax, the rough metallic scrape of a shovel.

Two men were digging furiously at a spot in the floor where the earth looked as though it had been recently disturbed.

The man with the shovel lifted his sweating face. It was a mean, ratlike countenance. Beside him, the man with the pickax swore fiercely. In the lantern light, Clyde caught a glimpse of a pointed brown beard and ruthless pinpoint eyes.

The underground diggers were Paul Rodney and his evil little henchman, Squint.

CHAPTER XIX. THE END OF THE RIDDLE

"IT'S no use," Rodney snarled. "Get up out of that hole. We're wasting time!"

"We've only dug about three feet," Squint protested. "The cup may be buried deeper than we thought."

The Shadow and Clyde Burke watched the crooked pair. The Shadow had drawn his agent into a tiny grotto of the cave wall, formed by the rough juncture of two huge stalactites. Neither Rodney nor Squint were aware that they were under surveillance.

"The cup can't be buried any deeper," Rodney growled. "It's been stolen already! I was afraid of this, when I saw how soft the earth was. Somebody has been here ahead of us!"

"The Shadow!" Squint muttered.

Rodney's bearded face seemed to twitch under the impact of sudden murderous rage.

"That damned paper of his! It must have been a deliberate plant! He found the cup, long ago! He meant us to read that note and come here. It might be a trap!"

His arm gestured fiercely.

"Quick! Get back to that water tunnel! See if the exit is still open! I remember now there was a boulder that might be Quick!"

Squint turned, raced off through the cave. Rodney's gun whipped into his hand. He turned, his glance

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searching the darkness beyond the lantern's glow with the stare of a cornered animal. He could see neither The Shadow nor Clyde. But by some evil intuition, he remained facing the tiny grotto in which they were hidden, as if he were dimly aware that peril might lurk in that particular spot.

It would have been easy to shoot him where he stood, but The Shadow had other plans. He intended to take full advantage of the play of evil against evil in this cliff cavern. He knew now the various forces involved against one another and the amazing truth back of it all.

The sound of stumbling footsteps put an end to the grim tableau. Squint came racing back from his inspection of the tide tunnel.

"It's blocked!" he shrieked. "There's a big rock jammed tight in the hole we came through! There's no way to get out!"

"I thought so," Rodney growled. "Trapped!"

Squint's cry was tremulous with terror. "How how are we gonna get out? Maybe the water will come in, fill the whole damned place like an underground lake!"

"Shut up! Stop that yelling! I've got to think."

A voice behind the rigid pair interrupted with cold, slow menace.

"Hands up, you cheap rats!"

THE evil pair whirled, saw the level gun. It was Bruce Dixon. His face was black with murder. He stood motionless at the edge of a dank gallery, from which he had emerged.

Rodney dropped his weapon. He knew death when he saw it. But Squint, noticing that Bruce's attention was centered almost wholly on the brown-bearded crook, sprang sideways and sent a treacherous bullet flaming toward their captor.

The bullet missed. The slug struck rock with a sullen thwack. The cave was still roaring with sound when Squint toppled slowly forward. Bruce had shot him grimly through the middle of the forehead. Squint was dead before his wizened body struck the ground.

"How about it, Rodney?" Bruce jeered. "Want a little dose of the same medicine?"

Bruce moved slowly forward, his weapon ready for the second kill. But Rodney made no hostile move. For some queer reason, the appearance of Bruce Dixon had filled him with rage, rather than terror. His words carried their own explanation to the ears of The Shadow.

"So this is your game, you double-crossing skunk! I put you in Dixon's house, fix everything so you can pose as the old guy's son and clean up his dough and I get this!"

Bruce laughed. The sound of it was freezing, utterly merciless.

"Talk some more," he jeered. "You're not a smart guy. You're a fool! You still don't know what it's all about! I'm handing you a lead pill, same as Squint got, right through the skull!"

Rodney's nerve left him. He began to plead.

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"A sniveler!" Bruce sneered. "Did you think I came here to find that damned Cup of Confucius? I've got a bigger stake than that I'm after every penny of Arnold Dixon's fortune! All I've got to do is to blast you to death and two more fools like you and then I'm sitting pretty!"

"Two more?" Rodney faltered.

"You wouldn't understand."

Bruce's finger was beginning to squeeze ominously against the trigger, when Paul Rodney gave a shout of wild joy. He was glaring with glazed eyes past the shoulder of his executioner. He seemed to be watching some one in the darkness behind Bruce.

"Kill him!" Rodney screamed. "Let that rat have it!"

But Bruce merely laughed.

"That's an old trick! It won't do you a damned bit of –"

A STREAK of scarlet jetted from the rocky cave behind Bruce. A bullet smashed into his back. He went down as if struck by lightning and lay there on his face without moving, badly wounded.

Rodney said, hoarsely: "Nice shooting, Timothy!" and picked up his dropped gun.

Arnold Dixon's lawyer advanced slowly into the circle of yellow radiance cast by the lantern. He moved awkwardly because of the arthritis in his left foot. But that was the only familiar sign that linked this cold killer with the peaceful lawyer that Arnold Dixon knew and trusted. His usual timid expression had peeled away like a mask. Even his voice was different.

"A fine mess you've made of things, you fool!"

"I obeyed every order you ever gave me," Rodney muttered. "It's not my fault if Bruce went haywire. You should have offered him a bigger cut. Then maybe he wouldn't have tried to double-cross us and grab everything."

"He grabs nothing," Timothy snarled. "He's dead! So will you be dead if you don't remember I'm running this show and do as you're told!"

"You don't have to get tough with me! I've been head man of all your rackets too long, for you not to trust me."

"Maybe," Timothy snapped. "What happened to The Shadow? Are you sure he didn't follow you here?"

"I don't know."

"All right; we'll search the cave. Forget about drowning. The tide doesn't rise that high. I know, because I studied the tidal marks. We've got to find The Shadow! He's got to be killed or I don't get my fingers on Arnold Dixon's millions!"

"Drop those guns both of you!" Clyde Burke ordered.

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CLYDE had advanced with a noiseless bound from his vaulted hiding place. Beside him was a more ominous figure, a black-cloaked specter that seemed to tower above the tense Clyde. Burning eyes and a beaked nose were visible in the yellow light of the lantern.

"The Shadow!" Timothy gasped.

The robed figure made no answer. There was death waiting in the gloved fingers that rested so lightly on the triggers and William Timothy knew it.

He began to babble terrified words, a protestation of his innocence. But Clyde Burke cut him short with a brief sentence.

"Don't lie, you hypocrite! You betrayed yourself very neatly during the little talk you've just had with Rodney your own henchman working under your criminal orders!"

The Shadow uttered a whisper of sibilant laughter. He began to glide slowly forward, and at his side Clyde Burke advanced, too.

Without warning, the cavern behind them echoed with a piercing scream. It was a woman's cry, bubbling with terror. It filled every nook and cranny of the underground cave with spine-tingling abruptness.

Clyde Burke whirled instinctively. He saw a girl bending over a motionless huddle on the floor. The huddle was Bruce Dixon. The girl was Edith Allen.

Clyde had barely recognized her when he felt a powerful fist strike him between his shoulder blades. The blow knocked him from his feet. As he fell he heard the whistling rip of a bullet a scant inch above his head. Timothy had fired with the speed of desperation.

But The Shadow's action had been faster still. He had seen the guns of Rodney and Timothy jerk level. A sidelong blow sent his agent plunging head-first out of the path of death. His other gun took care of Rodney.

A scarlet dot appeared just below Rodney's left eye. He fell forward, and the weight of his dead body struck The Shadow's knee and knocked him off balance.

In that second, Timothy recovered from his futile shot at Clyde. The muzzle of the crooked lawyer's gun pointed straight at The Shadow's throat. But even as the gun spat, there was a queer, convulsive, jerk of Timothy's wrist. The bullet nicked the ear lobe of The Shadow, instead of ripping his jugular apart.

Timothy stared dully, as though puzzled by his miss. Blood gushed from his own throat. He died before he knew what had happened. He was unaware of Clyde, hunched fiercely on his knees, a curl of smoke eddying upward from the hot barrel of his weapon. Clyde had returned the swift favor The Shadow had done for him.

EDITH was still on her knees beside the figure of Bruce Dixon. She was moaning, wringing her hands. Apparently she hadn't heard the roaring pistols a few feet away.

The Shadow vanished into darkness. He followed the passage that led to a chamber where a mysterious, trussed figure had been lying, when Clyde and The Shadow had first made their cautious descent from above.

When The Shadow returned, he was not alone. A figure stumbled at his side. The two hurried straight to the spot where Edith Allen was staring at the limp body of Bruce Dixon.

Edith seemed carved from stone. But as The Shadow helped his faltering companion forward, the grief that held Edith speechless was abruptly broken.

She uttered a shrill cry of wonder.

The man who stood facing her, his countenance etched in lines of suffering and pain, was an exact counterpart of the wounded man who lay on the ground. It was as though Bruce Dixon had split himself, by some diabolic magic, into two separate bodies.

Bruce Dixon was staring downward into the sneering, wide-open eyes of Bruce Dixon!

CHAPTER XX. HIS FATHER'S SON

FOR an amazed second, Edith stared at the identical men. Then two things happened. The wounded Bruce uttered a faint, snarling oath. The Bruce whom The Shadow had brought back from the corridor offshoot held out trembling arms toward the girl.

"Edith! Thank God, you're safe! Oh my darling!"

Her face cleared. She moved toward him, crept with a sob into his open arms. This was the man she loved and trusted. He talked tenderly to her in a voice she knew. But his smile was ashen; there was fear in the depths of his eyes.

"You are Bruce," Edith whispered. "Now I understand at last! This wounded man is an impostor. He was playing a criminal role, pretending to be Arnold Dixon's true son."

The man holding her in his arms was silent. His eyes avoided Edith. But the wounded man laughed jeeringly.

"Why doesn't he answer you? He can't because he's a liar! He's not Arnold Dixon's real son. I am!"

The girl shuddered, drew back a pace. Clyde Burke glanced at The Shadow. The Shadow nodded permission to speak.

"It's the truth," Clyde told Edith, quietly. "Dixon's real son is that murderous rat on the floor. The man you love is an impostor. But don't misjudge him. The real criminal is Dixon's own son."

He glanced at the sneering crook on the floor.

"You're dying, Bruce. You might as well talk, before you die."

Bruce laughed feebly.

"Okay. Why not? I hated my stupid father left him ten years ago never would have returned until it was time for me to identify myself and inherit his fortune. But I happened to read an item in a San Francisco paper, and realized that this good-looking fake was taking my place in the family, pretending to be me."

He drew a deep, rattling breath.

"I came back secretly. I found out what was going on. This fellow was being used by Timothy, the lawyer, who was after the Dixon wealth. Rodney was the guy who arranged the substitution."

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"That's not true," the white-faced impostor replied. "I never met Rodney. I never saw him until the night he first appeared outside the library window at Shadelawn."

Clyde Burke shook his head.

"You had met Paul Rodney before, but you didn't recognize him in his disguise of the brown beard."

The Shadow took a quick step forward where the dead Rodney lay. He bent suddenly and his gloved hand ripped the false beard from the stark face. It was no longer Paul Rodney. It was the sleek, clean-shaven face of Donald Perdy, the art photographer.

THE fake son of Arnold Dixon gave a shuddering cry. He buried his face.

"You'd better talk," Clyde told him in a gentle voice. "You're safe, now. Tell the truth."

The young man nodded, squared his shoulders. His eyes moved toward Edith. He seemed to be talking only to her.

His name, he confessed, was not Bruce Dixon but Bill Chandler. He had come to New York as a young civil engineer, out of work but determined to get a job. He failed. He was hungry, penniless, on a park bench when Perdy discovered him.

Perdy had been combing the city with a camera, hunting for some one to impersonate the missing Bruce Dixon. Chandler agreed, not knowing the criminal plot he was furthering. The smooth Perdy took Chandler to Dixon's lawyer, Timothy, and the latter convinced the young engineer that the whole scheme was a last effort to save the life of a sick and sorrowful old man.

Dixon, according to Timothy, was dying from grief because of the continued absence of his son.

Bill Chandler was completely transformed. The fact that he was physically an exact double of Bruce was merely the beginning of the scheme. He was operated on, given a duplicate appendicitis scar. Timothy, who had known the real son from childhood, taught Chandler every fact he could recall and the cunning lawyer's memory was prodigious.

The result was a masquerade that defied detection. It fooled the old man and Charles, the butler, and, at first, Edith.

"I love you, Edith," Chandler whispered, brokenly. "And I learned to love Arnold Dixon, too. As soon as I discovered that I was being used in a plot to kill him and turn his fortune over to Timothy, I tried to protect him. I knew that if I stayed in the house and pretended to work with the crooks, I could guard Arnold Dixon and perhaps save him from death."

He drew a shuddering breath.

"I didn't know that the real Bruce had returned secretly from San Francisco. I didn't know who Snaper and Hooley were. There was no one that I dared turn to for help, except a crook named Spud Wilson.

"I offered Spud money, and he agreed to double-cross Timothy and help me to protect the old man. But Spud was discovered the night he crept to my window to talk to me. The next night, Perdy planted dynamite in Spud's parked car and blew him to pieces."

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"You mean," Edith faltered, "that all through this horror you've been helping Arnold Dixon, not trying to harm him?"

Chandler nodded.

"He's telling the truth," Clyde Burke said. "The Cup of Confucius was stolen by Bruce himself, not young Chandler. The murder of Charles and the attempted killing of his own father were also the ugly work of the real Bruce. Chandler was innocent all through this case. His sole guilt is the fact that he impersonated another man. He —"

THERE was a quick warning hiss from The Shadow. He had been listening quietly to the true story he had already discovered for himself. He failed to reckon on one thing: the criminal cunning of the real Bruce Dixon.

Bruce had not been fatally wounded. His dying moan was merely a piece of clever acting. He had apparently fainted. But he was biding his time.

He staggered suddenly to his feet. Reeling, he fled toward the corridor.

Clyde's first warning of disaster was the quick movement of The Shadow. The Shadow raced after the disappearing figure of the wounded son of Arnold Dixon. He ran swiftly because he divined in a flash what Bruce intended. But he was unable to overtake the desperate fugitive.

Bruce Dixon darted into the rocky crypt where the explosives were stored. Before The Shadow could reach the doorway, he reappeared, something clutched in his wildly waving hand.

It was a deadly thing an explosive cap of fulminate of mercury.

"Back!" he shrieked. "You can't arrest me, do you hear? One step nearer and I'll —"

Clyde Burke came racing along the dim corridor. His gun whipped level for a shot. He couldn't hear what Bruce had cried. The rocky walls of the corridor had blurred the words.

Before The Shadow could restrain him, Clyde had fired.

The Shadow threw himself and Clyde flat on the rock floor. Bruce Dixon swayed with a bullet in his lungs. His dying hand threw the deadly cap. But he was too weak to toss it far. It smashed against the floor directly in front of him.

The roar of the explosion was terrific. Flame gushed up in front of the toppling murderer. When the dazzle was gone and the long thunderous echoes of the explosion died away, Clyde Burke uttered an exclamation of horror.

The place where Bruce had fallen was like a shambles. The walls were spattered crimson. Dixon's criminal son had blown himself to pieces. Only a twitching huddle of bloody rags showed where the desperate fugitive had been.

THE SHADOW drew a hissing breath. He clutched at Clyde, hurried him back along the corridor. Edith Allen and Bill Chandler were standing where he had left them, rooted in terror. Chandler's arms were about the girl in a protecting gesture.

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The Shadow whispered briefly to Clyde. Then the darkness of the cave swallowed The Shadow for a few moments. When he reappeared, he was carrying something in his hand. Clyde took it from him, walked to where Chandler and Edith stood. He handed the object to the young man.

It was the Cup of Confucius. Even in the harsh yellow light of the lantern on the floor, the marvelous beauty of the fabulous cup was evident. Under its grime of centuries old dirt, the priceless jade gleamed with a soft, living beauty. The nine mystic circles of jewels sparkled. There were rubies, emeralds, diamonds, pearls Chandler's eyes bulged as he looked at the cup. So did Edith's.

"Is... is Bruce dead?" the young man faltered.

Clyde glanced at The Shadow. The Shadow had told him what to say.

"It all depends," Clyde said, slowly. "Do you really love Arnold Dixon enough to want to keep him from dying of heartbreak?"

"Yes, yes! He's been more than a real father to me!"

"And you've been more than his real son. Bruce was his son only by name and birth. He's dead now, blown to pieces. But Arnold Dixon need never find it out. Go back to him. Take the cup. Tell him you followed the thieves and recovered it. Timothy and Rodney are dead. They can never betray your secret.

"The police will never find out the actual facts behind this case. The Shadow will take care of that. He wants you to continue in what no longer will be a deception. Fate and an old man's need has changed you to Dixon's son. You're the honest son he's always wanted to have. Go home to him, Bruce Dixon, and take Edith with you!"

Tears welled from Edith's blue eyes. She turned, stared toward the spot where The Shadow had been. The spot was empty. The Shadow had melted into darkness.

Edith's steps took her into Chandler's outstretched arms.

"I want to go home with you, Bruce, to your father. He needs you and I love you!"

FROM the fire-blackened stones of the foundations that once had supported the stately Carruthers mansion, a dark figure glided. It moved rapidly under the lonely stars in the sky. It vanished without sound.

A faint whisper of sibilant laughter was the only indication that a living being had moved across that open spot.

The Shadow was satisfied. The case was closed, forever.

Other cases would intrigue the Master of Darkness, however particularly one that would lead him along a "Treasure Trail." Millions in bullion lay between the rotting ribs of an old frigate under the East River's treacherous waters, but only The Shadow could pierce the innermost secret of its strong box at the end of the "Treasure Trail."

THE END