

THE DARK DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. TWO APPOINTMENTS

EVENING traffic was heavy on Sixth Avenue. Throngs of taxicabs had chosen this route to escape the jam of the theater district. The result was a tie-up as bad as any at Times Square. Stalled trolley cars; blocked trucks; cabs and automobiles clustered between elevated pillars – these were hopelessly entangled while traffic cops blew whistles and shouted orders that no one could obey.

All the while, the rumble of elevated trains sounded from above, as if derisive of the vehicles stalled beneath. The roar of one train brought an impatient growl from a taxi driver. The fellow thrust a pointed profile from the window of the cab. He saw a truck move ahead a dozen feet, opening a pathway.

The cabby yanked his car in gear. Snapping in front of a second taxi, he veered right, scraped an elevated pillar and shot up to the nearest corner. He wheeled right, swung into an opening in cross-street traffic and sped down the other thoroughfare.

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The traffic cop stared after him; then dropped his whistle and grinned. Ordinarily he would have slated the driver for a ticket: but there was no use in making a pinch tonight. One less car in that petrified jam of vehicles was a help, so far as the policeman was concerned.

Two blocks away, the taxi driver pulled up in front of a towering office building. A tall passenger alighted. He was out of the cab the moment that it stopped; the driver caught only a glimpse of head and shoulders as his fare entered the building. The passenger had not paid for the trip. That did not trouble the driver.

The jehu simply eased his cab to a parking space across the street. He looked into the back seat and saw a suitcase resting on the floor. His peaked face showed a slight grin. Then the driver settled back behind the wheel. As he waited, he looked upward toward the building that his passenger had entered.

Moe Shrevnitz was the name of this taxi man. His cab was an independent, presumably. Moe owned it himself. Actually, the cab belonged to a mysterious personage who had supplied Moe with the money for its purchase. This cab was the property of The Shadow.

Day and night, Moe kept in touch with Burbank, The Shadow's contact agent. Early this evening, he had called Burbank by telephone. He had received orders to be at Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street at eight forty-five. There, his passenger had stepped aboard the cab before Moe had realized it. A hissed voice had given this destination.

It was not Moe's policy to speculate on the doings of The Shadow. He had found it good business to follow orders. Nevertheless, there were times when Moe could not refrain from being curious. Tonight was one of those occasions.

The office building which his passenger had entered was totally dark except for one floor, which Moe estimated as the tenth. From the windows of that story came the flicker of bluish lights that flashed with intermittent brightness.

That floor, Moe decided, must be The Shadow's objective. The point settled in his mind, the taxi man lighted a cigarette and began to idle the time while he awaited his passenger's return.

Up on the tenth floor of the office building was one window that Moe had not seen, for it was around the corner of the skyscraper. The light from that window was a normal glare, for the room within was an office. On the door of the room was the legend:

JAMES SUNDLER

Supervisor

Behind the desk in the office sat a shock-headed man. This was James Sundler. He was the supervisor, in charge of the New York laboratories of the Universal Electric Company.

Opposite the supervisor sat a visitor. Sundler was fingering the caller's card. It bore the name of Lamont Cranston.

Eyeing his visitor, Sundler was impressed by the calm demeanor of Cranston's countenance. The visage was firm, almost masklike in its mold. An aquiline nose gave Cranston a hawk-like expression. Keen eyes met Sundler's as the supervisor met his visitor's gaze.

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"Ordinarily, Mr. Cranston," stated Sundler, "we could not discuss our experimental devices with persons outside our company. These laboratories are used for perfecting new inventions. We do not encourage visitors."

"So I understand," came the quiet reply, "I learned that from Guy Tawley."

"So Mr. Tawley told me," rejoined Sundler. "But he also requested that an exception be made in your case. Inasmuch as Mr. Tawley is the executive vice president of this concern, I shall make that exception. If you will come with me" – the supervisor arose – "I shall show you the new Q-ray machine that we have developed."

He led the way from the office, along a corridor and into a small laboratory. This room was dark; Sundler turned on a light and revealed a square-shaped machine that consisted of glass panels between chromium-plated posts. Within the transparent box was a set-up of four long glass tubes.

Sundler pressed a switch. The tubes began to glow with a peculiar sparkle that showed through their dark red surface. Sundler watched for a few moments; then extended his hand and nodded. Cranston did the same.

"You can feel the heat already," remarked the supervisor. "Do you notice it, Mr. Cranston?"

"Yes," came the reply. "Tell me, Mr. Sundler, does this Q-ray fulfill the claims that were made in the newspaper article? The one that appeared in the New York Classic?"

"It does," replied the supervisor, with a nod. "Originally designed for treatment of skin diseases, we learned that the Q-ray caused an actual change in the structure of the epidermis. This fellow Clyde Burke, who writes for the Classic, managed to get his facts without our knowledge."

"I understand then," remarked Cranston, "that the ray will give a Nordic complexion the heat-resisting strength that is found in skins of darker races."

"Precisely. With a series of treatments, it will accomplish with the individual what nature has produced in races. So far as color is concerned, the Q-ray will merely cause a slight tan. But structurally, it will actually transform a blond skin tissue into that of a brunette."

Cranston made no comment. He was watching the machine. Sundler chewed his lips uneasily. Then he put a question.

"May I ask, Mr. Cranston," he requested, "why you are interested in the Q-ray?"

"Certainly," was the response. "I mentioned the matter to Guy Tawley. I thought he had spoken to you about it."

"No. He merely said that you wanted to see the machine."

"Small wonder then that you were puzzled by this visit of mine. I shall explain matters, Mr. Sundler. I am a globe-trotter. I have visited nearly every country in the world. I have found tropical exploration greatly to my liking."

"You have been in Africa?"

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"Yes. I am going there again. I am choosing men for my expedition. Unfortunately, however, it is impossible to learn whether or not a man can stand the burning power of the tropical sun until he has actually experienced it.

"It occurred to me that this new Q-ray treatment would prove beneficial to members of my expedition. With a machine of this sort, I could prepare them for the African ordeal. Does your opinion coincide with mine, Mr. Sundler?"

"It does."

"Then it would be possible for you to deliver one of these machines if I ordered it?"

"No. Absolutely no!"

With this emphatic statement, Sundler stepped forward and turned off the Q-ray machine. Glowing tubes subsided. Sundler turned and faced his visitor.

"Mr. Cranston," he questioned. "Did you notice anything odd in that story that appeared in the Classic?"

"Yes." replied the visitor. "It stated that the Q-ray machine, though effective, would be delayed in its development. But the article did not specify why."

"I'll tell you why. This fellow Burke – the newspaper reporter – was stumped when he came to that detail. This machine, Mr. Cranston, is one of the most dangerous devices that has ever been created!"

Cranston's eyes were steady. The supervisor noted their keen glow. Sundler continued:

"You saw the machine working at low power," he said. "Had I drawn this lever" – he touched a rod that projected at the side – "those red tubes would have sparkled with a real fury. That high power is necessary to develop the effectiveness of the Q-ray."

"And then –"

"It produces the tissue change upon Nordic skins. It strengthens them. It even makes them immune to continued applications of the Q-ray itself."

"That seems to offset any danger."

"It does – so far as such persons are concurrent. The terrible effects of the Q-ray, Mr. Cranston, are confined to persons of darker races. Not only to Africans or Malays, but to members of the Indo-European race. People of the Mediterranean type."

SUNDLER stepped across the little laboratory. He reached for a roll of cloth that looked like a window curtain. He drew down a chart that showed blocks of color from almost a clear white to an ebony blackness.

"The top shows a pure albino, explained Sundler. "Here we have Nordic types. Here are light complexions. Here are sallow com–"

He stopped. His fore-finger was upon a red line. With his other hand, Sundler indicated the color blocks below.

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"To persons of these complexions," he stated solemnly, "the Q-ray means destruction. Not slow burning, but quick, startling death. We learned this when two of our experimenters were overpowered by the ray. It was terrible, Mr. Cranston. Terrible!"

"When did this occur?"

"A few months ago. Just when the machine had been stepped up to its full intensity. A chap named Cassgrove – dark-complexioned – was operating the device. It struck him down like that."

Sundler snapped his fingers.

"I was present," he added. "I turned off the machine. I felt no ill effects."

Keen eyes were on the speaker. Sundler, apparently a Norwegian, was very light of skin. Blue eyes – his shocky hair was a mass of white.

"It's a death box," resumed the supervisor. "Only two feet square" – he eyed the machine as he spoke – "but it packs a terrible power. Its range is approximately thirty feet. We kept people away from it after Cassgrove's death. Then a lab assistant named LeGrand – chap we called Frenchy – blundered into the radius when I was making a test. He dropped like a log, twenty feet away."

"If the machine is so dangerous," came Cranston's comment, "why is it not dismantled?"

"We are still experimenting," explained Sundler, "Trying to gain results with a lower intensity. Using rabbits and guinea pigs as subjects."

"Our theory is that light-colored skins absorb the Q-ray. Even though they change structurally, they preserve their immunity. But the darker skins apparently form no protection. The Q-ray reaches the organs of the body and causes instant death to those of dark complexion."

"This is confidential information, Mr. Cranston. To you, because you have made a legitimate request for one of these machines and because you are a friend of Mr. Tawley, I have explained why we cannot supply you with one of the Q-ray machines."

"I understand." A slight smile showed upon Cranston's thin lips, "But suppose, Mr. Sundler, that I should bring members of my expedition here for treatment. Would you give it to them?"

"Not at present. Perhaps later, in the presence of physicians. Assuming of course, that the men you brought were of pronounced Nordic types."

There was a knock at the door. Sundler called to come in. A laboratory assistant entered to announce that there was a call for Mr. Cranston on the office telephone. The tall visitor started for the office while Sundler remained to lock the Q-ray laboratory.

Reaching the office, Cranston picked up the receiver that lay beside the telephone. He spoke. A quiet voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report." Cranston's response was a hissed whisper.

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Burbank's voice clicked from the receiver. In the same whisper, Cranston gave brief instructions then concluded the call. He was hanging up the receiver when Sundler entered.

"Something important, Mr. Cranston?" inquired the supervisor.

"An appointment," replied the visitor. "A friend has arrived in town. My club told him to call here."

He extended his hand. Sundler received it. He was about to repeat his injunction that the visitor should preserve silence regarding the Q-ray machine. But one glance from Cranston's keen eyes told the supervisor that further words were unnecessary.

Five minutes later. Moe Shrevnitz popped up from behind the wheel of his cab as he heard a hissed order from within. His passenger had returned, unnoticed. Moe nodded as he heard the destination that the arrival gave.

The cab pulled away.

From within a bag in the back seat, folds of black cloth were being drawn forth. Inky garments slipped over head and shoulders. When the cab came to a stop on a secluded street, a door opened. Living blackness glided forth.

Moe did not see the form that emerged; yet he knew, instinctively, that his passenger had become The Shadow.

Looking into the rear of the cab, Moe saw that The Shadow had taken the bag along with him. Moe's job was done. The taxi man glanced at his watch. Half past nine. Time to head for Times Square and pick up business.

Moe drove away.

From a darkened portion of the street, keen eyes saw Moe's departure. A soft laugh came from hidden lips. Blended with darkness, The Shadow moved off on paths unknown.

Tonight, The Shadow had followed up a lead started by Clyde Burke, of the New York Classic. The reporter – a secret agent of The Shadow – had uncovered facts about the Q-ray machine.

As Lamont Cranston, millionaire globe-trotter, The Shadow had used Guy Tawley, vice president of Universal Electric, to gain an appointment with James Sundler, the laboratory supervisor.

That appointment was ended. The Shadow knew the secret of the Q-ray. It was something that he would remember for the future. At present, he was heading forth to keep another appointment. One that dealt with crime.

Yet, strangely, events were shaping toward a climax that even The Shadow did not foresee. Two appointments, disconnected, each of a different sort, were destined to have an unexpected bearing, one upon the other.

CHAPTER II. AIDS OF THE SHADOW

IT was half past nine when Moe Shrevnitz had gone off duty. The taxi driver had left The Shadow at a secluded spot near the border of the underworld. Moe had headed away from that vicinity.

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But at exactly the same time, another driver was following the reverse course. Seated behind the wheel of a trim sedan a young man was threading his way through the grimy, narrow thoroughfares of New York's East Side.

Lights from the glittering front of a penny arcade showed the driver's features as he stopped in traffic. The young man displayed a clean-cut visage as he eyed the people who were strolling along this avenue.

The driver of the coupe was Harry Vincent, a trusted agent of The Shadow. He had received orders from Burbank. A call had come to the Metrolite Hotel, where Harry made his residence. In response to that call, Harry was on his way to a rendezvous in the underworld.

Traffic started. Harry drove along, then swerved into the gloom of a side street. He picked out a parking lot between two dilapidated buildings and swung into the opening. The parking lot was devoid of cars. Few persons left their automobiles in this neighborhood.

Harry extinguished the lights of the sedan. A few moments later, fingers beat a light tattoo upon the window at the right side of the car. Harry opened the door. A man came aboard. His face was barely discernible. A square, chiseled countenance, Harry recognized Cliff Marsland.

Cliff served as The Shadow's agent in the underworld. Reputed to be a killer, Cliff stood in with the gorilla element. It was Cliff who had passed the word to Burbank; news that the contact man had relayed to The Shadow.

"You know what's up, Harry?" questioned Cliff, in a whisper.

"I know we're to tail a couple of cars," replied Harry. "Burbank told me to get the rest from you."

"Driller Borson's crew is on the move. Starting from the old Phoenix Garage, three blocks from here. At ten o'clock. I was down at the Black Ship when Skeeter Wigan showed up and passed the news to some of the gorillas."

"Any idea where they're going?"

"No. Driller is smart. Never lets his outfit in on the know until they get to their objective. But Driller's not the only one concerned tonight."

"Who else?"

"I don't know. Some other crook leader with a crew of his own. The idea is to let the two outfits meet."

Harry nodded. This fitted with The Shadow's methods. He began to see the importance of brief instructions that he had received from Burbank.

"Dash clock right?" questioned Cliff.

"To the minute," replied Harry.

"Ten of ten," noted Cliff. "We only need a couple of minutes to get to the garage. Hawkeye is due here before we pull out."

"Where has he been?"

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"Checking up. Doing a sneak near the garage. Just to make sure they're swarming. I tipped him off outside the Black Ship. He was watching the alley while I was in the joint –"

FINGERS drummed an interruption against the window. Cliff opened the door of the sedan and a hunched figure twisted in through the opening. A crafty, wizened face showed by the glow of the dashlight as "Hawkeye" joined his comrades.

"Spotted 'em," he whispered. "They got a coupe and a crummy old touring car parked in the garage. Looks like most of the crew is there. But they ain't starting until ten. Driller's a guy that works like a clock."

"We can circle over that way, Harry," suggested Cliff.

"Wait a minute." Harry spoke quietly. "I want to try something, Cliff. There's no chance of any one noticing us in here, is there?"

"Not much."

"Well, here goes – when the second hand of that dash clock hits the sixty mark."

As he spoke, Harry drew forth a small white tube that looked like the half of a cigarette. He pressed it between his fingers, then tossed it from the window of the car. The tiny object fell in the darkness beside the building.

"What's that?" questioned Hawkeye.

"You'll see," replied Harry. "Keep your eye on the dash clock."

One minute passed.

"Six minutes of ten," commented Cliff. "We ought to move inside of three minutes."

"I know it," said Harry.

Another minute passed without comment. Cliff and Hawkeye were puzzled; but they kept further thoughts to themselves. Both had been instructed to join Harry Vincent at this spot. The job of trailing "Driller's" crew belonged to him. Harry had the information about the garage. The rest was up to him.

Another minute. The clock on the dash showed four minutes before ten. A sudden fizz came from the wall where Harry had tossed the tiny tube. Staring, Cliff and Hawkeye saw a tiny blaze – like the squibby flash of a faulty firecracker. It ended with a slow white flame that continued to burn.

"Three minutes," commented Harry. He was calculating the time between the toss of the tube and the flare. "Three minutes to the dot. All right. Let's go."

Cliff and Hawkeye offered no objection. Harry backed the car from the parking space. He turned left and piloted the sedan in the direction of the Phoenix Garage. They passed the building – dilapidated and deserted – in the middle of a block. It was not quite ten o'clock.

Hawkeye peered back as they rode by. Just as the sedan neared the next corner, the little man whispered news.

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"There they come," he informed. "Out to the street, and turning this way. The coupe's in the lead —"

HARRY grunted a response. He let his car glide across an avenue and into the next block. He peered into the mirror. He saw the two cars reach the avenue and turn north.

"Heading up," said Hawkeye.

Harry stepped on the gas. He swung a corner to parallel the course that the mobster cars had taken. Two speedy blocks; then Harry shot into a cross-street, heading back to the avenue.

"Look for them, Hawkeye," he ordered. "If you don't spot them, we'll know they turned off at the last street."

Hawkeye was leaning from the window as they swung up the avenue. He bobbed back in beside Cliff.

"Half a block ahead," he stated. "I lamped the touring car first crack. A guy with half an eye could spot that buggy."

Harry chuckled. Straightened into the avenue, he could see the touring car himself. A half block behind, he was trailing the second of the mobster cars. An easy task in this traffic.

"Looks like they're heading for one of the bridges," remarked Cliff, as the course hung along the avenue. "That means the job will be somewhere on Long Island."

"Yeah," added Hawkeye, "and it won't be a cinch to tail 'em after we get out in the open. If I was in one of them cars, I'd be looking back to see if any mugs were coming after us."

"That's what I'm counting on, Hawkeye," put in Harry. "Keep watching. Pass me the word when you think it's right."

"You mean keep watching back? In case some other mugs are tailing us?"

"No. Keep watching ahead. Let me know when you think those fellows up front are liable to be suspicious."

"All right. But how's that going to help you?"

"I won't stick so close after that."

"Then how'll you tail 'em?"

Harry chuckled. This time Cliff joined him. They were swinging right, toward one of the big suspension bridges that spanned the East River. That was the course which the mobster cars were taking.

"How'll you tail 'em?" repeated Hawkeye.

"You'll see," laughed Harry.

"Do you get the idea, Cliff?" demanded Hawkeye.

Cliff nodded.

"It beats me," growled Hawkeye. "If you stay close, they'll spot you. If you drop back, you can't tail 'em. But that's for you to figure out. I'll tip you when I think those mugs are getting wise."

With that comment, Hawkeye hunched his shoulders and squeezed close beside the door. As they rolled clear of the bridge and headed for a boulevard, the little spotter's shrewd eyes were fixed steadily upon the rear of the decrepit touring car, two hundred feet ahead.

CHAPTER III. THE TRAIL

"THEY'RE getting leery."

The comment came from Hawkeye. It was the first statement that he had uttered since the bridge. Yet the dash clock showed that the sedan had been traveling a full half hour since then.

The course had led along a boulevard. Then into a less-traveled road. It was on this highway that Hawkeye made his comment. He added reasons a moment later.

"Did you see the touring car speed up a bit?" he questioned. "It was like a warning, to the car ahead. They've been watching back. Other cars have turned off this road. But we're still coming along."

"At a steady thirty-five," remarked Harry. "Remember that, Cliff. It's the pace they're using."

Cliff nodded.

Harry peered to the right. He spied a filling station a few hundred yards ahead. He slackened speed a trifle; then, as he neared the gasoline establishment, he swerved, applied the brakes and coasted up beside a gas standard.

"Check three minutes, Cliff," he remarked.

"Right," replied Cliff.

Harry stepped from the car and met the service station man who was coming out to the gasoline tank.

"Sorry," said Harry. "I've got plenty of gas and oil. Radiators heating up a bit. Thought maybe it's short on water."

"I'll fill the radiator, sir —"

"Never mind. I'll help myself."

Harry went to the radiator while the attendant was returning to the service station. Lifting the cap, Harry peered in; then picked up a watering can and poured a few pints into the radiator. He replaced the cap and climbed in back of the wheel.

"Thirty seconds left," stated Cliff.

Harry started the motor. He was easing out into the highway just as Cliff announced the expiration of the three-minute period. Harry slid the car into high gear. The headlights formed a brilliant path as they rolled along at thirty-five miles an hour.

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They passed a few cars coming from the opposite direction; but there was no sign of the mobster cars ahead. At this pace, there was no chance of overtaking those whom they were trailing.

Hawkeye eyed the speedometer; then grunted.

Like Cliff, Hawkeye had suddenly caught the idea. Crafty-eyed, he peered through the windshield. He was the first of the trio to spot the signal that came suddenly from ahead. They had just reached a crossroads sign when Hawkeye growled:

"There it comes."

SPARKS flared from the road. They were bluish; and as Harry applied the brakes, they sizzled down to a purple flame that flickered in the slight wind. The fuse was close by the roadside, at the crossing. Harry swung the sedan left.

A half mile along this new road. The Shadow's agents spied another signal. This time a sparkle of green flashed from the highway. It was followed by a small green fire. Harry swung the car at a new crossroads. His tire extinguished the blaze as he made a right turn.

This road was paved but little traveled. They came to a stop sign and Harry halted the sedan. At that instant, a burst of white sparks flashed from beyond the crossing. Harry started the car straight ahead, disregarding the yellowish blaze.

"A precaution," he remarked. "We'll get them at every crossroads where we're supposed to go straight through. If we don't see the yellow, it means that we're ahead of time."

As he spoke, another yellow flame spurted from a crossing ahead. Another half mile; there a purple flame was burning when they arrived. The mobsters must have sped up along this stretch. Harry swung left, the direction indicated by purple, and increased the speed of the sedan.

It was a lonely road, swinging in the direction of Long Island Sound. Cliff and Hawkeye gazed steadily while Harry drove along. They knew well enough that these signals were from The Shadow; that somehow, their chief had managed to light the trail for his aides.

Harry slackened as he approached a lonely crossroads. White sparks spurted; then a yellow flame. Harry missed this light with his wheels. As he kept on, a single headlight came speeding from a bend.

A motorcycle with side car shot past at a rapid clip. Harry was doing less than thirty as the motorcycle went by.

Hawkeye twisted about and peered through the rear window. He bobbed toward the windshield as Harry took the curve.

"Cops!" exclaimed Hawkeye. "And they're stopping at the crossing. Must have seen that blaze in the road!"

"I was a dub for missing it," returned Harry.

"Maybe they'll pass it up," remarked Cliff.

"Yeah?" Hawkeye snorted. "Say – look ahead. This road is straight for another mile. They must have passed two cars already. Now us – number three – and then a light burning in the road. They're going to wonder

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something."

"I'll hold it at thirty-five," declared Harry. "Keep looking back, Hawkeye. If they turn around and overhaul us, we'll have to stop and give them a stall. But it will mean losing the trail."

"Maybe we'll get a break," remarked Cliff.

"Not much," growled Hawkeye, from the rear window. "They're coming back. That's them all right, hitting it in from the bend."

"They've got a full mile for a start," announced Harry, as he swung a curve. "But they'll do that distance at sixty miles –"

"Hold it. Harry!"

The exclamation came from Cliff. Right ahead, in the middle of the bend, green sparks were sizzling from the roadway. Another signal. Turn to the right!

"Crush it, Harry!"

HARRY nodded as Cliff spoke. He jammed the brakes, rolled over the fading sparks and extinguished the green flame. He wheeled the car between two stone pillars and rolled along a winding driveway. As they coasted past a clump of shrubbery, Harry turned off the ignition.

He and his companions heard a roar from the road that they had left. Five seconds later, the motorcycle went whizzing past the gateway that they had entered. As the sound faded, Harry turned the ignition key. The coasting car caught in gear. The motor throbbed as they continued along the driveway.

"Neat," growled Hawkeye, "We dodged the cops that time. But they'll be coming back."

"Unless they get fooled at some crossroads further along," put in Cliff. "Maybe they'll think we opened up the car when they started after us."

The driveway was twisting up the side of a hill. Harry was using dim lights; yet the glow showed another driveway coming up to meet this one.

"That's to another gate," decided Harry. "We'll remember it when we're leaving. In case the cops decide to come in here."

The driveway that the sedan was following took a sudden turn past bushes to meet the other drive. As they made the swing, Harry applied the brakes. A dozen yards ahead, a flare of red fire was burning in the driveway, just before it reached the fork.

"The end of the trip," announced Harry. "That's the final signal. We use our own brains from now on."

He rolled across the red fire and extinguished it. But he kept on slowly, covering the thirty-odd feet that remained to the meeting point of the two drives. Harry's driveway and the other were like the arms of an inverted Y that joined into a single roadway.

While Cliff and Hawkeye shifted beside him, Harry made a sharp turn down the other arm of the Y. He coasted the sedan off the driveway through an opening between two clusters of shrubs. There he turned out

the lights.

"If we have to run for it," he said, in a low tone, "we'll be all set to head out this new driveway. If the cops come in from the road we followed, we can dodge them."

Harry opened the door on his side of the sedan. Hawkeye did the same on the other side. Cliff followed Hawkeye to the ground. Doors closed softly. Dull moonlight, coming through clouds, showed the trio as they joined at the rear of the sedan. Guns in readiness, The Shadows agents moved up the drive way, keeping to the grass.

It was Hawkeye who stopped them suddenly. Pointing off between trees to the right, the hunch-shouldered fellow gave a muffled exclamation. Harry and Cliff looked. Just above a terrace, they saw the gloomy outline of a huge, dark mansion.

No use to follow the driveway further. Simple reasoning told that it wound upward to the house. That mansion was their objective. Cautiously, the agents of The Shadow crept to the top of the terrace.

There, behind an embankment that served as a natural buttress, they waited. Cliff Marsland assumed command as they watched the house from a distance of fifty yards. The Shadow's agents were in readiness for events that were to come.

CHAPTER IV. IN THE MANSION

Up by the huge house, huddled figures were in conference. Harsh voices were whispering beside an opened window. Men of crime had parked their cars close by the big building. They had found others awaiting them.

"That you, Driller?" came a query.

"Yeah," was the gruff response. "Where's Gat Lober?"

"Inside. Waitin' for you. He jimmed the window while we was waitin'."

"O.K. Come on, men."

Driller clambered up through the window. Others followed. Bags were hoisted through. Two of "Gat's" men remained on guard outside. Driller spoke in the darkness.

"Who's bringing the bags?"

"I got 'em," came a growl.

"All right, Tonk." Driller recognized the voice. "Lug them along and stay with me."

Light showed through the crack of a door that lay ahead. Driller groped in that direction and tapped a signal. A low voice came from the other side. Driller acknowledged.

The door opened slightly. Followed by four mobsters, Driller Borson entered a huge living room which was illuminated by the flicker of candles on the mantelpiece.

In this light, Driller was revealed as a lanky, long-jawed individual, well-dressed despite his rough appearance. Facing him was Gat Lober.

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This ruffian was short, stocky and vicious of appearance. He had an ugly scar on one cheek; his lips showed an evil smile. A slouchy mobster stood beside him.

"Hello, Driller," greeted Gat. "All ready for you. The box is in the next room."

"What's the idea of the candles?" quizzed Driller.

"Didn't want too much light," returned Gat. "Particularly after we grabbed the servants."

"The servants?"

"Yeah. Take a look."

Gat led the way to a far corner of the room. Two more mobsters stepped up; Driller had not seen them in the dull light. These gorillas were standing guard over two men huddled on the floor. Bound and gagged, the victims were staring with frightened eyes. Both were clad in pajamas.

"Couple of caretakers," explained Gat. "They mooched in just after I jimmed the window. So we snagged them. They had a flashlight and got a squint at our mugs. That makes it too bad for them."

"Blotting them out?"

"Sure. After you crack the box. Listen, Bo – I'm supposed to be out in St. Looney or somewhere West. You don't think I'm going to leave these squawkers to tell what I looked like, do you?"

"I'm not kicking, Gat. Go ahead. Rub them out. But give me time to clear with the swag before you give them the lead. You can hear shots a mile off in this territory."

"Leave that to me. Where'd you park your cars?"

"Out beside your sedan. Left a couple of gorillas to watch them."

"Good! Listen. You crack the box and move out with your mob. When you're clear, I'll bump these bozos and follow with my crew. We'll go our way – like we've done before."

"Suits me. Where's the box?"

"In here." Gat stepped across to a door near a far corner of the room. "It's sort of a study –"

"Wait a moment." Driller turned around. He picked out a puny member of his crew. "You, Skeeter – keep by that door so you can hear anything from outside. And you, Tonk" – this to a tall, stoop-shouldered fellow who wore a grimy sweater – "come along and bring those bags."

"SKEETER" went back to the outer room. "Tonk" followed Driller and Gat into the study. There, Gat turned on the light to reveal an oak-furnished room with drawn window shades. A large safe stood in the corner.

"Ten minutes," calculated Driller, with a laugh. "Maybe less. All right, Gat. Leave it to me."

Gat went out. Tonk closed the door behind him. Driller was moving over to the spot where the tall mobster had laid three suitcases. Driller started to pick up one of the bags. Tonk stopped him and hefted another.

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"This one has the drills," he remarked. "The others are empty. For the swag."

"Right you are," declared Driller, opening the bag that Tonk had indicated. He removed a drill. "Well, boy, here goes. Might as well start to get those empty bags ready. We'll have the swag quick enough."

Driller went over to the safe, leaving Tonk with the bags. As a safe-cracker, Driller was proud of his ability. His nickname – Driller – had been well gained. His pet drill began to bite into the steel door. Driller kept on steadily.

At moments, he paused to eye his work. During those intervals, he spoke briefly, without turning. He wanted Tonk to witness his skillful workmanship.

"Hurry up with those bags," chuckled Driller. "They won't be empty long, Tonk. Not if this safe of old man Lovenson's has got all the stuff that it ought to have. They say the old gent cleaned up heavy with his soap business."

The drill resumed operation. Again, Driller paused to make comment:

"Just about finished, Tonk. Bring the bags over. Get ready to call Gat when I open this box. I always let him take a look."

Driller heard Tonk approach. The safe-cracker went back to his task. The job came to a quick finish. With a short chuckle, Driller opened the door. A laugh came from his pasty lips.

"Get a load of this, Tonk!" he exclaimed. "Stacks of bank notes – spending money that the soap king left lying around. And mamma's jewels! Look at them! Lamp the swag, Tonk!"

There was no reply. Driller had the sudden impression that his companion was moving away, not approaching closer. Puzzled, the safe-cracker stood up and turned toward the door. His eyes bulged.

Tonk was no longer in the study. He had left the bags in the center of the room: one open, the other closed. But the open bag had not been empty. Its contents had been removed. That bag had contained garments. Tonk had donned them.

In place of Tonk the mobster, a weird figure had joined Driller Borson in the secluded room. Tall, menacing and formidable, that transformed personage stood guarding the closed door.

A being cloaked in black. A countenance – once Tonk – shaded by the brim of a slouch hat. Burning eyes as symbols of a new identity. Below those fierce orbs, a pair of mammoth automatics bulging from black-gloved fists.

While Driller had been at work, his companion, too, had found a task. One of sinister significance. The change was complete. Driller Borson, startled, was revealing the swag to an arch enemy of crime!

For Driller knew that these garments were no masquerade. Through his startled brain throbbed fearful facts. Tonk, the mobster – Tonk Ringo – had joined this mob for a secret purpose. His identity had been a clever disguise.

This weird figure at the door was Tonk Ringo in his true form. He was a grim avenger of whom Driller Borson had heard – one whom Driller had hoped never to meet.

From Driller's faltering lips came the gasp that pronounced the identity of this mysterious foe:

"The Shadow!"

CHAPTER V. THROUGH THE NIGHT

DRILLER cowered as The Shadow moved inward from the door. Tall, sinister, with blazing eyes fixed steadily, The Shadow's very silence was terrifying.

Driller tried to frame pleading words. He failed.

Staring hopelessly, Driller looked for death. His career of crime had been a checkered one. Murder had gone along with safe-cracking. Driller was a rat who deserved to die. The Shadow knew that fact.

Coughed words came from Driller's lips at last. In response, The Shadow uttered a whispered laugh. Halted a few paces from his quarry, this master of vengeance was voicing contemptuous mirth, its uncanny tones confined within this room.

Still staring, Driller had a wild hope. Perhaps The Shadow would show undeserved mercy. There were others in the big room outside. If The Shadow opened fire, he would be trapped. Driller saw a chance to make a deal.

"I – I won't squawk!" he gasped. "If you let me off – I – I'll help you trap the others. I'm not with Gat – I mean about killing those fellows he grabbed here. You – you heard what he said. When you were Tonk Ringo. It was – it was Gat's idea to rub them out –"

"And you agreed." The Shadow's tone was a sinister sneer. "All you wanted was a chance to leave before the slaughter commenced."

"Honest –"

Driller stopped short. Pleas were useless. He had no possible alibi. The Shadow had heard his conversation with Gat. But as Driller cowered, his staring eyes saw something that The Shadow did not see.

The door was beyond the black-cloaked figure. The knob of the door was turning. Driller knew why. He had told Gat that the safe would be cracked in ten minutes. That time was up. Driller and Gat had worked together before. Gat knew that Driller never went beyond his estimated time. Gat was coming to learn the reason for the delay.

For an instant, Driller began to close his hands, tense with the thought of a sudden attack. Then he stopped. The door was swinging open. Better to let Gat take a shot at The Shadow; then Driller could spring.

"Honest –"

Driller blurted the word again, hoping that his voice would cover the sound of the opening door. It did. But The Shadow did not need to hear Gat's approach. Driller's actions had told him that danger was at hand.

THE Shadow whirled.

He was just in time. Had he waited to deal with Driller, he would have been too late for Gat. Ever ready with a revolver, Gat was holding a leveled weapon as he stepped into the room. His gun flashed as he aimed to

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kill.

The Shadow's whirl was a twisting one. As he spun about, he pressed the trigger of one automatic. His shot came simultaneously with the flash of Gat's revolver. A bullet whistled through the waving folds of the black cloak and thudded into the opened door of the safe, a foot from Driller Borson.

But The Shadow's shot was not wild. It found a living mark. Gat Lober wavered. He fired again, wondering why his arm was sagging. He had felt the force of The Shadow's bullet; but in his fury, he did not realize that he had been clipped.

Gat's second shot was three feet wide. Crazily, the mob leader crumpled. As Gat sprawled, Driller came springing forward, launching his lanky body in a terrific leap for The Shadow's form.

Well had The Shadow figured. Others might be behind Gat Lober. He could not spare the time to turn upon Driller Borson. With that thought, The Shadow had also reasoned that Driller, no gun ready, would leap instead of firing.

The Shadow's twist ended in a surprising fade-away. His body seemed to drop as Driller came hurtling upon his back. Surging with outstretched hands, Driller clawed vainly at the ducking slouch hat. Then shoulders came driving upward.

Overbalanced, Driller was hoisted into the air under the impetus of The Shadow's sudden rise. For an instant, he balanced like a teeter. Then, with a powerful twist, The Shadow sent the lunging safe-cracker headlong to the floor.

Driller struck the edge of a table. He rolled over and lay half stunned. The Shadow, straightening, swept toward the door. His automatics volleyed.

Two mobsters – those guarding the servants – had arrived. Responding to the shots, they were leveling their revolvers. But they were not as swift as Gat Lober. The Shadow beat them to the shot. The gorillas went kicking to the floor. The Shadow reached the doorway.

Here came a swift exchange of shots. Mobsters from the far door had expected him. They fired as The Shadow appeared. But his step into the outer room had been a feint. A backward swing baffled the gorillas. They fired wide.

Then the muzzle of an automatic came through the space between the hinges of the opened door. Through this unexpected loophole, The Shadow delivered his barrage.

Each belch of that automatic sent a gorilla sprawling. One – two – in quick succession. Then a third, just as the fellow aimed for the smoking muzzle of The Shadow's gun. Only one remained: Skeeter.

The puny mobster had seen The Shadow. He had fired with the other mobsters. But as he saw his companions fall, Skeeter dropped his gun and made a wild dive through the doorway that led from the living room to outer safety.

The Shadow had already sighted his automatic to clip this fleeing foe. But something occurred to save Skeeter from the doom that his companions had encountered. At the very instant of Skeeter's dash, The Shadow heard a sound close beside him, in the study.

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The Shadow's left-hand automatic was the one thrust through the crack of the opened door. His right-hand gun was idle. Glancing quickly to the right, The Shadow saw Driller Borson rising. Recovered from his tumble, the safe-cracker had drawn a revolver. He was aiming the weapon point-blank for The Shadow.

It was Driller's own anxiety to score a bullseye that brought his doom. The Shadow's right hand snapped upward. The automatic spoke while Driller's finger was still loose upon the trigger of the revolver. The Shadow's shot echoed through the room.

Driller sprawled forward on the floor.

OUTSIDE, Skeeter had bolted through the jimmied window. His cries were wild to those gorillas who had remained as outer guards. They had heard the shots. Skeeter gave them the explanation.

"The Shadow!" he cried. "The Shadow! Spread out! We'll get him when he comes!"

Mobsters leaped away from the wall. They were spreading to form an ambush.

But others had heard Skeeter's cry. From off beyond the house, long-beamed flashlights sent sudden rays through the darkness. Gorillas wheeled in their tracks to open fire upon new foemen. Automatics barked while revolvers were swinging to aim.

From three points, The Shadow's agents had gained the bead. Harry, Clint and Hawkeye – all expert marksmen, were on hand to thwart the scattering gorillas.

Mobsters went tumbling. Cliff called a command. Lights went out. As Cliff skirted over toward the rear of the house, Harry and Hawkeye followed. They were heading for the spot where the mobsters had left their cars.

One crook had dodged the scathing fire of The Shadow's agents. Skeeter Wigan, gunless, had continued his flight after giving warning. Ducking into darkness, he arrived at the parked cars and gasped the news to the two gorillas stationed there.

"The Shadow! Coming from the house –"

One mobster was seated at the wheel of Driller's coupe. The other was standing beside the same car. Both had ready guns. The man in the driver's seat twisted a searchlight and clicked the button. It was a lucky guess.

The powerful glare made a huge spotlight on the wall of the house. Revealed by the electric blaze stood The Shadow. He was a dozen yards clear of the house. Behind him, on the wall, his figure formed a mammoth outline – the shadow of The Shadow!

MOBSTERS aimed. The gorilla by the car fired one quick shot for that weird form. Away from the coupe, he was where The Shadow could not spot him.

But others did. The Shadow's agents, coming from an angle, saw the gorilla between them and the searchlight's beam. Three guns spoke almost in unison. The mobster tumbled.

Prompt with that fire came the burst of The Shadow's automatic. His shot was aimed for the searchlight. It crashed the glass. The light went out. The gorilla in the seat opened vicious fire toward the spot where The Shadow had been. His bullets whistled through thin air.

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The answer, when it came, was from a dozen paces to the left. Spotting the flashes of the mobster's gun, The Shadow delivered two shots through the opened window of the coupe. The gangster groaned. His gun clattered upon the running board of the car.

Skeeter had dodged behind the coupe. He had not been seen. He had fired no revealing shots, being without a gun. Huddled, cringing, he expected the arrival of The Shadow. Then came a break.

A motorcycle roared suddenly from the lower driveway. Its lone eye blazed a path that showed The Shadow's agents clustered among the shrubbery. Cliff – Harry – Hawkeye – all knew the identity of the arrivals. The policemen who had been patrolling the lower road!

THE three ducked for cover as revolvers barked. Then, from the neighborhood of the parked cars, came the shots of automatics. The Shadow had sensed the situation. He was firing to draw the police.

The motorcycle swerved and sped in that direction.

A motor roared. Headlights blinked on. Out from the cluster of the mobster cars came Driller's coupe. The Shadow had reached that car. He had plucked the dead gorilla from the wheel. He had timed a quick and sudden departure.

Cycle and side car skidded into a ditch to avoid the path of the coupe. As the light car swept past the spot where The Shadow's agents lurked, a weird laugh came from behind the wheel. That burst of mockery was a signal.

"Come on!" ordered Cliff.

He headed for Harry's sedan. His companions followed. As they piled aboard, they saw the motorcycle come down the driveway. The Shadow had taken the route to the lower gate, leading the cops in a futile chase.

"They'll never overtake him," declared Harry, as he started the motor of his car. "We'll head out by this other driveway."

The course led upward, across the large Long Island estate. As they reached the brow of a hill, Hawkeye gave utterance. Harry stopped the car. Down the sloping hill a panorama spread beneath them in the moonlight.

They could see the road by which they had come. Speeding along it was a coupe – Driller's – manned by The Shadow. A mile back was the gateway to the lower drive. The motorcycle was at that spot, turning about.

"They've given up the chase," laughed Cliff. "They've just decided that they belong back at the house, to see what's happened there."

"That's it," agreed Harry. He shoved the car into gear. "And that's why we're going to make time toward Manhattan. We'll just have time to reach a through highway before they telephone to have the roads watched."

The sedan shot forward. It sped through an upper gateway and caught a paved road that followed the direction they wanted. Cliff and Hawkeye settled back as Harry opened the throttle and brought the speedometer up to seventy-five.

The safety of thronged thoroughfares lay ahead. To that same safety, The Shadow was driving alone. The master fighter and his agents had done their work. Mobs had met to commit robbery and murder. The law

would find dead gorillas and their slain leaders.

And in that same mansion where The Shadow had blazed a trail of vengeance, the law would find two captured men unharmed. For The Shadow and his agents had saved helpless victims from doom.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S PASSENGER

A LIGHT coupe came to a stop on a secluded Manhattan street. A door opened. Someone stepped forth. The door closed.

Five seconds passed. Then a streak of blackness glided along the sidewalk beneath the dull glare of a street lamp.

The Shadow had abandoned Driller Borson's coupe. That momentary blotch upon the paving was the only token of his passage. From that spot, The Shadow had merged with darkness. His work accomplished, the weird battler was departing into the night.

Three minutes ticked by. Then came a motion at the back of the coupe. The rumble seat opened. A head poked into view. The street lamp showed the grimy, sweat-streaked face of Skeeter Wigan.

Cautiously the puny mobster emerged. He stole to the front of the car and looked in. He seemed puzzled; then his face showed fright.

Until now, Skeeter had thought that one of Driller's mobsters had been at the wheel of the coupe. The true identity of the driver dawning on him, Skeeter was filled with terror. He sidled across the street and dodged into an alleyway.

Ten minutes later, Skeeter appeared upon the steps that led to an elevated station. Peering nervously over his shoulder, the little gangster ascended and huddled in a corner of the platform until a train arrived. He rode for several stations, hunched in a corner of a half-filled car. Then he stepped from the train and descended to the street.

Skeeter spied a cab. He entered it and gave the driver an address. Some minutes later, he entered the lobby of a second-class apartment building. He used an automatic elevator to reach the third floor. He tapped at a door marked "3 G."

The door opened. A dark-skinned man eyed the visitor and motioned him to enter. The servant who had admitted Skeeter was a Hindu. Silently, the Oriental pointed to a chair; then started toward an inner door.

"Who is it, Mahmud?" came a gruff question from beyond the door.

"The little man, sahib," responded Mahmud. "The one that you call Skeeter."

"What's he doing here?"

Before either Mahmud or Skeeter could reply, the speaker arrived in the doorway. He was a tall man, attired in a gaudy dressing gown. His face was almost as dark as Mahmud's. His lips, also brown, showed a vicious leer that revealed the gleam of gold teeth.

THIS individual was well-known in certain circles of Manhattan. He was "Gyp" Tangoli, one-time speakeasy operator, erstwhile racketeer and reputed gambler. One of those shady characters upon whom the

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law had pinned nothing; yet who never stood above suspicion. Gyp Tangoli was noted for his participation in doubtful enterprises.

"Well?" Gyp glowered as he snapped the question at his visitor. "What's on your chest?"

"I got to talk to you, Gyp," pleaded Skeeter. "Right now. Alone."

"All right." Gyp seemed displeased despite his agreement. "Come on in."

He led the way to a bedroom, where another Hindu was putting shirts in a bureau drawer. Gyp spoke to this second servant, using a jargon of Hindustani. The servant departed, closing the door behind him. Gyp wheeled to Skeeter.

"I told you to stay away from here," he snarled. "What do you want to do – queer the game?"

"It's queered already, Gyp," whined Skeeter.

"What do you mean?" demanded Gyp, savagely. "Did somebody wise the bulls?"

"No." Skeeter's face showed real terror. "It wasn't the bulls, Gyp. It was The Shadow!"

Gyp paused to stare. For a moment, his hard features seemed frozen. Then he motioned to a chair. Taking a bottle from a bureau drawer, he poured out a drink and handed it to Skeeter. The little mobster gulped the liquor.

"Spill it," ordered Gyp. Then, with a short, forced laugh: "I mean the news. Not the booze."

"Out at Lovenson's," blurted Skeeter. "The Shadow was there. He got Driller. Then Gat. At least I think he got them; I didn't see them drop."

"Yeah? And what were the gorillas doing?"

"They took it too. The mugs that were inside the house. I hopped out and hollered to the others. But they didn't have a chance."

"Why not?"

"The Shadow had a crew planted outside. They bumped off the rest of the mob. I thought Wedge Dunney was going to get away in Driller's coupe. So I hopped in the rumble and pulled down the top."

"Yeah? And what happened to Wedge?"

"The Shadow must have got him, too. I didn't know it until the coupe got to town. Then I got out and looked in the front seat. There wasn't nobody there."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means that The Shadow was the guy that drove me in. No foolin', Gyp! He blew in that coupe, with me ridin' in the rumble!"

Gyp picked up the bottle and poured himself a drink. He eyed Skeeter thoughtfully. Then he spoke.

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"So they're all wiped out," mused Gyp, "Driller and Gat both. The gorillas with them. Well, guys like that come cheap. But let's get at the bottom of it. Can you figure out how The Shadow walked in on this set-up?"

"I think I've got it, Gyp. He was with the mob. That's the only way I can figure it."

"With the mob? Which mob?"

"Driller's. The Shadow was passin' himself as a gorilla named Tonk Ringo. Joined up with the outfit a couple of weeks ago."

"What makes you think that The Shadow was Tonk?"

"I'll tell you. First of all, Tonk wasn't around when I was passin' the word tonight. But he showed up at the garage just before we started out."

"Who tipped him that a job was on?"

"I don't know. I asked him how he got wise. He said Driller told him."

"What did Driller say about that?"

"I never had no chance to ask him. It was when we was ridin' out in the touring car that I asked Tonk. Driller was up ahead in the coupe. I didn't think nothin' more of it."

"Well – maybe Tonk told you a fact. It was your job, though, to tip off the crew. But how did Tonk know about the job if Driller didn't tell him?"

"Say – if he was The Shadow, he'd have found some way to know about it. There ain't nothin' he can't find out. But that ain't all, Gyp. This fellow Tonk had a bag with him."

"What kind of a bag? A keister?"

"Sure. Sort of a little suitcase. I asked him what it was for. He says to hold the swag."

"Likely enough."

"Yeah. But Driller already had two bags up in the rumble of his coupe. One with the drills; the other for the swag. Cokey put them there. Well, when we got out on Long Island, it was Tonk that brought in the bags; and he had his own with the others."

"What then?"

"He went into the room where the box was. Alone, with Driller. That's where the trouble started. Driller was sort of stallin' on the job. Gat went in to see about it. Shots. Then instead of Driller or Gat, out comes The Shadow."

"He might have been in there beforehand."

"Not much chance, Gyp. It's easier to figure he was Tonk Ringo, with that cloak and hat in the bag he brought along with him. This ain't no pipe-dream, Gyp –"

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"I'm not sayin' it is. How long was this Tonk Ringo with Driller? A couple of weeks you say?"

"Yeah."

"And this was the first job he was in? The first one that brought Driller and Gat together?"

"Yeah."

Gyp considered. His meditation ended with a nod.

"You've spotted it. Skeeter," he declared, "The Shadow was Tonk Ringo. Do you think he was wise that you were getting orders from somewhere and passing them to Driller? That you were getting orders from me?"

"He couldn't have knowed that, Gyp. I never came here. I didn't see much of Tonk. It was Cokey that got him in with the mob. He must have bluffed Cokey. Listen, Gyp – I wouldn't have come here right now if I'd thought that The Shadow was wise –"

"Cut it. This is the best spot for you. You've got to lay low. Keep away from the joints. And I've got to watch it too. Well – that's easy."

Gyp leered, and paced about the room. He stopped to pour himself another drink. He offered the bottle to Skeeter, who accepted. The little mobster began to lose his nervousness.

"Say, Gyp," he declared, "this figurin' that The Shadow was Tonk Ringo means somethin'. Do you know it?"

"It means plenty!" snarled Gyp, "It means too much."

"You don't get what I'm drivin' at. It means that there's some jobs The Shadow don't bother about bustin' up."

"What, for instance?"

"He ain't goin' to bother one crook that's after another."

"How do you figure that?"

"Last week" – Skeeter paused to reach for the bottle – "Driller went out to get Reds Parrock. A grudge job. He got Reds, too. A couple of the mob dumped the corpse."

"Was Tonk Ringo with them?" asked Gyp, quickly.

"No," replied Skeeter, "but he was wise to what was bein' pulled. He could've smeared the game if he'd wanted to. But he didn't. That's why I figure it that The Shadow ain't goin' to stop one crook from puttin' the finger on another."

"And you think that ought to interest me?"

"Sure it ought! Ain't there one guy you'd like to see in the morgue? The guy that –"

"Never mind; I remember. I told you about Cuyler Willington."

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"Sure you did. And you said he was sort of a high-brow guy. In with mugs that had dough. Around ritzy joints, the kind of places that The Shadow might be watchin'. You said if it wasn't for The Shadow, you might take a shot at this dude Willington –"

"I remember. Let's forget Willington."

"But Willington's a crook, ain't he? And if he's a crook, The Shadow's goin' to find it out after you put Willington on the spot. And The Shadow ain't goin' to worry about –"

"Hold it Skeeter! Take another shot and then turn in. I've got a room here for you."

Gyp opened the door and called for Mahmud. The Hindu appeared. Gyp delivered a jargon of words. Mahmud nodded and turned to Skeeter. The puny mobster finished his drink, waved good-night to Gyp and departed.

Gyp Tangoli closed the door. He seated himself in an easy-chair and peered toward the ceiling. His dark-hued face showed a frown. A snarl came from his lips. Then an insidious leer replaced it. Gold teeth gleamed in the light.

Gyp's claim as a big shot had been ended tonight. Hidden in this lair, the dark-faced crook had used Gat Lober and Driller Borson as his tools, with Skeeter Wigan as an intermediary. He had lost Gat and Driller. Skeeter had come here for refuge.

Yet, as he considered, Gyp Tangoli was sure that the link had been broken; that his hidden part had not been uncovered by The Shadow. To The Shadow, he was just a small-fry crook. That was cause for satisfaction.

That part settled, Gyp was considering Skeeter's final statements. Crook against crook. The Shadow would not intervene. That was Skeeter's theory. The case of "Reds" Parrock, rubbed out by Driller Borson, was tangible evidence.

Gyp Tangoli chuckled as he poured himself a night-cap. He was thinking of Cuyler Willington, the man whom Skeeter had mentioned. New crime – bigger crime – all would be possible, with Willington eliminated.

A new goal lay before Gyp Tangoli. It would start with crook against crook. It would finish with rampant crime. The way was clear. For Gyp Tangoli had gained an inside knowledge of the motives of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. THE NEW ALLIANCE

AT nine o'clock the next evening, Gyp Tangoli alighted from a taxicab on Broadway. Glittering lights above a marquee spelled the name "Club Cadiz." This garish pleasure palace was Gyp's destination.

The dark-visaged big shot nodded in response to the doorman's greeting. He entered the night club and ascended a flight of steps, for the main room of the Club Cadiz was located on the second floor.

At the top of the steps, Gyp looked over a glittering scene. Tables were crowded at the Club Cadiz. A floor show was in progress. All eyes were toward the spotlight that centered upon a pair of acrobatic dancers.

Gyp nudged a headwaiter who was by the door. The fellow started, swung about and nodded as he saw Gyp's dark, grinning face.

THE DARK DEATH

"Hello, Mr. Tangoli," said the headwaiter. "You want a table? Expecting to meet friends?"

"I'm looking for Turk Berchler," returned Gyp. "Seen him around?"

"In the gaming room," whispered the headwaiter.

Gyp nodded. He strolled away and skirted the big room until he reached a short passage. He came to a door. He knocked. A loophole popped open; a dark eye recognized him, as its owner peered from within. Bolts slid back. Gyp entered the gaming room.

This was a profitable department of the Club Cadiz. The room was large; its walls were lined with slot machines. In the center, a throng was gathered about a roulette table that stood upon a heavy pedestal.

A keen-eyed, mustached individual was operating the roulette wheel. Gyp knew the fellow – Tony Luggeto. He was supposed to have run a roulette wheel at Monte Carlo. No one had ever inquired why Tony had come to America.

Near the head of the roulette table stood a portly, gray-haired man whose paunchy-cheeked face was the shade of a manila parchment. This was Nicky Donarth, proprietor of the Club Cadiz. Gyp approached the portly man. Nicky shook hands.

Tony Luggeto's dark face turned toward them. The roulette operator eyed the meeting. Then Tony concentrated on the wheel. He was close enough, however, to hear what the pair had to say.

"Where's Turk Berchler?" questioned Gyp, in an undertone.

"In my office," responded Nicky, "You want to see him?"

"Sure thing."

"Then go on in."

Gyp strolled away. At the far side of the room he found the door marked "Office". He entered, followed a short passage and came to a second door.

It was locked. Gyp knocked.

"Who's there?" came a sharp voice, "Nicky?"

"No," returned Gyp. "It's me, Turk. Gyp Tangoli."

The door opened when "Turk" turned the inner lock. Gyp entered and found himself in a small room.

Desk and chairs in the center; beyond them a safe. There were two other doorways in the office, one at each side of the room. These were closed with heavy metal barriers.

Turk Berchler was a squatty, pug-nosed man whose tawny complexion was almost as dark as Gyp's. His eyes were black and gleamy. His puffy lips showed a slight smile.

"Thought I'd be hearing from you, Gyp." commented Turk. "Sit down. Let's chat."

THE DARK DEATH

Gyp nodded. He took a chair; accepted a cigar that Turk plucked from a box on Nicky's desk; then shrugged his shoulders.

"Not much to talk about, Turk," he said. "You've seen the newspapers. Gat Lober and Driller Borson got theirs."

"And they were working for you."

"Yeah."

Turk was lighting a cigar of his own. His sharp eyes were watching Gyp's sour countenance. Turk laughed harshly.

"I told you to lay off those mugs," he asserted. "Palookas, both of them. Everybody knew that Driller was a safe-cracker. And Gat was always too ready with a rod. What's more, he was on the lam. It's a wonder the bulls didn't wise up to them sooner."

"It wasn't the bulls that got them, Turk."

"No? Who was it, then? Some guys muscling in on their game?"

"Guess again."

Turk shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got me," he insisted.

"It was The Shadow, Turk," informed Gyp.

Turk Berchler blinked. He became visibly nervous. For a moment he started to draw away, as though fearing to be in the same room with Gyp Tangoli.

The visitor laughed.

"Don't worry, Turk," said Gyp. "There's no trail leading to me. Only one guy The Shadow might follow – and I've got him hiding out at my apartment. Skeeter Wigan."

Turk managed to smile.

"Listen, Turk," declared Gyp. "You said you thought you'd be hearing from me. Well, you are. I'm here to talk business."

"Maybe I'm not interested, Gyp."

"On account of The Shadow?"

"Yeah – in a way."

"You can forget The Shadow."

THE DARK DEATH

"That sounds all right. But that's not all, Gyp. You want me to pick up where Driller and Gat left off. That doesn't hit me as such a swell proposition."

"Why not?"

"Because the jobs they pulled were the cream. I'm getting the left-overs if I go in with you. And The Shadow is –"

"Wait a minute, Turk."

Gyp arose and paced about the office. Finally he stopped and faced the squatty crook. He spoke in a straightforward tone that impressed Turk Berchler.

"LISTEN, Turk," said Gyp. "I knew that Driller and Gat were small-timers. That's why I used them on the jobs I did. That's why I didn't want you working for me. I've been saving you for something real."

"First of all, I've got to go back a bit and tell you how I got started in this business. It goes back to before the time I met you. Before I mixed in the rackets; before I had that speak on Forty-ninth Street."

Turk nodded. He sensed that he was about to hear something extraordinary.

"Did you ever hear of Swami Marabout Bey?" questioned Gyp.

Turk shook his head.

"Well," declared Gyp, "I was the swami. What I couldn't see in a crystal ball wasn't worth seeing. I was a hot shot. Invited out to swanky homes. Had a couple of Hindus with me. Talked their lingo."

"The same guys you've got now?"

"Yeah. Mahmud and Bundha. But it wasn't only crystal gazing that I did. I looked around those ritzy places where I went. I learned a lot about the people who owned them – a whole lot, I did."

"Say," put in Turk, with a grin, "I'm beginning to see –"

"Hold up," interposed Gyp. "You haven't heard anything yet. At one of those places I ran into a rich guy named Cuyler Willington. Ever hear of him?"

"Sure. He lives at the Hotel Royal. Comes in here right along. Nicky knows him."

"All right. Get a picture of Willington. Fine-looking guy, isn't he? Tall, handsome face, eyes blue, hair almost white – looks like a society dude."

"He is."

"So you think. But I know different. I know Willington is a crook!"

"Say –"

"No hokum, Turk. When I was playing the swami game, Willington spotted that I was phony. He came to see me one night and laid his cards on the table. Wanted me to work with him."

"A swell stunt."

"That's what I thought. Willington got me in with the real people. I picked up enough information to last me a year. Places that were set-ups. Cash, jewels, laying around in boxes that you could open with a hair-pin."

"And you went after them, Gyp?"

"No, I didn't. Willington said hands off."

"Was he goofy?"

"No. He wanted to work those society people for big dough. Smooth, so there'd be no comeback. That sounded pretty good. But some of the jobs were so easy I couldn't pass them up. I raided one swell apartment and swiped a lot of sparklers that I fenced for ten grand."

"Did Willington find out about it?"

"Sure – when I offered him his split. He was sore."

"Sore about getting five grand?"

"You bet. He said we could have made fifty grand out of those saps – fifty grand apiece, if I'd let him play them. He was going to burn them with a phony stock deal, as near as I could make out. Anyway, Willington gave me the gate."

"What did you do then?"

"What was there to do? I quit the swami racket and put my dough in the speak. I became Gyp Tangoli again. Willington used to drop in at the speak. We talked friendly enough."

"And then?"

"The speak went sour. Too many of them in New York. I tried a racket; it went on the bum. So I started this new game. Using Driller and Gat to raid places I knew about."

"What did Willington say to that?"

"Nothing. Because I only picked places that I had learned about before I met Wellington. I knew he'd get tough if I took a whack at any of his ritzy friends. I had five good jobs I knew about. Lovenson's – that Long island place – was the last of them."

Turk nodded. He was calculating, and his dark face showed a gleam that matched Gyp's evil leer.

"Listen, Turk," stated Gyp. "There's just one reason why I've laid off of Cuyler Willington. That's because he's supposed to be a society guy. I figured that if I tried to bump him, I'd have The Shadow on my neck,"

"Maybe you would," agreed Turk. "They say The Shadow keeps an eye on people who have dough, just because he knows they're the ones that crooks will go after."

"That's right. But I learned something last night that changes all that. Skeeter wised up that The Shadow was with Driller's mob under the name of Tonk Ringo."

THE DARK DEATH

"Acting as a gorilla?"

"Yeah. And he knew about it when Driller bumped Reds Parrock. He didn't bust the game. See what that means? If a crook gets a crook, The Shadow lets it ride."

"I get it. You're figuring on the same thing if you go after Willington. But maybe The Shadow don't know that Wilmington's crooked."

"I don't think he does. But suppose we give Willington the works. What'll the police do about it?"

"They'll investigate Willington's affairs."

"Sure. And The Shadow?"

"He'll do the same."

"Right. And they'll find out that Willington was a phony. He goes in for blackmail, Turk. As soon as he's bumped, a lot of saps are going to spill what they know about him. People who are keeping their traps shut right at present."

"I'm getting it now."

"Sure you are. When The Shadow gets the real dope about what Willington was, he's going to laugh about it. A crook bumped by crooks. He won't worry who did it."

"And then –"

"We'll wait a while. Sit tight and look gentle. Then we'll bust loose. One job after another. Places I learned about while I was working with Willington. And he won't be around to crimp the game."

Turk thrust out a hand. Gyp received it. The two crooks grinned as they formed their pact. Then came a click at the door; a key turned in the lock. Nicky Donarth entered.

THE night club proprietor chatted pleasantly as he went to the safe and opened it. Nicky removed a stack of bank notes, closed the safe and went out.

As soon as the door closed behind him, Gyp turned to Turk.

"What about Nicky?" questioned Gyp. "You know him pretty well, don't you, Turk?"

"Sure," grinned Turk. "He and I are pals. You wouldn't find him leaving me alone in this office if we wasn't."

"He'd give you an alibi if you needed it?"

"Sure, he would. Want me to talk to him?"

"Yeah. But don't tell him too much, Turk. You've got some torpedoes you can count on?"

"Any time I want them. Not a bunch of bum gorillas, either. Smart guys."

"Use them. Tail Willington. Have Nicky fixed to give you an alibi. But don't tell him what for until after you've rubbed out Willington. Get it?"

"Every bit. Leave it to me, Gyp."

Gyp Tangoli leered. He strolled to the door, turned the latch and went out, closing the door behind him.

Turk Berchler sat down behind Nicky Donarth's desk and began to drum with his fingers. A grin appeared upon his dark face.

But that grin was nothing to the gleaming leer that Gyp Tangoli wore when he entered a taxicab outside the Club Cadiz. For Gyp Tangoli, thwarted by The Shadow, was looking forward to bigger and more profitable crime.

CHAPTER VIII. THE FIRST THRUST

Two nights later, the pretentious lobby of the Hotel Royal was thronged with guests. An elevator arrived at the ground floor. Its doors clanged open. The last person to step forth was a man attired in evening clothes.

There was something debonair about this guest's appearance. He looked like a member of the elite. His attire was perfect. His face was handsome, except for a slight paleness that was accentuated by the near-whiteness of his hair.

Approaching the desk, the tall man inquired if any mail had come for him. The clerk gave a negative response, addressing the tall man as "Mr. Willington." Leaving his key, Willington strolled from the lobby and hailed a taxicab. He ordered the driver to take him to an address on Ninety-sixth Street.

As he rode along, Cuyler Willington adjusted a cigarette in a long holder. He lighted the cigarette, tossed the match from the window and looked out through the back of the cab. He noted a green cab close behind his taxi. He spotted the license number.

Willington's cab entered Central Park. The tall man looked back again. He saw the same cab still close behind. He rapped at the driver's window.

"Take a long way through the park," he ordered. "Drive around a bit. I like the air."

The driver nodded and changed course. Willington looked back. The same cab was still tailing. It kept on the trail as the curving course continued.

Willington lighted another cigarette. A puzzled frown appeared upon his forehead.

The driver finally decided that he had tacked enough unnecessary fare on the meter. He ended the meandering course and came back to a direct route. The cab left Central Park and finally arrived at the address that Willington had given. The place was a restaurant.

As Willington finished paying the driver, the green cab pulled up to the curb.

Willington spied it, turned quickly and entered the restaurant. He chose a table near the back. As he ordered from the menu, he looked sidelong to the front. He spied a darkish face peering through the plate-glass window.

THE DARK DEATH

The waiter brought soup. Willington finished the course, then arose suddenly. Close by was a door that formed an exit to a service entrance. Willington swung swiftly in that direction, cut through a passage and stepped out into the darkness of Ninety–fifth Street.

His pace became a jogging run for half a block. Then Willington darted into the entrance of an apartment house. Panting slightly, he pressed a button on the wall–board holding the names of the building tenants; then gave a quick ring to the bell button beneath. He picked up a hanging receiver, expecting a response from above. Instead, the front door buzzed. Willington leaped for the barrier, dashed through and closed the door behind him. He made for the automatic elevator.

Thirty seconds later, a hard–faced man entered the front of the apartment building. He had spotted Wilmington's flight. The fellow took a look at the wall–board. He was sure that Willington had not gained time to press another button. He noted the connection button pressed at 3 B. The name on the card was "H. Mollin".

The spy ducked out into the street. He found a man awaiting him. It was Turk Berchler. The spy reported.

"H. Mollin", chuckled Turk. "Say – that's a hot one! That guy is Congo Mollin! I knew him before he took a rap over at the Island. Been playing softy since then. I've been up to this apartment of his. Good work, Terry. Come along."

The two men walked down the street to where others awaited them. Turk Berchler held confab with his torpedoes. One of them was a long–haired fellow who looked like a musician. He was carrying a guitar case. The crew moved toward a corner.

Up in Apartment 3 B. Cuyler Wellington was lighting a cigarette as he talked to a tall, solemn–faced man. This was "Congo" Mollin. He looked like a butler; in fact, he had been one, prior to serving time at Welfare Island.

This was not the first time that Cuyler Wellington had been to Congo's apartment. Yet tonight, the gentleman crook was evidencing a new interest in the place. He and Congo were seated in a plainly–furnished living room. Congo was pouring his guest a drink from a decanter that he had taken from the top of a radio cabinet.

"Nice layout you've got here. Congo," remarked Willington. "It should prove very quiet and restful at nights."

"You think so?" replied Congo. "Well, it isn't. These windows open on the back alley. There's a garage on the other side. They make plenty of noise pulling cars in and out after midnight."

"What about the bedroom?"

"That's better." Congo opened a door and turned on the light. "It opens into a court and the noise isn't so bad. But it's stuffy and I have to leave the door open to the living room. So I get the noise anyway."

"Too bad. You ought to move away from here."

"I'm going to – next month. I'm getting sick of this place."

"Well, Congo," – Willington held out his glass while the solemn man filled it – "you're going out with me tonight."

"How come?"

THE DARK DEATH

"I want to talk with you."

"If it's about Brophy –"

"We'll come to Brophy, later. You've got a dress suit, haven't you?"

"Packed in camphor."

"Dig it out. Put it on."

"Where are we going?"

"I don't know yet. Maybe down to the Club Cadiz. You need full dress to get into the gaming room there."

"All right." Congo went into the bedroom and Willington followed. Congo rummaged in the closet. "Here's the glad rags."

"Get into them. I'll talk while you're dressing."

"I've got bad news about Brophy."

"Let me hear it."

Congo began to talk solemnly as he spread out the dress suit on the bed. Willington watched him from a chair in the corner.

"I WENT to see Brophy last night," explained Congo, "I told him another payment was due. He said he didn't have the money."

"Yes? What did he do with it?"

"He didn't get it."

"That sounds thin, Congo, you know he gets a thousand a month from the Universal Electric Company. Besides his regular amount from investments."

"They've cut off his advances."

"They couldn't. He's under contract to develop that Q-ray machine of theirs."

"That's just the trouble. The Q-ray has gone blooey. Experiments suspended."

"On what account?"

"Too dangerous. It killed two men. They're giving Brophy a leave of absence until their own men have made more tests. A fellow named Sundler is in charge."

"I don't like the story, Congo. You told me that Brophy used to work right in the path of the ray. He said it wasn't dangerous."

"He didn't think it was. Then something funny happened. You know how pale, pasty-like, Brophy is?"

THE DARK DEATH

"Yes. What has that to do with it?"

"Well, the other fellows weren't pale. The ones that got killed. They were dark."

"You mean that the Q-ray finished them but couldn't hurt Brophy?"

"That's what Brophy says."

"What about this fellow Sundler?"

"He's a Scandinavian. It can't hurt him either."

"Bunk, Congo. Bunk!"

"Maybe it is. Anyway, Brophy sticks to his story. You know the deal you had with him. He was to pay you what came from that Q-ray machine. Well, he says he's getting nothing."

"What does he intend to do about it?"

"He wants to go away. Says he needs a rest. He's getting enough income from his investments to take a trip."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him it would be tough for him if he moved out of the city. Said I'd pass his message along to you. He's waiting to hear from us."

"All right, Congo. I shall see Mr. Seth Brophy in person. If this tale about the capers of the Q-ray is true, I may make allowances. But if it is a lie, I'll penalize him half his regular income, along with the advance money he gets from Universal Electric."

By this time, Congo had donned his dress suit. It fitted him well and looked good except for a few creases where trousers and coat had been folded. Congo stood in front of a mirror and began to adjust a white bow tie.

Willington spoke in casual manner. "Gyp Tangoli ran into a cropper, Congo."

"You mean that mess out on Long Island?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure Driller Borson and Gat Lober were working for him?"

"That's my guess."

"Your guesses are generally good."

"I know that chump like a book," mused Willington. "When Gyp was pulling the Swami Bey business, I could figure everything that was in his one-track mind. That's why I had to get rid of him. He was crude."

"So you always said."

THE DARK DEATH

"Gyp tried to be a Hindu swami. He wasn't bad at that job. But as a speakeasy proprietor, as a racketeer, he was just another lemon. I figured he was out to be a big shot after that. Well, he lost out. But he's starting up again."

"Who's he getting to replace Driller and Gat?"

"He's picked Turk Berchler."

"No!" Congo swung around with a startled look. "Who told you that?"

"Tony Luggeto, who runs the roulette wheel down at the Club Cadiz. Tony's done work for me, you know."

"Tony saw Gyp and Turk together?"

"Yes. Two nights ago. They had a conference in Nicky Donarth's office."

"I don't like it."

"Why not?"

Congo eyed Willington seriously.

"Gyp Tangoli would like to get you," he declared. "He hasn't nerve to try it alone. But with Turk to help him he's liable to point the finger in your direction."

Willington clapped Congo on the shoulder.

"Thanks for the tip," he laughed. "You're a pal, Congo. You stood by me the time I pinched Lady Atherton's pearl necklace. If they'd found it on me, there at Thoreau's, it would have been the end of my career."

"But you slipped it to me," added Congo, with a smile. "To me, Thoreau's butler. They found it on me."

"And you took the rap. Stout fellow. You'd do anything to help me out, wouldn't you, Congo?"

"I sure would. Any time –"

"Then get me a drink. Out of that pet decanter of yours. That imported stuff is great."

Congo laughed. He stepped past Willington and left the bedroom. Willington watched him start across the living room toward the radio cabinet where the decanter stood.

Like Willington, Congo was now in evening attire. His figure looked very much like that of his visitor. Congo had to walk past the row of three windows as he headed for the far corner of the living room. Willington was straining as he gazed from the doorway of the bedroom.

Congo passed the first window. He was at the second. The window was open; sounds of snorting automobiles could be heard from the garage across the alley. Then came a sharp, sudden rattle that sounded like the tattoo of a riveting machine.

Rat–tat–tat–tat–tat! Congo Mollin slumped suddenly in his tracks and went sprawling to the floor. He had stepped directly into the path of a machine–gun barrage that had opened from the roof across the way.

THE DARK DEATH

More bullets pounded the inner wall of the living room, while Cuyler Willington watched plaster crackle and fall in chunks. Then the firing stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

WILLINGTON stood quietly in the doorway. He could hear shouts from the alleyway below. Men in the garage had heard the volley from the roof. They were raising an excited cry.

At the end of two minutes Willington smiled. He knew the assassins would be gone by this time.

Calmly, the tall man strolled across the room. He poured himself a drink from the decanter. Holding the glass, he stared at Congo's bullet-riddled form and shook his head sadly.

"Too bad, Congo," spoke Willington, to the dead man. "It had to be one of us. The same as before. You didn't know it was coming. It was an easy out."

"You did look good in a dress suit, Congo. If you hadn't, they wouldn't have mistaken you for me. I thought that garage roof would be the spot they would choose. I guessed right again, Congo."

With that final comment, Willington tossed down his drink and replaced the glass beside the decanter. He left the apartment and descended in the automatic elevator. Three minutes later, he was hailing a cab on the avenue near Ninety-fifth Street.

But the address that he gave the driver was neither the Club Cadiz nor the Hotel Royal. Cuyler Willington had decided that it would not be healthy to return to either of those haunts.

From now on, he intended to remain at some obscure hotel as long as he might be in Manhattan. For this thrust from Gyp Tangoli had come through Turk Berchler. Those fellows meant business.

Cuyler Willington was pondering deeply as he adjusted a cigarette in the long holder. His thoughts concerned his future actions as a suave gentleman of crime.

CHAPTER IX. THE SHADOW LISTENS

"HELLO, Fritz."

Detective Joe Cardona gave the greeting from behind his battered desk at headquarters. He was speaking to a tall, dull-faced janitor. Clad in overalls, the fellow had entered with mop and bucket.

"Yah," responded Fritz.

A smile showed on Joe Cardona's swarthy face. Fritz, the janitor, was a card. His vocabulary seemed limited to that single expression, "yah."

Fritz began to work with mop and bucket. That was his policy when Joe Cardona stayed overtime in his office. Fritz mopped up when he was ready. Joe had to like it. So Joe always managed to get a laugh out of the situation.

A man stepped into the office. It was Detective Sergeant Markham. Joe Cardona had been waiting for him. As acting inspector, Joe had sent Markham out to gather facts.

"Anything new on that Congo Mollin killing?" questioned Joe.

THE DARK DEATH

"Not a thing," replied Markham. "They had the machine gun on the garage roof; but they must have made an easy get-away while everybody was running around in the alley."

"And it was half an hour before anybody found Congo," mused Joe. "Well, there's another crook gone. What I can't figure is why anybody wanted to get Congo."

"Maybe they thought he was playing stool pigeon," put in Markham. "He'd been behaving himself ever since he came back from the Island."

"That's just it," declared Cardona. "He was behaving too well. Keeping away from tough spots. Nobody would have figured him as a stoolie. Particularly since he wasn't one."

"Have you checked up on him?"

"Yes. But it looks like he's been on the level. The people up at the apartment house say he was quiet and orderly. Minded his own business."

"How about the guys with the typewriter, Joe? Have you figured who they might be?"

"Not yet. I thought of half a dozen. They all have alibis. Take Turk Berchler, for instance. I figured he might have been capable of the job. But he was up at the Club Cadiz all evening. Nicky Donarth said so."

"Nicky's reliable, too. Say – he's running a little strong with that gambling joint of his."

"It wasn't operating when I was in there. But that was in the afternoon. I told Nicky that he'd better watch himself, though. If we found any gambling equipment, we'd crack down on him."

"What did he say?"

"Told me to pay a visit any time I wanted. Said if I found a roulette wheel there I could pinch the place. He's got one, though. But I guess it's only temporary. It wasn't there this afternoon. But let's get back to Congo Mollin."

"All right."

MARKHAM drew a list from his pocket. He handed it to Cardona. Joe read it and shook his head.

"Places he worked at before he went to the Island," said Joe. "Those don't mean anything. I'll keep the list though."

He tucked it in a desk drawer.

"There's just one thing that puzzles me," observed Cardona, "I looked Congo's body over at the morgue. What I want to know is why that guy was wearing a dress suit."

"He must have had a date."

"Where? Why the glad rags? Congo didn't play the gentleman. Anyway, he hadn't worn that dress suit for a long time. It smelled so strong of camphor that you couldn't smell the formaldehyde in the morgue."

"That's odd, all right."

THE DARK DEATH

"I'll say it is." Joe got up from his desk. "A crook that's doing nothing but minding his own business. Dolled up in a dress suit for the first time in months. Plugged by machine gunners who went out of their way to get him. It beats me."

"Do you think anybody was up there with him?" questioned Markham.

"No," replied Cardona. "There was some liquor gone from a decanter; but only one glass had been used. Congo might have taken a drink for himself."

"Did the doc say he'd been drinking?"

"No. But he might have taken one drink an hour or two before he was bumped. It doesn't mean anything, Markham. Well, just between us, nobody's going to lose any sleep over the murder of Congo Mollin. We'll keep on the case; but you know what the commissioner thinks."

"Good riddance?"

"Right."

Cardona and Markham went out, leaving Fritz mopping by the wall. A strange shadow flickered across the floor as the tall, stooped janitor turned toward the desk. A sudden gleam appeared in Fritz's listless eyes.

The janitor plucked the list from the drawer. He read Markham's notations. As he replaced the list, he indulged in a soft, whispered laugh. Fritz, the janitor, was The Shadow!

CARRYING mop and bucket, The Shadow left Cardona's office and shuffled off to an obscure locker. He set down the objects that he carried. He drew black garments from a shelf and donned them. The overalls slipped from beneath the dark cloak. The Shadow hung them in the locker. He stepped away. His cloaked figure faded suddenly beyond the locker.

Footsteps. A scrawny, stooping man came into view. It was the real Fritz. The fellow opened the locker, donned his overalls and picked up mop and bucket. He departed. Again, The Shadow laughed softly.

He had arrived ahead of Fritz. He had played the role of the janitor and had ended the clever part just before Fritz reached headquarters. With Fritz gone, the way was clear.

Finding a deserted corridor, The Shadow glided out into the night.

LATER, a tiny flashlight glimmered in a room where dull illumination came from three windows. The Shadow was in the living room of Congo Mollin's apartment.

The room was exactly as the police had found it. The Shadow knew this through a report from Clyde Burke, who had covered the story for the Classic. Every detail fitted Clyde's description. But the reporter had mentioned something beside the decanter and the glass. He had noted several cigarette stumps, all of the same brand.

The Shadow found them. Four in an ash tray in the living room. Three in the bedroom. Like the single glass beside the decanter, these apparently meant nothing. Congo Mollin could have smoked the seven cigarettes himself. But The Shadow noted something that gave a different indication.

THE DARK DEATH

Of the four cigarettes in the living room, two were slightly ragged at the end. They had been held between moistened lips. The other two had a twisted crimp; furthermore, they had been smoked a half inch further.

The three cigarette stumps in the bedroom also had twisted ends. They had been smoked close to their limit. The Shadow turned his tiny flashlight on the bureau. Its glow showed odds and ends that Cardona had found in the pockets of Congo's discarded suit. The Shadow looked for a cigarette holder. None was present.

The light clicked out. The Shadow moved about in the gloom. Then a door opened softly and closed again. The Shadow had departed from the apartment.

LATER, a click sounded in a pitch-black room. A bluish lamp glowed upon a polished table. Long, white hands appeared beneath that light. A shimmering gem glowed from a finger of the left. Those pale hands were like detached creatures. The Shadow was in his sanctum.

A hand began to write in bluish ink. Words dried, then faded as The Shadow inscribed his thoughts. With uncanny precision, he was reconstructing events at Congo Mollin's. He had disregarded the decanter and the glass. Only one man had imbibed liquor. But two had smoked cigarettes.

Congo Mollin, lacking a cigarette holder, had consumed two in the living room, while his visitor was smoking two cigarettes in a holder. Then Congo had gone into the bedroom to don evening clothes. His guest had accompanied him. Three cigarettes – all smoked in a holder – gave evidence of the visitor's presence.

Cigarette holders were no longer fads. A person using one would probably be fastidious. The type of man who would wear evening clothes. A soft laugh told that The Shadow was gaining an answer to the mystery of Congo Mollin's death.

Picturing a visitor in evening clothes, The Shadow visualized Congo dressing to accompany his friend. Congo coming out into the living room. Passing the windows, a target for waiting snipers.

Crooks had seen the visitor enter clad in full evening dress. They had mistaken Congo for him. Their quick fire had found the wrong man. The desired victim had departed, unscathed. Chances were that he, like Congo, was a crook.

The Shadow, however, left nothing to chance. He had taken special interest in the death of Congo Mollin because it lacked motive. His deductions proved that assassins had missed their man. Someone was still at large, a tribe of killers ready to find his trail.

The Shadow saw an important task: To determine whether or not this person was a crook like Congo. He pictured the unknown as a smooth, keen individual. One who had not lost his nerve after seeing Congo die. One clever enough – if crooked – to have coaxed Congo into doom intended for himself!

Writing on the sheet of paper, The Shadow inscribed names from memory. Those names had been on Markham's list. They were the persons in whose employ Congo had served prior to his imprisonment on Welfare Island.

There were six names in all. Among them was that of Cuyler Willington – for Congo had at one time served as valet to the fashionable crook. That name had no special significance as yet. The Shadow passed it as he went to the bottom of the list.

Titus Thoreau. That was the final name. Thoreau, a New York banker, was Congo's employer at the time the crook had been arrested for robbery. Thoreau would remember the man. Again, The Shadow laughed.

THE DARK DEATH

This very evening, Joe Cardona had mentioned the most important point regarding Congo Mollin: namely, the dead man's past. But Cardona could see no link between the past and the present. Congo Mollin had been quiescent since his release from Welfare Island. He had had no gang connections, even before his imprisonment.

To The Shadow's analysis, the fact that Congo had been on good behavior since leaving the Island was an indication of some past connection. Why had Congo found it good policy to settle down to quiet life after his release?

That was a question that The Shadow was determined to answer. Through it he could see some chance of learning the identity of Congo's unknown visitor. He could then discover why that man's life had been sought.

The light clicked out. A soft laugh crept through the black walls of the sanctum. It rose to a mocking tone that faded with eerie echoes. Then came silence. The Shadow had departed.

THE master sleuth had seen no cause for haste. He had divined that the man he sought must be cunning enough to keep away from danger for days to come. In that assumption, The Shadow was correct.

But at the very moment of The Shadow's decision, chance was creeping into affairs of crime. Strange circumstances were due to cause a change of tactics on the part of Cuyler Willington. Already, the man whom The Shadow sought was on his way to a meeting that was destined to inspire him to a desperate counter-thrust.

Murder was in the making, thanks to that attempt by Turk Berchler. Cuyler Willington, the hunted, was fated to become the hunter!

CHAPTER X. THE SECOND MACHINE

A TAXICAB had stopped on a secluded street in the West Eighties. A man was peering from the window. His was the face of the hunted. The driver turned to open the door. The man calmed himself, stepped out and paid the fare.

The cab pulled away. Cuyler Willington stood alone on the curb. He repeated his quick glances in both directions. No one was in sight. Willington ascended brownstone steps and rang a bell.

A full minute passed while Willington waited, close against the door. Then came the clatter of a lock. The door opened. A nervous, pasty-faced man stepped back as Willington entered.

"Hello, Brophy." greeted Willington, quietly. "Close the door."

"Very well." Brophy's voice had a slight quaver. "I – I didn't expect you. I – I thought that maybe Mollin was coming –"

"Didn't you read today's newspapers?" questioned Willington, abruptly, as they walked toward a flight of stairs.

"No," replied Brophy. "I have been busy packing."

"Congo Mollin is dead."

"Dead! You – you mean murdered?"

"Yes."

"Who is responsible?"

"The police are trying to find out."

"Mollin," mumbled Brophy. "Mollin – dead –"

"But he talked to me before he was killed," interposed Willington. They were at the head of the stairs. "That's why I'm here, Brophy. Where can we talk?"

"In my laboratory," faltered Brophy. "In here."

He led the way to a small room that was fitted with electrical machines and other equipment. Willington took a chair; he drew a cigarette from a case and placed it in his holder.

Willington was not in evening attire tonight; but he was fashionably dressed. He made a contrast to Brophy. The electrical expert was wearing a shabby suit with baggy trousers.

"So you're packed up," parried Willington. "Does that mean you are going somewhere?"

"Only if you permit me," responded Brophy, quickly. "I – I could see no harm in packing while I waited to hear from you."

"Where are you going? That is, if you go."

"I haven't decided. I need a change. I've thought of Bermuda. But I haven't bought tickets yet –"

"That's good. We have a little matter to settle before you leave. A question of a thousand dollars a month. My expense money, Brophy. I need it. I'm going on a trip myself."

"I – I do owe you a thousand, Mr. Willington. That is, I would owe it, according to our agreement. But they have cut off my advance royalties."

"So Mollin told me." Willington's tone was a velvet purr. "He said you were cut down to the amount that you receive from your investments. Unfortunate for you, Brophy. You will have to sell some of your securities."

"I can't do that!" exclaimed Brophy. "They are part of a trust fund left me by my uncle. They bring me in very little, Willington. Very little."

"I am ready to consider a cash settlement, Brophy. Five thousand dollars. No more payments."

"But I don't have the five thousand."

WILLINGTON eyed Brophy steadily. He could see that the man was telling the truth. Brophy would have jumped at this chance to clear himself from further blackmail.

"I know you can ruin me, Willington," pleaded Brophy, suddenly. "If you let it out that I was mixed up with that electric belt fraud, five years ago, I would go to jail. I don't want to go to jail."

THE DARK DEATH

"Cut it, Brophy," put in Willington, abruptly. "You're not going to prison if you're telling the truth. I can do without your payments, provided that you are not getting them. But that yarn you told Congo Mollin did not impress me. I want to hear it straight from you. About the Q-ray."

"It is true, every word." Brophy's pasty face looked worn. "The experiments were halted when the ray proved dangerous at high intensity."

"It killed two men?"

"Instantly! They were melanochroids."

"Melanochroids?"

"Yes. That is Huxley's division for one class of the Caucasian race – those of darker skins. Spaniards, Italians, Sicilians, and others of that group. Those of lighter skin – you and I, for instance – are called xanthochroids."

"I see. I've heard the distinctions. But I thought they called light-complected persons Nordics and dark ones Mediterraneans."

"You are mixing two authorities," explained Brophy, with a solemn smile. "Deniker and Ripley. Deniker used the term Nordic, to mean xanthochroid, or light-skinned. Ripley used Mediterranean to indicate the dark-skinned melanochroid. There is another class – the Alpine – but we can confine ourselves to the two that I have mentioned."

"Basically, the Q-ray was intended to give light skins the structure of dark. We tried it on xanthochroids and found that it worked. It seemed to strengthen the skin structure. The ray seemed to have no harmful effects whatever."

"But we had never thought what might happen to melanochroids. We discovered the truth most unfortunately. Two members of the Universal laboratory staff were killed almost instantly by the Q-ray. That ended the experiments."

Willington looked impressed as he eyed Brophy. Incredible though the statements seemed, he was on the verge of believing them. Brophy persisted.

"I swear that what I have said is true," he declared. "Absolutely true! The skin structure of xanthochroids will absorb the Q-ray perfectly. But the dark-hued melanochroid cannot resist its power. The Q-ray machine covers a radius of thirty feet. Within that circle, death for a person of truly dark-skinned texture."

"Anywhere within the circle?"

"Practically. A person at the fringe of it might survive. Yet the second man who died at the laboratory was killed when almost thirty feet away."

"You say that death is instantaneous?"

"Yes – if the ray is at full intensity."

WILLINGTON stroked his chin. Then he shook his head and delivered a sour laugh.

THE DARK DEATH

"You're an inventor, Brophy," he remarked, "and like most of them, you're a bit balmy. You thought that electric belt would work, even though you would never be able to make a court believe that such was your true opinion.

"I am beginning to think that Universal Electric wanted to get rid of you and took an easy way out. Some wise gentleman decided that you were cracked and told you this fable. You believed it –"

Seth Brophy drew himself up to his full height. For a moment his eyes were glaring; then he delivered a crackly laugh. He clutched Willington's coat lapel.

"I can prove it!" ejaculated Brophy. "I can prove it – to you alone! You already have evidence that would send me to jail. I do not care if you gain more. I shall show you the Q–ray machine!"

"What are you going to do?" quizzed Willington, stepping away. "Crack the laboratory of the Universal Electric Company? You are crazy, Brophy!"

"Do you think so?" Again the wild laugh. "No, Willington. You are wrong. We do not need to go to the laboratory of the electric company. I have a duplicate machine right here."

"Where?" demanded Willington, looking about at Brophy's equipment. "I don't see it. You will be telling me next that it is invisible."

"Look!" Brophy hopped across the room and stopped at a tiled wall. He removed a loose section from the white tiling, digging it free with his fingernails. He pressed a switch.

"There is the duplicate machine!"

A section of the wall slid up as Brophy spoke. Willington, staring, saw a small secret room. From its interior gleamed a square, pillared device – the duplicate of the machine that James Sundler had shown to Lamont Cranston.

"Where did you get it, Brophy?" demanded Willington.

"I stole it," chuckled Brophy.

"Stole it?" Willington eyed the man. "Why, it must weigh a couple of hundred pounds."

"I stole it piece by piece." explained Brophy. "While I was working at the Universal Electric laboratory. I claimed that certain parts were defective and demanded that they be replaced. New parts were obtained. The old ones were discarded."

"You took them out one by one?"

"Yes. I smuggled them in sections. Not all, you understand. I was too clever for that. I took only those parts which I knew could not be obtained elsewhere. I had mechanics make the other sections according to my description."

"And this machine works?"

"It does. See" – Brophy pointed into the little room – "I have a crate there to pack it for shipment. But I am not taking it with me. It is safer here."

THE DARK DEATH

Willington nodded. He was thinking deeply.

"Would you like to have me demonstrate the Q-ray?" questioned Brophy.

Willington nodded.

CHUCKLING, the electrical inventor pulled a chair over by a bookcase. He clambered up and pulled a shoe box into view. Stepping down, he showed a pair of guinea pigs: one white, the other brown.

Brophy carried the box into the little room. He turned on an electric light. Willington stepped in after him. The visitor eyed the machine carefully.

"I should think shipment would damage this device," he remarked. "Those glass panels look fragile."

"They are shatter-proof," said Brophy. "The whole machine is strong. Even the tubes. The operation is simple. A mere attachment to an ordinary floor plug, as I have it here. Then this lever."

Willington started back. Brophy laughed and clutched his sleeve.

"Have no fear," said the inventor. "You are a pronounced xanthochroid, like myself. But it would be wise to close that panel."

He did so. The two men stood in the little room, under the single light. Brophy took the guinea pigs from the shoe box and placed them on the crate. He pointed to them as he pressed the lever.

"Watch."

Vivid sparks flashed about inside the dull-red tubes of the machine. Silently, the Q-ray began to develop its full power. Brophy spoke after an interval.

"It is time. Watch the guinea pigs." Willington did so. Both of the little creatures were moving about on the crate. Suddenly, the brown one stopped. It twisted sidewise and lay still. The white guinea pig kept crawling about.

"That is all," said Brophy, quietly.

He turned off the machine and picked up the brown guinea pig. Willington examined it. The creature was quite dead.

Red tubes were subsiding in the death machine. Brophy opened the panel. He put the white guinea pig in the shoe box and dropped the brown one in a corner of the little room. Stepping out into the laboratory, he mounted the chair and shoved the shoe box out of sight atop the bookcase.

Willington had also stepped from the secret room. He watched Brophy descend from the chair. Then he spoke his tone solemn, but friendly.

"You intend to leave tomorrow?" asked Willington.

"Tonight," returned Brophy. "If I have your permission."

"There is no boat for Bermuda tonight."

THE DARK DEATH

"I shall stay at a hotel. In the morning I can give the key to an express man and have him come for the baggage."

"Where are your trunks?"

"In the front room, downstairs."

"Brophy," decided Willington, "you have told me the truth. Your demonstration with the guinea pigs prove it. As proof of my friendship, I shall claim no further payments for my silence regarding your past."

"Do you mean that, Willington?"

"Positively. But there is one condition. I want that machine that you have in your secret room."

"No!" cried Brophy, hotly. "You can't have it, Willington! Much of it is my invention. It protects me, should the electric company try to deprive me of my due!"

"I want the machine only while you are away," purred Willington. "It will be safe with me. You should not leave it here."

"No one will find it –"

"There might be a fire."

Brophy looked startled. Then he considered. Finally he gave a nod.

"I shall lend you the machine," he declared. "But you must take care of it. Only, how can I arrange its delivery?"

"I shall explain that. Come. Pack the machine. We will carry it down with your trunks."

Brophy nodded. He and Willington stepped into the secret room and hoisted the Q-ray machine into its box. They clamped the lid; then carried the box out through the laboratory and downstairs.

"Let me have the key to this house," suggested Willington.

Brophy, puzzled, passed it to him.

"You will go out with me tonight," explained Willington. "Arrange your passage in the morning. Call me at the Hotel Royal. I shall send the express men. They will deliver your trunks at the pier. The box will come to me."

Brophy nodded.

"Let us go upstairs again," remarked Willington. "You left the secret panel open."

Brophy nodded. They went upstairs. They crossed the laboratory. The light was burning in the secret room. Brophy stepped through the panel and reached up to extinguish the light.

"Wait," ordered Willington. He had stepped into the secret room also. He pressed the switch that closed the panel. "I want to tell you something, Brophy."

THE DARK DEATH

Brophy turned. His eyes bulged with horror as he saw a gleam in Willington's fist. Then Willington jabbed a stub-nosed revolver into Brophy's ribs and pressed the trigger.

A muffled report. Brophy slumped, gasping. Pungent fumes filled the room.

Willington lifted the switch. The panel opened. Willington stepped out into the laboratory. He looked at the gasping form of Brophy.

"Sorry," said Willington, suavely. "I could not let you get anything on me, Brophy. You would know too much if I had let you live."

Brophy made no reply. His gasps ended. The pasty-faced inventor was dead.

WILLINGTON closed the panel and replaced the loose tile, jamming it in tightly. The secret room had become Seth Brophy's tomb.

Quietly, Willington turned out the laboratory lights. He went downstairs and extinguished the lower lights also. He left by the front door, locking it behind him with Brophy's key.

Cuyler Willington had used craft in his murder of Seth Brophy. He had chosen the secret room as the spot for the fatal shot, knowing that the revolver report would not be heard outside the house, thanks to the muffling panel.

Then the same room had served him for his disposal of the body. It would be a long time before any one would discover the corpse of the electrical expert.

Willington's lips wore a smile as the murderer entered a cab. He told the driver to take him to the Hotel Atlantic. Then, settling back upon the cushions, Cuyler Willington adjusted a cigarette in his fancy holder and gazed dreamily at the lights of Broadway.

CHAPTER XI. THE BROKEN TRAIL

LATE that same evening, two persons met at the exclusive Cobalt Club. One was Lamont Cranston, the globe-trotter. The other was a portly gentleman: Titus Thoreau, the banker.

The two shook hands. They were old acquaintances; but it was only occasionally that they happened to meet. Both visited the Cobalt Club regularly when they were in New York; but it was seldom that both were in town at the same time.

This was no chance meeting, however. The Shadow had learned that morning that Thoreau was in New York. In the guise of Cranston, The Shadow had been waiting at the club, anticipating Thoreau's arrival.

Greetings exchanged, the two sat down in a quiet corner and began to chat. It was not long before the conversation turned to the train that The Shadow wanted. In the quiet tones of Cranston, he chanced a remark:

"Did you see Lord and Lady Atherton on your last trip to London?"

"Why yes," responded Thoreau. "What made you think of them, Cranston?"

"Something I saw in the newspapers."

THE DARK DEATH

"Regarding Lord Atherton?"

"No. About a chap named Mollin. A chap who once tried to steal Lady Atherton's pearls."

"Mollin! He was my butler. That happened at my home, Cranston."

Cranston's eyes looked quizzical.

"Absolutely," asserted Thoreau. "Lady Atherton's pearls were stolen while she was a guest of Mrs. Thoreau. It happened just at the end of an evening party. People were leaving. We stopped them and called in the police."

"And the servants?"

"We lined them up also. All in a room together. When the police arrived, we began a search. Mollin had the necklace."

"Did he try to alibi himself?"

"No. He confessed that he had seen the pearls in Lady Atherton's room. He said he could not resist the temptation of stealing them. They gave him a light sentence. But from what you say, he must have been in some new trouble."

"He was murdered last night."

"By whom?"

"No one knows."

Thoreau shook his head.

"Poor devil," he said. "I'm genuinely sorry, Cranston. I don't think the fellow was a crook at heart. At first I did – on the night of the robbery; but afterward, I changed my mind."

"You talked with Mollin?"

Thoreau shook his head.

"No," he declared. "It was an odd chain of circumstances that made me feel kindly toward Mollin. You see, the man had been an excellent servant; and he had come with fine references. One was from a chap named Willington, Cuyler Willington. Mollin had been Willington's valet."

"It happened that Willington was a guest at that party for Lord and Lady Atherton. The next day, Willington stopped in my office. He was highly apologetic for having given Mollin a reference."

"Then he became indignant. He insisted that I should demand a full prosecution of the fellow. In fact, Willington seemed so vicious in his denunciation that I found myself taking Mollin's part."

Lamont Cranston's features wore a smile as Thoreau paused.

THE DARK DEATH

"I asked Willington what he had against Mollin," resumed the banker. "I wanted facts if I intended to prosecute the man. That stumped Willington. It seemed his indignation was all foam.

"I asked him if Mollin had ever stolen anything from him. Willington said no. Then he recalled that he had once gone out of town for three days, forgetting several thousand dollars that he had left upon his bureau. At his destination he found a wire from Mollin. The servant had found the money and was informing him that it was safe.

"That impressed me, Cranston. I became indignant toward Willington. Fancy it, denouncing a man who had shown such honesty. When Mollin's case came up in court, I put in a plea for leniency. Willington did not appear; but I cited the instance that he had mentioned. The judge gave Mollin the minimum term. I told Willington about it afterward."

"What did he say?"

"He seemed pleased. He admitted that he had been unjust in his first denunciation."

"Willington." Cranston's tone was musing. "Where have I met that chap?"

"He lives at the Hotel Royal. A pleasant fellow, Willington. Well, good night, Cranston."

A FEW minutes after Thoreau had departed. Cranston also left the Cobalt Club. He stepped into a luxurious limousine and gave a destination to the chauffeur. When the car halted, later, on a secluded street, a cloaked figure stepped silently forth.

Lamont Cranston had become The Shadow. His course became untraceable. It finally terminated in the darkness of the sanctum. The bluish light clicked on. Earphones came from the wall beyond the table, brought forth by white long-fingered hands. A tiny bulb gleamed. Then came a quiet voice:

"Burbank speaking."

The Shadow gave brief instructions. Then he replaced the earphones. The little bulb went out.

Remaining in the sanctum, The Shadow began to open envelopes. Crime reports from agents. This work was The Shadow's routine.

TWENTY minutes after The Shadow had given his instructions. Harry Vincent appeared in the pretentious lobby of the Hotel Royal. He strolled up to the desk and inquired for Cuyler Willington. He learned that the man had gone out of town. The clerk did not know when he would return.

Harry strolled out to the street. He stood beneath the marquee of the hotel and glanced in the direction of the hack stand. He saw an extended arm waving from a taxicab, and headed for it.

"Get in," came a whisper. It was Moe Shrevnitz.

The cab started forward. Moe shot quick information back to Harry.

"Take a squint at that beanery across the way," suggested Moe. "Lamp the mug at the table by the window."

"I saw him," declared Harry, as they rolled by.

THE DARK DEATH

"Know him?" questioned Moe.

"No," replied Harry.

"Looks like a dip to me," stated Moe, as they rolled along an avenue. "I got up here ahead of you. I noticed the guy watching everybody that went into the Hotel Royal. Do you think Hawkeye would know him if we could get him here?"

"Probably. Hawkeye's over at Slade Farrow's."

"I'll get him after I drop you. Where are you going? To the Metrolite?"

"Yes."

Moe dropped Harry at the latter's hotel. The taxi man sped away. He reached the apartment where Slade Farrow lived. He rang the bell and talked to Hawkeye. The little man came down.

On the way back to the Hotel Royal, Moe encountered a heavy traffic jam. It was a full half hour before he reached his destination. A cop waved for him to hurry through.

"Look quick," said Moe, leaning back to Hawkeye, who was riding as a passenger. "You can spot him if he's still there. Yeah. There he is – getting up from the table –"

"Shoot over to the curb, quick!" broke in Hawkeye, as he spied the man in the window. "Let me out, Moe. I've got to tail that mug!"

Moe responded; another cab shot in front of him. It was fifty feet further on before Moe managed to swing his taxi to a stopping place. Hawkeye bounded from the cab. Moe edged into a cramped parking space and waited.

Ten minutes passed. Hawkeye returned. He climbed into the cab growling.

"Back to Farrow's," he said.

"Did you lose the guy?" quizzed Moe, pulling away.

"Yeah," returned Hawkeye, "Keep an eye out, Moe. That bird isn't a dip."

"No? What is he then?"

"The guy we're looking for."

"Skeeter Wigan?"

"The same. He was leaving the beanery when we slid by. I couldn't tag him. He was gone."

A HALF an hour later, The Shadow received a call in his sanctum. Burbank delivered new reports. Cliff Marsland, stationed in the underworld, had drawn a blank. Harry Vincent had called to state that Cuyler Willington was no longer at the Hotel Royal.

THE DARK DEATH

But from both Moe and Hawkeye had come important news. They had spotted the missing Skeeter Wigan, on watch across the street from the Hotel Royal. Burbank's information ended.

"Reports received," whispered The Shadow, "Instructions: Moe and Hawkeye to keep watch at the Hotel Royal. Vincent to make another call there tomorrow."

"Instructions received," returned Burbank.

Earphones clicked. A soft laugh crept through the sanctum. Sinister mirth, it carried future portent. Trails were broken; yet The Shadow was not perturbed. Broken trails were linking.

From his conversation with Titus Thoreau, The Shadow had gained a key to Congo Mollin's past. He saw clearly that Congo had been no more than an accomplice in the theft of Lady Atherton's pearls.

Keenly analytical, The Shadow knew that Cuyler Willington had worked a clever game with Titus Thoreau. Willington had visited the banker to demand harsh measures toward Congo Mollin; then, artfully, Willington had worked matters around until Thoreau had sided with the guilty servant.

It was the type of game that a clever crook would play in order to save an accomplice. Willington had twisted it so that Thoreau became the one to plead for leniency. Congo had taken the rap to protect his chief; and Willington's name had stayed out of the case.

Because of that analysis, The Shadow had dispatched Harry Vincent, tonight, to see if Willington happened to be at the Hotel Royal. Harry had learned that Willington was gone. To The Shadow, the conclusion was obvious.

It was Cuyler Willington whom machine gunners had been out to get. It was he who had visited Congo Mollin on the night of murder. Once again, Congo had taken the penalty that Willington deserved.

Then Skeeter Wigan had stepped into the picture. Spotted by Moe Shrevnitz, identified by Hawkeye, Skeeter had made a departure from the neighborhood of the Hotel Royal. Skeeter was a missing link in the chain of crime. Cliff and Hawkeye had been taking turns looking for him in the underworld. The man had bobbed up in an unexpected locality.

The Shadow knew that other crooks were seeking Cuyler Willington. He also knew that Skeeter Wigan must be a pawn in the game. With which did Skeeter side: Willington or the others? It did not matter for the present. The answer could come later.

If Skeeter should prove to be a tool of Willington's, it would mean that he would continue to frequent the neighborhood of the Hotel Royal, during Willington's absence. Should Skeeter turn out to be one of Willington's enemies, it stood to reason that he must have been watching the hotel to see if Willington returned. In either event, Skeeter would be back at the beanery where Moe had spotted him.

Through Skeeter, The Shadow could gain a trail to either Willington or the unknown murderers who had killed Congo Mollin. The Shadow had chosen to follow that course. For he knew that this was no ordinary feud between crooks. Moreover, it pointed along a trail which he had already begun.

The Shadow wanted to meet the hidden big shot who had ordered Driller Borson and Gat Lober into their deeds of crime. Whether that big shot should prove to be Cuyler Willington or some hidden crime master, made no difference to The Shadow. Men of murder were to be his prey.

THE DARK DEATH

THE light clicked out. Darkness pervaded the sanctum – Stygian darkness chilled by a parting laugh. The Shadow could foresee the future. He knew that crooks were set to meet in deadly encounter. And through Skeeter Wigan, The Shadow would find the path to that meeting.

Tonight, The Shadow had gained a break, thanks to the efficiency of his agents. Breaks, when The Shadow gained them, were the result of forethought and prompt action. The cards had turned in The Shadow's favor.

Hunter and hunted – one was to be The Shadow's quarry. Perhaps both. The Shadow had followed trails like this before. He could picture Willington, dodging enemies, ready, perhaps, to turn and give battle.

There was accuracy in The Shadow's study of the circumstances. Earlier this very evening, it would have been correct in detail. But tonight, unknown even to The Shadow, Cuyler Willington had met and murdered Seth Brophy.

That occurrence had changed all. It was destined to bring The Shadow to the threshold of astounding crime. Soon the master sleuth would be confronted with grim circumstances that would tax his mighty prowess to its limit.

For Cuyler Willington had gained a new and remarkable weapon: one that no criminal had ever possessed before. Hunted by relentless foemen, he owned the Q-ray machine that Seth Brophy had kept in the secret room where he – part designer of the mechanism – lay dead and undiscovered!

CHAPTER XII. A TRAP IS SET

IT was the next afternoon. The Club Cadiz was deserted, save for a few attendants who were loitering about among the tables. The obscure door to the gaming room was locked. Nicky Donarth would not be due for the next half hour.

A man came strolling into the barren night club. It was Tony Luggeto, the roulette operator who hailed from Monte Carlo. A smile on his dark, mustached face, Tony nodded to the idling attendants. He produced a key from his pocket and unlocked the door to the gaming room. He entered and locked the barrier behind him.

Tony's smile persisted as he strolled across the gaming room. The floor was one large space, for the roulette table was absent. Tony continued until he reached the door to Nicky's office. Here he paused and looked about in a cautious manner.

There was nothing unusual in Tony's entering the gaming room. The key which he had used was one that Nicky Donarth had given him. But it was not Tony's privilege to enter Nicky's private office. The night club proprietor presumably possessed the only key to that inner room.

Hence Tony had need for caution when he produced another key from his vest pocket. He moved into the little passage, reached the inner door and inserted the key in the lock. The key worked. Tony entered the office, shut the door behind him, and turned on the light.

He opened a drawer of the proprietor's desk. In it, he found a bunch of keys. Carrying these, he chose the steel door at the left side of the office. He unlocked it and revealed a flight of stone stairs that went downward.

Tony pressed a light switch. Bulbs glowed along the winding descent. The roulette operator stole downward. He came to the bottom of the steps. A light showed two metal doors – one on the left the other on the right. A stone wall blocked the end of the passage.

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Tony unlocked the door on the right. The glow from the passage showed a light truck parked in what appeared to be a one-car garage. Tony gave a slight whistle. A man came from behind the truck and stepped into the light. It was Cuyler Willington.

The two shook hands. Then Tony, still using the ring of keys, unlocked the door at the left of the little passage. The light revealed the bottom of an elevator shaft. In the lowered car stood Nicky Donarth's roulette wheel.

THE elevator car was nothing more than a platform; and its floor matched the thick, ornate rug that adorned the upstairs gaming room.

Cuyler Willington noted this and smiled. Tony Luggeto chuckled.

"Just like I told you it was," he stated. "Trapdoor in the gambling room. Press the switch under Nicky's desk, the trap breaks downward and the whole roulette layout comes up through the floor."

"The same switch sends the works down. That's why Nicky ain't scared of the bulls. All he's got to do is douse the lights and press the switch. Ten seconds – the works is gone. Down here."

"Ready to be taken out aboard the truck?" queried Willington.

"Sure," nodded Tony. "That part's a cinch. Right out into the alleyway. The way you came into the garage. Nobody thinks any thing of that truck being here. Just an old truck in a sort of private garage."

"Good stuff," commented Willington. "But how did you get down here, Tony, without Nicky knowing it? You were going to explain that to me when I phoned you –"

"Here's the answer," put in Tony, "Nicky leaves the keys right in his office desk. So he can send me or anybody else in there if there's an emergency. We've each got a key to the truck."

"But Nicky keeps the office key. That's the hitch. Only, one night, he sent me into the office, giving me the key. I made a tracing of it, and measured the thickness with a ruler in Nicky's desk. I had a key made. It worked."

"Good," laughed Willington.

Tony Luggeto looked pleased. His dark face looked unusually sallow in the dim light. He stepped into the little elevator room and stooped above the roulette wheel. Unfastening a clamp, he removed the wheel from the heavy base on which it rested.

"See?" Tony pointed to a hollow interior. "It's all ready if Nicky wants to plant any kind of a gaff inside. There was a fellow trying to sell him an electric control. But Nicky figured he didn't need it. We've been using bouncers."

"Bouncers?" queried Willington.

"Yes," replied Tony. He pulled a short strip of thin hard rubber from his vest. "Like these. Wedge one in the back of a pocket on the roulette wheel. The ball bounces out. We use them when a guy's luck starts running too good on one special number."

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"But I've been telling you all along, boss" – Tony paused with a gleam in his dark eyes – "I've been telling you that if we planted a gaff of our own in this wheel, Nicky Donarth would never know. Believe me, it sounded great when you called me and told me to go get that machine this morning."

"Where is it now?" asked Willington, smoothly.

"In the truck," replied Tony. "Still in the crate, like you told me to leave it. Say – it's heavy enough, isn't it? What is it – an electro–magnetic machine?"

Yes," stated Willington. "Listen, Tony, When you first talked about this idea of double–crossing Nicky Donarth, I didn't like it. I had made a deal with you to keep an eye on the people who came here. I wanted to know who was gambling; how much they spent. I told you to forget it when you sprang your plan of breaking in on Nicky's gambling racket.

"But from what you tell me, Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler must have used Nicky's office as their headquarters when they hatched their little scheme to rub me out. That means Nicky was in on the deal, to some extent. So I'm ready to get back at Nicky."

"Good way to look at it." commented Tony.

"Come on out to the truck," suggested Willington. "Give me a lift with that crate. Let me plant the machine. I'll make sure it works. Then I'll tell you what to do."

THE two men went out to the truck. The vehicle was a small one: for Nicky Donarth had intended it only for the purpose of removing his gambling equipment in a hurry, should police raid his joint.

They brought out the same box that Willington and Brophy had carried downstairs from the inventor's private laboratory. They had no difficulty getting it into the elevator where the roulette table stood.

"The other truck was at the house when I got there this morning," remarked Tony Luggeto. "I had to go around and pick up the key that you left in the envelope at Soulard's restaurant. I had the other fellows take the luggage to storage. One of the truckmen helped me get this crate into my truck."

"Good," assured Willington. "Nicky didn't know you took out the truck?"

"Not a chance."

"All right. Slide upstairs while I plant this machine in the roulette wheel. Where's the floor plug?"

"Right here. Shove back the edge of the carpeting. Don't you want me to help?"

"No. I want to be sure that Nicky isn't around."

"All right, boss."

Tony left. As his footsteps died on the stone stairs, Willington opened the box. He managed to hoist the machine from its container; for without the weight of the box, the task could be accomplished by one man.

It required an effort to get the Q–ray machine into the space in the roulette pedestal, but Willington succeeded.

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He attached the floor plug. Then he tested the machine. The crimson tubes sparkled. A smile appeared upon Willington's pale face as his eyes spied an opening at the back of the pedestal. He turned about the machine and adjusted it so that the lever projected from the open space.

Then he put the roulette wheel back in place. He lifted the empty crate, carried it out and set it in the truck. He returned to the passage just as Tony Luggeto reappeared from the steps.

"Any sign of Nicky?" whispered Willington.

"Not yet." Tony shook his head. "But he's due soon. Got the thing planted?"

"Yes." Willington stooped to indicate the lever, now hidden by the surface of the roulette wheel. "But don't fool with it, Tony. It's set just the way I want it."

"But how does it work?"

"You won't have to know. Leave that to me. When I give the signal once" – Willington crossed two fingers – "you press the lever all the way. A signal twice – push it back. I'll play the right numbers. We'll bust Nicky Donarth tonight."

"Did you put the crate back in the truck?"

"Certainly. So you can get the machine out all alone. Load it in the crate and move the truck out tomorrow. Nicky will never know how we trimmed him."

"Where will I take it?"

"I'll tell you later."

"All right," nodded Tony. "But remember one thing. Keep out of Nicky's office. Gyp and Turk may be around tonight. They won't touch you in the gambling room. But in the office –"

"Don't worry about me, Tony."

"I've got to warn you. There's two ways out from that place. The door that leads down here. Another that opens into a passage that goes the opposite way. And be careful after you leave the gambling joint. Gyp or Turk might tail you."

"I'll be careful. By the way, Tony, what about these steel doors in Nicky's office. He leaves the keys in his desk?"

"Yes. Like I told you. And there's bolts on the outsides of the doors. In the passages, see? So if anybody comes following along, they'll be stuck even if they bust the locks."

"I understand. All right, Tony. Go on up. I want to go around to the front street and see Nicky when he comes in."

Tony Luggeto ushered Cuyler Willington out through the little garage. Tony's face showed a pleased grin when his chief had departed. Locking the door to the garage, then the one to the little elevator, Tony ascended the stairs. When he reached Donarth's office, Tony locked the door to the stairway. He replaced the keys in the desk; then turned out the light. A dull square of illumination came through the frosted surface of a thick

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skylight. It showed Tony opening the door that led toward the gambling room.

Past the barrier, Tony closed the door behind him. It latched automatically. The roulette operator strolled across the gambling room and used his own key to go out into the night club proper.

MEANWHILE, Cuyler Willington had arrived on Broadway. Standing by the entrance to the Club Cadiz, he was inserting a cigarette in his holder, when he observed the approach of Nicky Donarth. Willington stretched out a hand.

"Hello, Nicky!" he exclaimed. "I thought you would be along soon." Then, in a confidential tone, "Are you still running the roulette games?"

"Certainly, Mr. Willington." responded Nicky, covering the surprise that his dark face had betrayed. "When will you be around again?"

"Tonight," replied Willington, lighting a cigarette. His tone was casual. "I'm going out of town tomorrow. I thought that perhaps a little luck might help finance my trip."

"Good," said Nicky. "I'll see you tonight then, Mr. Willington."

Another handshake. Willington strolled away, puffing his cigarette. Nicky Donarth stood in portly pose, watching Willington's departure. But Nicky did not see the smile that showed on Willington's face.

Nicky displayed a grin of his own as he walked up the steps to the night club. He nodded to the waiters as he passed them. He waved a greeting to Tony Luggeto. He continued on through the gambling room. He unlocked the door of his office and entered.

After turning on the light. Nicky locked the door and hastily picked up the telephone. Still grinning, the dark visaged night club operator dialed a number.

Nicky Donarth was calling Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler to let them know that he had learned where Cuyler Willington would be tonight.

CHAPTER XIII. TRAILS IN THE NIGHT

IT was nine o'clock that evening.

Gyp Tangoli, attired in gaudy dressing gown, was standing in the living room of his apartment. His dark face wore an evil scowl; his twisted lips, as they formed an ugly smile, showed a glimmer of his gold teeth.

Opposite Gyp was Turk Berchler. The squatty killer was seated in an easy-chair, puffing at a cigarette. Turk's pug-nosed face showed brownish in the light. His expression was one that indicated annoyance. But Turk said nothing. He was waiting for Gyp to speak. The time came.

"We ought to have heard from Skeeter," growled Gyp. "He's been around that beanery for a couple of hours. It's a cinch that he ought to have spotted Willington by this time."

"I don't figure it that way, Gyp," returned Turk. "Why should Willington go back to the Hotel Royal?"

"That's where he lives, isn't it? And he's in town."

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"Sure. But he's taking no chances."

"No? Then why is he talking about coming to the Club Cadiz?"

"It's easy to figure, Gyp. Willington knows that somebody may be out to get him. He's not quite sure, though. He thinks maybe the bump was really meant for Congo Mollin. But he'd be a palooka to go back to the Hotel Royal. The Club Cadiz is different, though."

"Yeah? Why?"

"Because Nicky Donarth keeps gorillas out of that joint. Except any he might want to have around for protection. Willington figures the Club Cadiz is safe."

"You don't think he figures I'm out to get him?"

"Why should he? He don't know what's in your mind. You've never gone after him before."

"Maybe you're right, Turk. But Willington is smart. He might have figured that Driller Borson and Gat Lober were on my pay roll."

"But he wouldn't figure on meeting you at the Club Cadiz. That's why he's going there."

Gyp nodded. Turk's expression sounded logical. The two crooks faced each other in silence. Then Gyp spoke again.

"It looks like the Club Cadiz is the best bet," he remarked. "That is, if Willington really shows up there. Only Nicky was kind of squeamish when I talked to him."

"I fixed that," grunted Turk. "Nicky can't back out on anything that I put up to him. He gave me an alibi, didn't he? Well, he's got to stick to it, or get in wrong with the bulls. Listen, Gyp: you don't want Skeeter Wigan on the loose. Call him in from that beanery. He won't see Willington around the Hotel Royal."

GYP TANGOLI nodded. He clapped his hands. Instantly, his two Hindus appeared, each from a separate door.

Gyp spoke to the one called Mahmud. The fellow bowed and went to the telephone. He dialed a number; then in careful English, he asked to speak to Mr. Wigan. A short conversation followed. Mahmud hung up.

"I have spoken to him, sahib," said the Hindu, addressing Gyp Tangoli. "He will come here from that little restaurant where he now is."

The Hindu turned and went into another room. Bundha copied the action, returning to the place from which he had come. Hardly had the Hindus departed before the telephone began to ring.

"Answer it, Turk," said Gyp.

Turk Berchler responded. His conversation was brief. He looked pleased when he had completed it.

"It was Nicky," he said to Gyp. "Willington has shown up at the Club Cadiz. Nicky's ready for us."

"To get Willington?"

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"Sure. In Nicky's office. It will be a cinch, Gyp. Nicky can get Willington in there. Then we show up and bump the guy. Lug him out through a passage that Nicky has all set for a get-away. The door on the right of the office."

"Who has the key to it?"

"Nicky keeps the key in his desk drawer. But we won't need them. He's going to leave the door unlocked."

"All right." Gyp's teeth gleamed. "Willington isn't wise; that's a cinch. He's been around the Club Cadiz a lot more than I have. He wouldn't figure on Nicky selling him out to me."

"Of course he wouldn't."

"And that makes it soft. I'll walk in there and meet him. Like it was an accident. Both of us trying our luck at Nicky's. Handshakes and all that."

"Sure thing."

"You come in a little later. Don't talk to me. Just walk around, like you belonged there. Which you do."

"Right."

"When Nicky suggests that Willington go into the office, the guy will fall for it. If for no other reason, he'll want to talk about me and what I'm doing there. Nicky will send for you, Turk."

"That's it."

"And when you get inside, I'll come over and cover. Nicky can step out, leaving you talking with Willington. I'll walk in – like it was Nicky coming back –"

"And there'll be curtains for Cuyler Willington."

Turk's face was evil as his lips formed the final statement. Gyp grinned in appreciation of his companion's enthusiasm. He clapped his hands. The Hindus appeared.

"We're going out," stated Gyp, forgetting his usual jargon of Hindustani. "When Skeeter comes in, tell him to sit around until he hears from me. Get my evening clothes. Mahmud – the coat and vest. Here, Bundha, hang up this dressing gown."

Gyp peeled off the dressing gown as he spoke. He stood wearing stiff shirt and collar with white tie as he waited for his coat and vest. Turk was already attired in tuxedo. He remained in his chair.

NEAR the entrance of the Hotel Royal, Hawkeye was standing by a news stand. He looked like a loiterer; but his presence had brought no comment from a passing policeman. For Hawkeye had a knack of appearing harmless and inconspicuous.

The little spotter had been watching the beanery across the street. He had seen Skeeter Wigan go to answer a telephone call, when accosted by a man behind the counter. Skeeter had remained to finish a bowl of chili. That accomplished, the frail mobster was starting toward the door.

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Hawkeye stepped from beside the news stand. He sauntered across the street and shot a wig-wag signal to Moe Shrevnitz. The taxi man was parked near the cab stand of the Hotel Royal. Moe started along the street as he caught Hawkeye's call.

Skeeter, leaving the little cafe, was swinging toward the corner. It looked as though he intended to walk; for he ignored the cab that was approaching. But as he reached the corner, he suddenly changed his mind and entered a taxi that was standing there.

"Goin' to the Delphin Apartments," growled Skeeter to the driver.

"Yeah?" questioned the cabby. "Where is the place?"

Skeeter gave the address. The taxi started out into the traffic of the avenue.

At the same instant, a man twisted away from a jam of persons waiting to cross the street. It was Hawkeye. Close at Skeeter's heels, the little spotter had caught all that Gyp Tangoli's tool had said.

A traffic officer was shouting angrily at Moe Shrevnitz, who had stalled his cab at the corner. Hawkeye came bounding over, wrenched open the door and leaped aboard. Cross traffic started. Moe grinned at the growling cop and shot across the avenue.

Hawkeye, head thrust through the space to the front seat, was talking quickly. He gave Moe the name and address of the apartment house.

"I think that's where Gyp Tangoli lives," he added, as they shot along the side street. "You'll know the mug if you see him. Dark – he looks like a gypsy – with long hair and a lot of gold teeth.

"You can beat the goof that's driving Skeeter. Get over there ahead of them and park. I'm coming along right after I make a phone call. Drop me at the next corner."

Moe jammed the brakes twenty seconds later. Hawkeye bounded to the curb near the corner of an avenue and hurried into a cigar store to make a telephone call to Burbank.

Moe swung on a right turn. Traffic was clear. The alert cab driver made speed.

In fact, Moe Shrevnitz, when he neared the vicinity of the Delphin Apartments, was confident that he had gained a full five minutes on Skeeter's cab. The street, when he reached it, was deserted except for a few parked cars. Moe pulled up a dozen yards away from the apartment house.

This was a good place to wait.

Watching from behind the wheel, Moe kept on the lookout for the arrival of Skeeter's cab. He had stopped on the near side of the apartment house. He was staring at the entrance. His eyes became suddenly alert as two men stepped into view.

Both were dark-visaged. One was tall; the other squatty. These men – Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler – had come from the apartment house. Moe was positive that one must be the crook of whom Hawkeye had spoken.

Correctly, Moe picked the tail man as Gyp Tangoli. He eased the cab into gear and rolled up toward the apartment house.

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"Taxi?"

Gyp and Turk climbed aboard as they heard Moe's question. As they entered, Gyp growled an order through the front window.

"Club Cadiz," he instructed, "and step on it. We're in a hurry."

No chance to stall. Moe shot the cab away from the curb, carrying the two crooks with him. Reaching below the seat, Moe pressed a switch. He bundled his coat collar close about his neck. The action enabled him to adjust an earphone.

For the rear of Moe's cab carried the hidden microphone of a dictograph. It was wired for such occasions as this. As he drove along to the Club Cadiz. Moe Shrevnitz was set to overhear any conversation that might pass between Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler.

Two minutes after Moe had left, another cab pulled up in front of the apartment house. Skeeter Wigan alighted and entered the building. The front door was open; he went through and took the automatic elevator. The taxi, meanwhile, made its departure.

Three minutes passed. Then a furtive figure stepped gingerly into the entrance of the apartment house. It was Hawkeye. The little trailer had come to this vicinity after making his call to Burbank. He had looked in vain for Moe's cab. Not seeing it, he wanted to check on the residents of this apartment house.

The name Tangoli appeared on a card by the number 3 G. Hawkeye grinned. That was enough for the moment. Hawkeye stepped outside and slunk away toward the darkness at the side of the apartment house. He had gone no more than a dozen steps when a sudden hiss halted him.

The Shadow!

Hawkeye stopped, trembling. Though he owned The Shadow as a chief, Hawkeye still dreaded his mysterious master. For Hawkeye possessed an uncanny ability at spotting hidden watchers; yet The Shadow, at times, approached so warily that even Hawkeye could not sense his presence.

"Report," came a whispered order, seemingly from nowhere.

Hawkeye nodded in the darkness. He had already told Burbank that this was Skeeter's destination and that Moe would be posted near the Delphin Apartments. He had also mentioned that he believed the apartment house was where Gyp Tangoli lived.

Moe took up his report from that point.

"It's Gyp's place," he informed, in a whisper. "3 G is his apartment. But Moe's gone. Maybe he picked up some passenger. It might be Gyp. I told Moe what he looked like –"

"Report received," came a hissed interruption. "Off duty."

Hawkeye nodded. He moved away from the apartment house, almost reluctantly. He thought he heard a swish close beside him. As he turned to cross the street, Hawkeye could not resist the temptation to dart a glance toward the entrance of the apartment house.

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There he caught a momentary glimpse of blackness upon the stone steps of the apartment building. Hawkeye did not see The Shadow. Only that token on the steps, a fleeting silhouette of a figure that had entered.

UP in Apartment 3 G, Skeeter was seated in the easy-chair that Turk Berchler had occupied. Mahmud had been here to give him orders. The Hindu had departed, leaving him alone.

Smoking a cigarette. Skeeter was staring at the floor. His eyes became suddenly affixed upon the same manifestation that Hawkeye had seen below. A profiled silhouette upon the floor.

A soft laugh whispered in the room. Skeeter gripped the arms of the chair and twisted about. The cigarette dangled foolishly from his pasty lips, its lighted point almost burning his chin. Before him, Skeeter saw The Shadow!

Like an apparition, the master of darkness had entered the room. Soundlessly, he had closed the door behind him. He had seen that Skeeter was alone. Instinctively, The Shadow had known that Gyp Tangoli was gone: that Moe Shrevnitz must have taken the dark-visaged crook as a passenger outside.

Blazing eyes were steady upon Skeeter. They burned from beneath The Shadow's hat brim, from the face that was obscured by the upturned collar of the inky cloak. Again, the whispered laugh. No need of questioning.

Skeeter came half to his feet, plucking the cigarette from his lips, only to let it fall to the floor.

"Honest," he whimpered. "Honest – I – I ain't been doin' nothin'. It's Gyp Tangoli! He – he's the guy you want. He – he had me spottin' a guy named Willington."

"Gyp's gone. I – I don't know where to. He was gone when I got here. I – I had to stay here. Gyp would bump me if I squealed. There was a guy here with him. Turk –"

Skeeter saw The Shadow whirl; at the same instant, gloved hands swept from beneath the cloak, bringing forth huge automatics. That was Skeeter's last glimpse of life. For at that moment, two whirring objects came flashing through the room, each from a different door.

Unseen even by The Shadow, Mahmud and Bundha had stepped up to the doorway. Simultaneously, the cunning Hindus had sent long-bladed knives hurtling through the air, each with a different target.

MAHMUD'S aim had been for the traitor, Skeeter Wigan. The blade found its mark, deep in the neck of the pasty-faced crook.

Bundha's target had been The Shadow. Only a sudden knowledge of danger had saved the cloaked intruder. The Shadow had whirled just in time.

As his cloak swept wide, Bundha's blade went slashing through the crimson lining of the black-surfaced garment, inches only from The Shadow's body. An instant later, both Hindus came hurtling across the room. Ignoring Skeeter as the little crook went slumping to the floor, they leaped fiercely upon their black-clad foe.

Even with his rapid whirl, The Shadow had not time to fire before his dark-visaged attackers were upon him. He had spun completely about to escape the hurled knife. Fading toward the wall, he dropped beneath the crashing force of the attack.

These Hindus were thugs. Professional killers, banished from their native land, they had a lust for murder. With amazing prowess, they caught The Shadow's upcoming wrists and twisted the cloaked fighter in a

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ferocious grapple.

Automatics blazed. Both shots went wide as the Hindus gripped The Shadow's arms.

The Shadow's left fist opened. Its automatic went bouncing to the floor. One weapon lost.

Bundha, the Hindu at the left, emitted a hoarse cry of triumph as he released The Shadow's arm and leaped toward the automatic.

But that move had been a master stroke of strategy. Combined, the two thugs were as powerful as any enemy that The Shadow had ever encountered. Realizing it, he had dropped the gun as bait for one.

Mahmud had The Shadow's right arm in a bone-crushing grip. But as Bundha leaped away, The Shadow shot his free left to Mahmud's neck. With a mighty upward snap of his body, he sent the Hindu spinning through the air. Mahmud's grip was torn away. The would-be killer went hurtling for a dozen feet, straight through the doorway from which he had come.

Dropped to his knees, The Shadow rolled for the floor as Bundha fired with the automatic. The bullet sizzled six inches above the folds of the black cloak. Bundha was surging forward as he fired. As the thug sought to press the trigger with new aim, The Shadow fired with the automatic that he had retained.

Bundha screamed. His arms shot forward. His body came pounding down upon The Shadow's prostrate form. Rising, The Shadow gave a push with his left shoulder. The thug's body rolled over and lay face upward on the floor. Bundha was dead. The Shadow's bullet had found the villain's heart.

THE SHADOW heard a sound from the next room. Swinging to the wall, he reached the doorway. A door slammed from beyond. The Shadow sprang forward. The room was a kitchen. Mahmud, recovering, had headed through the outer door, locking it behind him.

The Shadow stepped back into the living room. He could hear cries from outside; shouts coming from different sections of the apartment house.

Calmly, he picked up the telephone and dialed a number. Burbank's voice responded.

"Report," whispered The Shadow.

"Report from Moe Shrevnitz," came Burbank's answer, "He took Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler to the Club Cadiz. Overheard their conversation. They plan to murder Cuyler Willington."

"Report received."

People were crashing at the door of the apartment. The Shadow turned and viewed the bodies on the floor. Bundha lay face upward; Skeeter face downward. The crook, like the thug, was dead.

The Shadow stepped into the kitchen; the illumination was dim there, for all the light came from the living room. He crossed and inserted a pick in the lock. Mahmud had taken the key from the other side.

Crashes at the outer door. They meant nothing to The Shadow. He needed but a dozen seconds to probe this lock. The door opened. The Shadow stepped forth. He was on a fire tower. As yet, no one had thought of this way of reaching the apartment.

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The Shadow descended. He stepped into darkness; he faded away through a narrow passage between buildings at the rear. His whispered laugh sounded in the gloom. He had found the destination that he wanted. That was the Club Cadiz.

Knowing the ways of crooks like Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler, The Shadow was sure that their attempt to murder Cuyler Willington would not be hasty. He had time to arrive before death would be due.

But The Shadow had not yet learned of Cuyler Willington's counter measures. The doom that threatened at the Club Cadiz was more imminent than even The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XIV. DARK DEATH STRIKES

CUYLER WELLINGTON was standing by the roulette table in the gambling room of the Club Cadiz. The apparatus had been raised on its elevator, ready for the evening's play. That measure had been taken before the admission of the customers.

Even though he knew the secret of the device, Willington was unable to note the marks on the carpeting that indicated the edges of the elevator platform.

Smiling, he was pleased with the ingenuity of Nicky Donarth's contraption.

Tony Luggeto was operating the roulette wheel. His dark face suave, the man from Monte Carlo was eyeing Willington, constantly ready for the signal. Tony had fallen completely for Willington's story. He was sure that the device under the roulette wheel was meant to control the play.

Tony's eyelids flickered as he looked toward the outer door. Willington noted it, but did not turn. He was not surprised when a friendly hand clapped him on the back. He looked around to face the grinning, dusky countenance of Gyp Tangoli.

"Hello, Cuyler," greeted Gyp, in a low tone. "Where have you been, old man? Hardly ever see you nowadays."

Willington responded with a contemptuous grimace. He shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the play. Gyp edged beside him and spoke again.

"Don't know an old friend?" he asked, in a voice that was slightly gruff.

"I choose my associates," responded Willington, quietly. "You have the same privilege, Tangoli."

"I don't blame you," said Gyp, trying to honey his tone. "After me running a speak and handling a racket, I guess I'm not good enough for swell company. So long, old man."

With that, Gyp turned away from the roulette table. He went over to a corner, cashed in some money and received a batch of slugs. He began to play them in a slot machine.

Another flicker from Tony Luggeto's eyelids. This time the roulette operator's lips moved. They formed the name:

"Turk Berchler."

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The second enemy had arrived. Willington gave a slight nod. He placed new money on the board and adjusted a cigarette in his holder while Tony was spinning the wheel.

"Having luck, Mr. Willington?" It was Nicky Donarth who asked the question.

Willington nodded as he turned to shake hands with the proprietor. Then Nicky spoke in an undertone.

"I saw that fellow talking to you," he said. "They call him Gyp Tangoli. Sort of a cheap racketeer who comes in here once in a while. I don't like him to be around."

"I don't blame you," returned Willington.

"I've been troubled by those fellows," added Nicky. "Not in a business way, you understand, but just because they want to mix with the regular clientele. I'd like to talk to you about it. A friend gave me a suggestion to get rid of them. I'd like your advice."

"Glad to give it, Nicky."

"Thanks. I've left my office open. Drop in there when you have a chance. I'd appreciate it."

"Very well."

Nicky walked away. Willington glanced toward Tony. He saw his spy's lips move. Tony was phrasing the words:

"Don't go."

WILLINGTON smiled slightly. He began to study the play about the table. More than a dozen people were in the game. One was a mustached South American, whom Willington recognized as an ex-official of one of the southern republics. With him was a girl of Spanish appearance; an attractive brunette.

Other women present were blondes, with one exception. This was a girl who was talking French to a companion. She was a pronounced brunette. Among the men was a sallow, nervous-looking chap. Willington recognized him also. Eustis Thaling, nephew of a wealthy railroad official.

All at the table appeared anxious to continue their play. The evening was young. The crowd would increase, not thin. Willington shrugged his shoulders. These people meant nothing to him.

Nicky Donarth had visited the office. He was coming back to stand near the table. Turk Berchler had edged up. He was watching the play. Willington glanced about and saw Gyp Tangoli strolling over from the slot machines.

Willington made a mental calculation. The edges of the room, where the slot machines stood, might be beyond the range of the Q-ray. Gyp Tangoli, passing the end of the table, had stopped to jingle slugs which he still held.

Chances were that he would go back to a slot machine; not remain at the roulette table. The time had arrived for action. Willington looked about, spied Nicky close by and made a remark to the proprietor.

"I'll be in your office shortly," he said.

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"Good." responded Nick.

Willington noted Gyp Tangoli about to turn away from the far end of the roulette table. He glanced quickly at Tony Luggeto and caught the fellow's eye. Then, with a slight raise of his hand, Willington crossed two fingers. Tony reached beneath the wheel and pressed the switch.

As Tony made the move, Willington stepped away, strolling slowly toward the office. He saw Turk Berchler watching him. He caught Nicky Donarth's gaze. Willington spied Gyp Tangoli, on the move toward a slot machine.

THEN came chaos. Death struck with a suddenness that even Willington could not have anticipated, despite Brophy's claims for the power of the Q-ray. Tony Luggeto, closest to the hidden death machine, slumped without a murmur.

The South American official sprawled across the board, money dropping from his hand. A gasp came from the lips of the Spanish brunette. That was all the girl uttered as she fell. Eustis Thaling toppled suddenly.

The French girl placed her hands to her heart. Her conversation ended as she swayed and fell sidewise. At the end of the table, Turk Berchler gave a sour, painful grimace and slumped out of view.

Other persons stood astounded. They were of light complexion. Their voices rose in anguished cries as they saw the hideous fate that had suddenly gripped their companions.

Cuyler Willington glanced quickly toward the wall. He saw Gyp Tangoli standing there. The fellow had somehow reached a slot machine.

Willington clenched his fists. Was Gyp out of range? Hardly; but it was possible. At least the ray would not get him as quickly as the others. Willington decided to make for the office. If Gyp should follow him, he would probably come closer to the effect of the Q-ray.

As Willington turned away, hands suddenly clutched him. He swung. The hands relaxed their hold. It was Nicky Donarth. Succumbing to the effects of the ray, the portly proprietor had made a grab for the person nearest to him.

Willington drew away. Nicky sprawled dead, his dark face grotesque. Quickly, Willington turned and dashed toward the office door.

Reaching his objective, he entered the lighted room and found the switch beneath Nicky's desk. He pressed it, to lower the roulette table. In the drawer he found Nicky's keys. He sprang to the door at the left and unlocked it. He leaped through and closed the steel barrier behind him. He shot the bolt; then headed down the steps.

In the gaming room, horrified people were drawing away from the table where death reigned. They were clustering toward the outer door, seeking an exit. The dark-faced man whom Nicky had stationed there came pressing forward, seeking to stop the exodus. Suddenly he slumped to the floor. He had come within the range of the deadly Q-ray.

Someone reached the door and managed to unlock it. In a panic, the survivors went shrieking out into the night club. Their wild cries caused chaos there. Men who had seen death in the gaming room stopped attendants who were about to enter. The panic spread.

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All in the night club headed for the exits, as though the place had been stricken by a plague, with the gaming room as its center. They chose the exits most distant from that point as they heard the wild cries of those who had seen.

"Death! Death!"

One man alone stood in the gaming room. That man was Gyp Tangoli. He had drawn back to the wall; with arms outstretched, he was pressed against a slot machine. Even to his evil eyes, this scene was amazing. Stricken victims, lying against and about the roulette table.

Nicky Donarth was dead. So was Turk Berchler. Gyp Tangoli, alone alive, still stared. Then he saw the roulette table begin to move downward. He gazed, puzzled. Bodies began to follow the table as it descended into the floor. They were stopped suddenly. As the top of the table cleared a point two feet below the floor, the sides of a trap came bobbing up with spring-like action.

The rising sections of the floor caught the falling bodies and lifted them. They rolled, almost like drowned corpses in the swell of moving waves; then became still.

Gyp Tangoli came suddenly to action. He sprang to the spot where Nicky Donarth lay. He found a key in the dead proprietor's vest pocket. Seizing it, Gyp dashed to the office. He found the door latched. Cuyler Willington had attended to that matter. Gyp unlocked the door and entered.

Tumult was sounding from the outside night club. Policemen were fighting their way through the hordes of frantic customers who were battling to gain the exits. There was an outlet at the side, not far from the entrance to the gaming room; but only a few had fled from this exit that lay so near the entrance to the dread room of death.

Blackness emerged suddenly from that unused exit. A figure moved into view. The cloaked form of The Shadow became visible in this deserted spot.

Swiftly, The Shadow swept through the door to the gaming room. His burning eyes saw the bodies on the floor.

Stepping forward. The Shadow eyed dead faces. The whisper that came from his unseen lips was one of grim, fierce understanding. Instantly the link had leaped to his mind. He knew what had caused the death of these victims, all of dark complexion.

Pounding footsteps from the night club. The police had broken through. The Shadow's gaze swept round about. He pictured the spot where the roulette wheel had been. He knew that the menace was gone.

Swiftly, he headed for the office; he stepped through the unlocked outer door, to the passage beyond. He tried the inner door; the actual office entrance. It was latched. The Shadow produced a pick.

Police had stopped on the threshold of the gaming room. Their mad dash had ended. The Shadow had counted upon that occurrence. Though accustomed to the sight of death, the blue-coats were stunned by the unaccountable scene that lay before them.

Dark, mysterious death. The incredible result was something that men of the law could not fathom. They waited, wondering what to do, how to move, not realizing that someone had arrived upon the scene before them.

Meanwhile, The Shadow, glimmering his tiny flashlight in the short passage to the office, was working upon the strong lock of Nicky Donarth's door. For The Shadow knew the cause of murder that had struck. He was seeking the fiend who had delivered death and fled.

CHAPTER XV. TRAILS DIVERGE

GYP TANGOLI had acted with promptness upon his arrival in Nicky Donarth's office. Astounded by the deaths that he had witnessed, Gyp had been nonplused for a solution to the mystery.

He might have wondered about his own survival, except for the fact that others, too, had lived. He did not realize that the slaughter had been the premeditated work of Cuyler Willington.

For Willington had planned with a craft far beyond Gyp Tangoli's ken. Fiendishly, the pale-faced crook had designed the death of his ally, Tony Luggeto, along with his enemies, Gyp and Turk. He had also included the treacherous Nicky Donarth in his scheme of murder.

To Willington, men who knew too much were dangerous. He had let Tony Luggeto die as he had sacrificed Congo Mollin. He had fled believing that Gyp Tangoli would surely succumb as had those others of dark-hued complexion.

The lowering of the roulette wheel had been Willington's final stroke. He had performed that action with confidence, thinking that Gyp Tangoli must surely have died. But Gyp, living, had seen the contrivance drop. Gyp knew enough of the layout at the Club Cadiz to know that the control lay in Nicky's office.

It was there that Willington must have fled. The dropping of the roulette wheel was Willington's work, in Gyp's opinion. But to Gyp's startled brain, it meant only that Willington must have gained some familiarity with arrangements here. Gyp saw no connection between the roulette wheel and the dark death that had fallen.

Two impulses had motivated Gyp Tangoli. One was pursuit of Willington. The other was his own desire to escape before the police arrived. Thus, upon reaching Nicky's office, Gyp's first act was to try the steel door at the left.

Gyp found the barrier bolted on the other side. He realized that Willington had gone in that direction, closing the path behind him. Plans of pursuit changed to those of escape. Bounding across the room, Gyp opened the unlocked door on the right.

Just as the dark-faced crook was about to dash from the office, the telephone began to buzz. Hesitating, Gyp grabbed the instrument from Nicky's desk. He lifted the receiver and spoke in a low, disguised voice. The response came in a tone that Gyp recognized:

"Is Mr. Tangoli there? I would wish to speak with him."

It was Mahmud. Hoarsely, Gyp responded.

"This is Gyp Tangoli," he informed. "What is it, Mahmud? Where are you?"

"I have gone from the apartment, sahib," came the Hindu's voice. "The Shadow came there. He has killed Bundha. It is wise not to return, I have gone to the place which you have prepared for an emergency in a time like this –"

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"I'll meet you there," broke in Gyp.

WITH that, the crook hung up the receiver. He stared momentarily toward the center door of the office.

Gyp's eyes were wild. He seemed to sense that someone had arrived beyond that barrier. In that impression, Gyp was correct.

For The Shadow had reached the outside of the door at the very moment when Gyp had completed his conversation with Mahmud. Luck had favored the crook. But for the Hindu's timely warning, Gyp might have lingered. Mention of The Shadow, however, had filled him with apprehension.

Hastily, Gyp Tangoli ducked through the doorway at the right. He closed the barrier behind him and threw the bolt. He made his way along the hidden passage, seeking only to put all possible distance between himself and the ill-fated Club Cadiz.

Thirty seconds after Gyp's flight, the door of Nicky's office opened. The Shadow swept suddenly into view, automatics in readiness. Finding the lighted office empty, he closed the door behind him, locking it.

The Shadow tried the steel door on the left. He found it bolted. He tested the one on the right and made a similar discovery. A soft laugh crept from his lips. The Shadow knew that trails had diverged: that Cuyler Willington had taken one route; Gyp Tangoli the other. For The Shadow had seen neither of those crooks among the dead in the gaming room.

As The Shadow lingered, someone began to pound at the office door. The police had arrived. Hesitation ended, they had crossed the room of death. They were coming to investigate the office. Soon they would begin to shatter the wooden door. Meanwhile, The Shadow stood trapped between two steel barriers, each bolted from the other side.

Again the whispered laugh as The Shadow looked upward. Quickly the black-cloaked personage crossed the office and turned out the light. His ghostly figure stood revealed only by the slight glow that came through the frosted skylight. That illumination showed The Shadow rising atop Nicky's desk.

His long arms reaching to the low ceiling, The Shadow manipulated the rusty catches that held the skylight shut. As The Shadow worked, a crashing sound came from the door. A policeman was attacking the barrier with an ax.

The skylight yielded, swinging downward on groaning hinges. The Shadow's figure stretched uncannily as his fingers caught the edges of the opening. Then his form went upward.

The Shadow came out upon a small roof. Lying prone, he drew the skylight up with force. Despite its loosened fastenings, it jammed in place.

The Shadow knew that the police would investigate this outlet. His rising figure looked like a growing shroud as he arose upon the little roof. The glow of city lights outlined his shape in uncanny fashion. The Shadow made for the edge of the roof.

Seeking a dropping point, he spied a space below. It looked like a darkened alleyway. Lowering himself into a corner where two walls met, The Shadow found cracked spaces among the bricks. Digging toes and fingers into these openings, he descended.

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The space was deeper than The Shadow had supposed. At the bottom, he found himself in total darkness, save for the dull surface of what appeared to be doors at the inner end of this little cul-de-sac. One door swung open to The Shadow's touch. The Shadow entered and glimmered a tiny flashlight.

He was in an underground garage, an innocent-looking spot that was just large enough for a small truck. This space was empty. The probing rays of The Shadow's light showed a door at the side of the little garage. That door was metal.

Producing his pick, The Shadow attacked the lock. It yielded to the instrument. Opening the door, The Shadow stepped into a lighted passage. He saw steps leading above; straight ahead was an open door. The Shadow saw the roulette table, resting on the platform of the lowered elevator.

Cuyler Willington had unlocked that elevator room in order to regain his precious Q-ray machine. He had not bothered to close the door behind him. He put the machine in its crate aboard the truck. He had, however, locked the door to the garage. Then he had made a prompt departure at the very time when The Shadow had been escaping from Nicky's office.

The picture was plain to The Shadow. He saw the reason for the elevator; he knew that the garage must have contained a truck for the removal of the roulette layout. Yet the gambling device was still here.

A soft laugh told that The Shadow knew the answer.

Stepping into the elevator, he found the roulette wheel loose. He lifted it and saw the vacant space beneath. Replacing the wheel, The Shadow did what Cuyler Willington had failed to do. He clamped the wheel upon its pedestal.

THE Shadow's next action was forced by something that occurred above. A muffled explosion came to his ears. The air in the passage quaked. Shouts followed. The police had blown the steel door in Nicky's office. They were coming down the steps.

The Shadow wheeled from the elevator. He crossed the passage and opened the door into the garage. He departed without locking the door behind him. He reached the alleyway and moved out toward the street.

Near his objective, The Shadow pressed suddenly against the wall as a flashlight's beam came down the alleyway. Two policemen had arrived. They had spotted this entrance as a possible way of reaching the raided Club Cadiz. They pounded through, passing The Shadow on their way. Swiftly, the cloaked being glided to the street.

A taxi was close by. It was not Moe's cab; but that did not trouble The Shadow. He reached the vehicle, opened the door and stepped silently aboard. In a quiet voice, he gave a destination. The driver heard it.

Puzzled, the fellow started the cab. He had been listening to sounds of whistles and sirens on the avenue, where the police were still busy entering the Club Cadiz. Hence the driver was only mildly surprised when he realized that he had gained a passenger.

When the cab reached its destination, something fluttered to the seat beside the driver. The man picked up the object. It was a five-dollar bill. Surprised, the driver looked into the back seat. He turned on the light. The cab was empty. The mysterious passenger had made a quick departure.

THE next evidence of The Shadow's presence came within the walls of the sanctum. The bluish light clicked on. White hands appeared beneath its glare. One hand began to write. Steadily, concisely, The Shadow was

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summing up the events that he had encountered tonight.

Gyp Tangoli and Turk Berchler had fared forth to get Cuyler Willington. That fact was evident. They had chosen the Club Cadiz as the place for murder. They had been forestalled. By whom? Cuyler Willington.

Past and present linked. The Shadow, through his constant study of new inventive measures, had gained facts regarding the terrible Q-ray machine. He had believed that device to be safely kept in the laboratory of the Universal Electric Company.

It seemed obvious that Cuyler Willington had obtained that strange machine; that with it, he had delivered wholesale slaughter in order to eliminate dark-skinned enemies. Through the Q-ray. Willington had made a counter-thrust. Yet, somehow, his action had failed.

Gyp Tangoli must have escaped death. Gyp's absence from among the dead forms in the gaming room was proof of that fact. Crooked foemen were still at large, ready for new battle. Both were fiends. Each would again seek the other's life.

Ordinarily, The Shadow might have let one eliminate the other. But present circumstances forbade that course. Into this feud between two crooks had come a new and terrible element: the Q-ray. It had been used once for promiscuous death. It could be used again, now that its secret was known.

For the safety of humanity, The Shadow could use but one course: the prompt elimination of both these murderers. To end their fiendish careers, he must find one or the other. That must be accomplished with promptitude.

Trails had diverged. Links again were broken. Fierce enemies had gone into hiding. That fact brought a sinister, understanding laugh from the lips of The Shadow as his hand extinguished the blue lamp.

With both fiends living, there would be time to prepare for well-planned combat. They would be hiding from each other, as much as from the law. To gain a chance for combat, one would have to bait the other.

Therein lay The Shadow's opportunity. If other measures failed, he could watch for the coming lure. When it arrived, he could step into the impending battle. That thought was the reason for The Shadow's laugh.

CHAPTER XVI. THE FINAL FACTS

"DETECTIVE CARDONA is here, sir."

Police Commissioner Ralph Weston looked up and nodded to the secretary who had spoken. The man turned about and went out to admit the detective. Commissioner Weston glanced at his clock and smiled.

It was three o'clock on the afternoon following the terrible affair at the Club Cadiz. Detective Joe Cardona was due to report at this hour. Weston was pleased at the sleuth's punctuality.

A man of brusque, dynamic forcefulness, Commissioner Weston handled the New York police force in almost military fashion. Weston looked like an army officer; his firm face and short, pointed mustache gave him a distinctive bearing. His eyes were both stern and alert when Joe Cardona entered the office.

Stockily built and swarthy of countenance, Cardona made a contrast to the police commissioner. Time had been when the star detective had chafed under Weston's driving methods. That period had passed. The two had reached accord; then Ralph Weston had resigned his post as police commissioner in order to visit a South

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American republic, where he had reorganized the police system.

During Weston's absence, the post of police commissioner had been held by a gentleman named Wainwright Barth. A pompous individual with his own ideas about crime problems, Barth had proven a trial to Cardona. Joe was glad to see Weston back on the job. Weston knew it.

"Hello. Cardona," he greeted, in a pleasant tone. "You don't seem as glum as you used to be."

"That's because you're back," admitted the detective. "Don't think I didn't get along with Commissioner Barth. I did. But when things came up like this Cadiz Club business, I never knew what slant he might decide to take."

"Well," mused Weston, "Wainwright Barth has taken a trip to Europe. For the time being I am on the job. I take it that you have decided just what my course will be in this case."

"I have," stated Cardona. "You won't stop, commissioner, until you've found out what killed those people. I've been trying to find out for you. I haven't got it yet."

WESTON eyed Cardona seriously. The detective began to feel ill at ease. He always did when Weston studied him in that fashion. Looking for an out, Cardona picked up a newspaper that was lying on the desk.

"This story in the Classic," he remarked. "It takes up the theory that we had last night. Some sort of gas attack. But it doesn't hold together, commissioner. They want something stronger."

"Who? The reporters?"

"Yes. Particularly Burke, the fellow who wrote this story for the Classic. I was talking to him only an hour ago."

"Hm—m—m." Weston became thoughtful. "Didn't Burke have some sort of a run-in with Barth while I was gone?"

"Yes," replied Cardona, with a slight grin. "He panned Commissioner Barth in a column. He lost his job on account of it. The only reason he's back with the Classic is because you're police commissioner again."

"Then I think we can handle Burke," Weston, with a smile. "You told him that you had an appointment this afternoon?"

"Yes," answered Joe, "That stalled him for the time being. And if we can keep Burke in line, we won't have trouble with the other news hawks."

Weston nodded. He took the newspaper from Cardona's hands, glanced at the sheet and then laid it aside. He noted a stack of report sheets upon his desk; then settled his elbow on the desk and leaned his chin against his hand.

"Cardona," said the commissioner, seriously, "we're going to stick to this gas theory, so far as the press is concerned. We'll hold it until we have found something better. When we uncover something that looks like the truth, we shall still keep it secret."

"In order to bluff the people in back of the murders?"

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"Precisely. Autopsies have shown that these victims died from a shock that could have been caused by some electric impulse. But the examining officials are still puzzled. We are up against the same trouble that the gas theory gives us.

"Why did some die and others survive? We know that the roulette table was above the floor when the tragedy took place. But some of those in contact with it lived; and some who were a dozen feet from it died."

"The roulette wheel was wired, commissioner.

"It was provided with a space for some mechanical device. But I do not know of any machine that could have delivered death in the fashion that it arrived.

"Somebody made a get-away, commissioner. By rights, that fellow ought to have loaded the roulette table aboard his truck. That was what the truck was there for."

"Probably the man was panic-stricken. He decided to flee on his own account. Nicky Donarth was dead. There was no reason to save his reputation by removing the gambling device."

"But the fellow could have carried away something that was in the roulette table."

"I understand that. It brings us back to my former point. Cardona, there is no type of electrical current that can behave in so extraordinary a fashion as –"

THE commissioner broke off as his secretary entered. The man had come to announce a visitor.

"Mr. Cranston is here, sir," stated the secretary. "He says that he must see you regarding an urgent matter."

"Tell him to come in," ordered Weston. Then, to Cardona, as the secretary was leaving: "You may remain here while I talk with Cranston. I don't suppose he will be long."

The tall, calm-faced visitor arrived in the commissioner's office. Weston arose to shake hands with his friend. Joe Cardona also greeted the globe-trotter. Weston invited Cranston to a chair.

"We are having an important conference," he reported, "But there is always time to talk to you, Cranston. I trust, however, that your subject can be handled briefly."

"Very briefly," came the quiet, even response, "Particularly because it concerns the very matter that I believe you are discussing. The murders at the Club Cadiz."

Weston stared, puzzled. He caught a momentary gleam in his visitor's eyes. It was one of those revealing glimpses that showed the personality of The Shadow behind his affected guise of Lamont Cranston. The flash, however, was too brief for Weston to realize its symbolism.

"I read this account in the Classic," remarked The Shadow, picking up the newspaper. "I was much interested in it, because it was written by a man named Clyde Burke. Curiously, it was another article by this same writer that gave me an inkling as to what might have caused death at the Club Cadiz."

"How is that?" questioned Weston.

"Some time ago," responded The Shadow. "I read an account by Burke that concerned a Q-ray, developed in the laboratories of the Universal Electric Company. The function of that ray was to change the structure of

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the epidermis; so that persons of light skin would gain the qualities of darker races."

"I recall the story," nodded Weston.

"It interested me," resumed The Shadow, in the quiet tones of Cranston. "I saw a use for such treatments in connection with my tropical explorations. I went to the laboratory of the Universal Electric Company."

"You saw the machine?"

"Yes. And I learned its danger."

"Its danger? I thought you said it would prove beneficial."

"To persons of light complexion, yes. But to those of darker skin the Q-ray means death."

Weston sat staring. So did Cardona. But the detective's swarthy face began to show a sudden change. Leaping to his feet, Joe pounced his hand upon the desk.

"Do you get that, commissioner?" he queried. "It fits! Every one that died at the Club Cadiz had a dark complexion. Those brunettes; that South American official; young Thaling. Nicky Donarth, Turk Berchler, Tony Luggeto –"

"Cranston," snapped Weston, "where is this machine?"

"I saw it," came the reply, "in the laboratory of the Universal Electric Company."

"That is where we are going," stated the commissioner. "Let us start at once."

HALF an hour later, the trio had arrived at the big laboratory. They were seated in James Sundler's office. The supervisor was making a statement in response to Commissioner Weston's questions.

"Our machine could have caused that terrible damage," admitted Sundler. "I thought of it when I read this morning's newspaper. But I understood from the accounts that some unknown gas had caused the deaths."

"That was merely a statement for the press," snapped Weston. "Where is this Q-ray machine?"

"Locked in its testing room," replied Sundler. "That is another reason why I did not communicate with you, commissioner."

"Let me see the machine."

Sundler led his visitors down the hall. He unlocked the door and showed the death machine. Approaching it, he ran his finger along the top of the glass device.

"Dust," remarked Sundler. "I assure you, commissioner, that it has not been removed from this room. Our laboratory operates twenty four hours every day."

"Perhaps another machine was used," returned Weston, a trifle testily.

"There is no other," informed Sundler. "This is the only Q-ray machine in existence. It was built in our own laboratory."

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"Who invented it?"

"It was partly developed by our own experimenters. An outside expert cooperated with them, however."

"What was his name?"

"Seth Brophy."

"Where is he at present?"

"I believe he has gone away for a vacation. I can give you his address, however. He lives in New York."

THIRTY minutes later, the same group arrived at Seth Brophy's secluded house. The four alighted from the commissioner's car and found the door of the residence locked. Cardona went around to a side door, broke in and admitted the others through the front.

They found the place deserted. It was obvious that Brophy must have packed up for a trip. A search of the house brought them to the laboratory. Here, Sundler made a thorough inspection. He shook his head.

"There is no evidence here, commissioner," he stated. "If there were any parts of a Q-ray machine, I would recognize them."

"Brophy could have removed them."

"That is true. But to remove them, he would first have had to obtain them. That would have been impossible."

"Why?"

"Because all the experiments were conducted in our laboratories. Certain materials could be supplied only by us. We have kept strict watch on the removal of any parts of machinery."

"Then Brophy could not have constructed a machine of his own?"

"I am positive that he could not have done so."

Weston paced about the deserted laboratory. He seemed to be coming to some decision. Finally he gave it.

"Sundler," stated the commissioner, "the only answer is that someone managed to remove and return the Q-ray machine that is in your own laboratory. I intend to make a complete investigation there."

"Very well, commissioner."

"And in the meantime, I shall place a guard over that Q-ray machine."

"We can do better than that if you wish. We can dismantle it and destroy the vital parts."

"But you have spent a great deal of money on the Q-ray."

"Certainly we have. But the money has been wasted. We have given up further experiments. The Q-ray is a menace – a scientific monstrosity! I am ready to advise its sacrifice."

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"I appreciate your attitude, Sundler. That course will absolutely forestall further crime. Come; let us leave here."

During the return trip to the Universal Electric laboratories, Weston and Sundler reached an agreement. The new theory concerning the Club Cadiz murders was to be kept from the press, in return for the dismantling of the Q-ray machine. Should it be proven that someone at the laboratories was criminally responsible for the deaths, a statement could then be made. But, in the meantime, silence was to be preserved.

Lamont Cranston did not return to the Universal Electric Company. The commissioner's car dropped him at the Cobalt Club. Weston and Cardona alone returned with Sundler, anxious to see that the menace of the Q-ray machine would be ended.

Dusk arrived. Seth Brophy's deserted house seemed gloomy in the fading light. For a while, all was still about the shrouded building. Then a motion occurred beside the side door.

A blackened shape had arrived there. The Shadow was working on the door that Joe Cardona had broken open. The detective had barricaded it before leaving; but it required only a few minutes for The Shadow to effect a new entry.

Soon afterward, a tiny light glimmered in Brophy's laboratory. The searching beam shone upon one definite spot. That was the top of the bookcase. Keen eyes spied the edge of the shoe box that Brophy had replaced there. The Shadow, as Cranston, had noted a corner of that object, but had said nothing.

A gloved hand plucked the shoe box from its place. A grim laugh whispered in the laboratory as The Shadow removed the lid and discovered a white guinea pig inside. This was the answer to the riddle. Proof to The Shadow that Seth Brophy had conducted experiments of his own.

The light shone about the room. It showed the tiled wall. Approaching, The Shadow stared keenly. He noticed a slight chip in the edge of a single tile. His fingers loosened the piece from the wall. The flashlight showed the hidden switch.

The secret panel opened when The Shadow pressed the switch. The rays of the light shone upon the scene within. Seth Brophy's body huddled on the floor; his outstretched hand almost touching another dead object – the brown guinea pig.

FIVE minutes later, The Shadow's unseen form was swishing down the stairway of the Brophy house. The master investigator had left the little laboratory as he had found it, with Brophy's body still concealed in its secret tomb.

The Shadow had gained the final proof he wanted. He knew the source of the Q-ray machine that had delivered death at the Club Cadiz. His problem was to uncover its present owner. He had played the part of Lamont Cranston only to gain the beginning of a trail; to learn what James Sundler would have told only to the police commissioner – namely, who had been responsible for the creation of the death machine.

Commissioner Ralph Weston intended to keep facts from the press; to let the police remain in ignorance of what had caused the deaths at the Club Cadiz. Weston felt justified, since he had taken measures to eliminate what he believed was the only Q-ray machine in existence.

Similarly, The Shadow had decided to let the police commissioner remain in the dark. He, too, was justified. He had followed clues that Weston and Cardona had failed to see. The Shadow, like the law, intended to move unhampered.

With the final facts established, The Shadow was prepared to seek the next meeting between men of crime. His laugh, delivered outside the dreary walls of the old house, was proof that his next trail would not fail.

CHAPTER XVII. THE SCHEMER RESUMES

FOUR days had passed since The Shadow's discovery of Seth Brophy's body. Two men of crime were still missing: Cuyler Willington and Gyp Tangoli. The furor aroused by the murders in the Club Cadiz had died away.

The police had gained no inkling of Cuyler Willington's part in murder. Oddly, however, they were searching for the man whom Willington sought. The law was after Gyp Tangoli for a matter other than the slaughter at the Club Cadiz.

The fight at the Delphin Apartments had been laid on Gyp Tangoli. It was believed that Gyp, as the tenant of Apartment 3 G, had been responsible for the deaths of Skeeter Wigan and an unidentified Hindu.

The report of the trouble at Gyp Tangoli's had been but a small item in the daily newspapers. But along the grapevine telegraph of the underworld, it was an important subject. The underworld knew that the bulls were after Gyp Tangoli. The underworld knew also that Gyp had disappeared.

No one had reported Gyp as having been at the Club Cadiz on the night of slaughter. In fact, the dead bodies in his apartment had served him as an alibi; for the fight there had taken place just before the massacre at the Club Cadiz.

As for Cuyler Willington, his position was perfect so far as the law was concerned. Moving in select circles, this crook felt no fear of implication in the Club Cadiz outrage. He was keeping out of sight on account of Gyp Tangoli.

This was the fourth evening since The Shadow's investigation at Brophy's house. The night was drizzly. City traffic was hampered by the mean weather. Taxis were few along Sixth Avenue. The drivers preferred thoroughfares where there was no chance of skidding into elevated posts.

One cab, however, was sloshing directly along the avenue, close to the curb. It came almost to a stop; then moved on a dozen yards and halted. Peering through the rain, the driver spied a number over an old battered door. He announced to his passenger that they had reached the destination.

The man who alighted was wearing a raincoat, with the collar turned up about his face. He paid the driver; when the cab pulled away, he went up the steps to the battered door and rang the bell.

The door opened. A stooped figure met the visitor. The two men went up a flight of darkened stairs and entered a room that was lighted by a single gas jet.

The visitor doffed his hat and coat. His pallid features were revealed in the light. This man who had come to the old house on Sixth Avenue was Cuyler Willington.

THE stoop-shouldered fellow who had admitted Willington, was an evil-faced scoundrel whose features were wizened and dusky. He was wearing a shabby smoking jacket and a black fez with a gold tassel. He was puffing a large pipe, and his lips showed a toothless grin.

"It is good you are here, Mr. Willington," declared the man with the fez. "I have wondered every day when you would come. At last you are here."

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"Yes," chuckled Willington, "I'm here, Rami Zaka. There would have been no use in coming earlier. It was safer for me to remain at the little hotel where I am staying."

"I have kept the box that you sent to me," declared Rami Zaka. "It's in the storeroom, with the elephant table. Would you like to see them?"

"Not yet." Willington reached to his raincoat pocket. He brought out a newspaper that was dampened by the rain. "I want you to read this advertisement, Rami Zaka."

The dark man took the newspaper. He studied the column that Willington had indicated. His eyes became glaring.

"So!" hissed Rami Zaka, "He is back! That fake who calls himself swami Marabout Bey. Bah! He was the one who hurt the business which I had been doing."

"Do you know who he really is?" questioned Willington.

Rami Zaka shook his head. Willington took the newspaper and turned to another page. He pointed to a news column, where a brief item mentioned the search for Gyp Tangoli.

"What!" exclaimed Rami Zaka, eagerly. "This Gyp Tangoli – he is Swami Marabout Bey also? Ha! That will be good for me. I shall speak to the police –"

"Keep your fez on," interposed Willington, with a laugh. "You won't talk to the law just yet, Rami Zaka. Sit down and listen. I have something to tell you."

Rami Zaka quieted. He perched, Turkish fashion, upon a little stool that stood in the corner. Willington began to talk.

"You remember, Rami," he said, "that this Swami Bey worked for me at one time. I found him unreliable. I let him go. He quit the swami racket and went around under his right name: Gyp Tangoli."

"He is no gypsy –"

"He looks like one. They call him Gyp for a nickname. Anyway, Gyp Tangoli tried to make trouble for me, not so long ago. I ducked out of sight. Gyp had to do the same, on account of the bad business tip at his apartment."

Willington was fixing a cigarette in his holder; apparently that engaged his attention while he spoke. Actually, he was eyeing Rami Zaka beneath lowered brows. He could see that the wizened man was accepting the story.

"Gyp is not afraid of me," went on Willington. "He thinks that he has me on the run. That is why he went back into the swami racket. He thinks he is safe. The worst of it is that if the police get him, they won't be able to pin anything on him."

"Men were killed in his apartment recently –"

"That doesn't prove that he was the murderer. The same way with a lot of crooked stuff that Gyp pulled. The law needs proof. To merely expose him as a fake would gain us nothing. I have a better scheme."

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Willington paused. Rami Zaka puffed tensely at his pipe. Willington eyed the stoop-shouldered man. Rami Zaka was not a crook. Willington was basing his plan upon the fellow's love of fakery.

"Gyp Tangoli knows the swami business," remarked Willington. "Read that ad. It says that he and his company of Hindu mystics have opened their new psychic parlors. You know who will go there. People who have lots of money."

Rami Zaka nodded wisely.

"Our game is to queer Gyp's racket," resumed Willington. "To do it, we will have to keep tabs on him. That is why I asked you about the elephant table. It has the hollow base, where you used to keep the midget hidden."

"That is right," nodded Rami Zaka. "Little Poley used to sit in there for hours at a time, hearing what people said when they came into my reception room. They admired that table, with its four posts like elephant trunks. They never knew that the little man was inside."

"And Gyp Tangoli – Swami Marabout Bey – will not know what is inside that table when you sell it to him."

RAMI ZAKA'S eyes opened wide. The man lowered his pipe. He began to understand; his grin appeared. Then the expression faded. Rami Zaka shook his head.

"It will not do," he declared. "Little Poley is no longer here. What if he was? What if we could find another like him? If I sell the table to Swami Marabout Bey, he would find that someone was inside it. Our little man could not stay there all the while."

"We're putting something else inside the table," explained Willington. "We won't use a midget. We'll use a machine."

"A machine? Is that what you sent me in the box?"

"Yes. A silent recording device. It starts automatically and stops at the sound of a human voice."

"Ah! You mean it will catch all that is said in the swami's seance room?"

"Exactly. It can stay there indefinitely."

Rami Zaka began to nod; then paused.

"How will we get the table back?" he questioned.

"Easily," replied Willington, smoothly. "Sell it to Gyp Tangoli. Cheap. Meet his terms; then explain that you will have to have the table back for just one seance that you are going to give. And when you deliver the table it will be necessary for you to connect the electric wire from the recording device into a floor plug. This will have to be done unseen."

"Tangoli can use the table in the meantime, paying you part of the cash. After a few days, you go back and get it. We will keep it for a few hours. During that time, we can remove the recording machine."

"And we will know all about the swami's game," chortled Rami Zaka, springing from his perch. "It is a wonderful idea, Mr. Willington. What will we do after that?"

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"Start a swami racket of our own. Chisel in on his best customers. I can stay out of sight – you a silent partner. Come. Rami, let's see the elephant table."

Rami Zaka led the way into an apartment that served as a storeroom. Two objects caught Willington's eye: One was the elephant table; the other the crate that contained the Q–ray machine. He had brought it here for storage, after his departure from the Club Cadiz.

THE elephant table was a massive piece of furniture. It consisted of a solid pedestal. Its corner posts were formed by elephant heads, with long trunks extending down to the base. In the center of the top was a circular stand, intended to receive a crystal ball.

Rami Zaka approached and gave a twist to the cylinder. It unscrewed under pressure and came out, to show a space beneath. Reaching in, the wizened fellow undid hidden clamps. He lifted off the top of the elephant table. He pointed to tiny air holes that could not be seen from the outside, due to the darkness within the big pedestal.

"All right," said Willington with a nod. "It is large enough. Help me open the box."

They pried the top of the crate and brought out the Q–ray machine. Rami Zaka looked puzzled at the oddity of the device. Willington made no comment other than a gesture to lift the machine into the elephant table. The space proved ample.

Willington noted that the all–important lever was below the surface of the elephant table. He looked about, found a piece of wire and attached it to the lever. He replaced the top of the table, reached in and tightened the clamps. Then he drew out the end of the wire.

Examining the cylinder that went in the center of the top, Willington noted that it had a slight projection beneath. He carefully coiled the wire about this knoblike section. Allowing some slack, he began to screw the cylinder into place.

When this was nearly accomplished, Willington felt the resistance of the wire. He smiled.

The slack was gone. Another turn of that cylinder, accomplished against pressure, would cause the wire to draw the lever. The apparatus was set for murder. All that it needed would be a final twist.

"Touch nothing," said Willington, warningly, as he turned to Rami Zaka. "The mechanism is as I want it. Go to see the swami tonight. Be friendly. Pretend that you need money. Offer him the table. Let me know how you succeed. I shall do the rest."

Rami Zaka nodded in agreement. He ushered his visitor from the storeroom. Willington donned hat and coat and left the dismal little apartment.

Ten minutes after Willington's departure, Rami Zaka also fared forth.

One hour later, the schemer received a telephone call at the obscure hotel where he was stopping. It was from Rami Zaka. The wizened seer had made a bargain with Swami Marabout Bey. Gyp Tangoli would receive the table tomorrow.

Standing by the window of his room, Cuyler Willington looked out toward the dreary glow of the city that shone through the misty night. His lips formed a contemptuous smile. One that symbolized a triumph that the murderer had long anticipated.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE NEXT NIGHT

THE address of Swami Marabout Bey was that of an old house on Fifty–eighth Street. The place was an unpretentious residence that had been converted, years ago, into an apartment building.

On the same night that Cuyler Willington held his meeting with Rami Zaka, a vigil began outside of the house on Fifty–eighth Street. It started with the arrival of a taxicab that parked in the vicinity for a full hour. Moe Shrevnitz was the driver of that cab.

After the taxi had gone, a coupe parked and remained in the neighborhood until midnight. Harry Vincent was behind the wheel of the car. When he went off duty, another watcher took charge for the remainder of the night. This was Hawkeye, loitering in a little alley across the way.

In the morning, Moe was back. Afterward came an Italian fruit vender who kept moving his wagon up and down the street most of the day. This was Pietro, another of The Shadow's reserve agents. The abode of Swami Marabout Bey was under constant surveillance.

For The Shadow had not been deceived by Gyp Tangoli's return to his old character. Like Cuyler Willington, The Shadow had seen the advertisement in the newspaper. He had recognized that Gyp Tangoli and Swami Marabout Bey might be the same man. He wanted to know more about the affairs of the pretended mystic.

Rami Zaka's visit to Fifty–eighth Street had preceded the vigil of The Shadow's agents. Hence no trail had been gained that might lead back to Willington. But on the next day, reports came in to both Rutledge Mann and Burbank, The Shadow's contact aids.

Various furnishings had been delivered to the house on Fifty–eighth Street, all of them to Swami Marabout Bey. These were described in as much detail as possible. Among them had come the elephant table, delivered in a single shipment.

EVENING found The Shadow in his sanctum, going over reports from his agents. He contacted with Burbank by telephone, to obtain final reports. Swami Marabout Bey had been seen entering his abode: this report came from Harry Vincent, who had relieved Pietro near dusk. Harry was not positive that the fellow was Gyp Tangoli.

A report from Clyde Burke was important. Clyde had seen Joe Cardona at headquarters. The detective had mentioned Gyp Tangoli. It was plain that Joe had gained no clue to the man's identity. With that report, Clyde had gone off duty.

Matters had turned to The Shadow's liking. A soft whisper above the blue lamp told that fact. There was a sinister tone to The Shadow's mirth, one that z ill for crime. The Shadow's mental prediction had come true.

Bait. That was Gyp Tangoli's purpose. He had taken on the character of Swami Marabout Bey in order to lure Cuyler Willington to doom. Willington must certainly know that Gyp was the swami.

In his comparison of the two crooks, The Shadow had picked Gyp as the one who relied on power: Willington as the one who dealt in craft. He knew that Gyp could not have guessed the danger of the Q–ray, even though he had seen its action at the Club Cadiz.

Gyp probably realized that death had been delivered by Willington; yet his own survival had made him believe that his luck would hold. Entrenched in his new abode, he was ready for an attack, confident that he could overpower Willington if the man made a move.

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Moreover, Gyp would not fear exposure to the police, through Willington. The law did not have the goods on Gyp Tangoli. In a tight spot, Gyp could tell plenty to make trouble for Willington. The Shadow knew that Gyp Tangoli was laughing at the law while he waited to receive Cuyler Willington as friend or foe, in whichever capacity Willington might choose to come.

Considering what he had learned of Willington, The Shadow felt sure that the schemer would eventually take the bait. Not, however, until he had formulated some plan of his own. That was why The Shadow had posted his agents for the first night. Well convinced that Gyp was the swami, The Shadow was ready now to move in person.

The bluish light clicked out. A laugh rang through the sanctum. It rose eerily and broke into shivering echoes. The Shadow had made his departure. Within a half hour he would be at Swami Marabout Bey's.

DOWN at detective headquarters, Joe Cardona was seated at his desk. Something of Joe's glumness had returned. His swarthy face was clouded. Quizzes at the Universal Electric Company had failed. The police had learned conclusively that no one could have had a part in the removal and replacement of the Q-ray machine.

That device had been dismantled. Its parts had been destroyed. James Sundler had produced physicians who had examined the bodies of the experimenters who had died during tests of the machine. Those doctors had looked at the victims of the slaughter in the Club Cadiz.

They believed that the persons at the night club had been murdered by the Q-ray. But how? By whom? Joe's check-up at the Universal laboratories had convinced him that there could not be a second Q-ray machine in existence.

Wearily, Cardona arose from his desk. He dreaded a meeting with the police commissioner. Weston had gone out of town for the evening, but would he back later tonight. Cardona knew that his chief would expect results.

Someone entered the office. Joe looked up to see Detective Sergeant Markham. Enthusiasm showed on the fellow's face. Joe growled a question:

"What is it?"

"A lucky break, Joe!"

"On this Club Cadiz business?"

"No. On Gyp Tangoli."

"Hang Gyp Tangoli!"

Cardona started for the door. Markham stopped him. The detective sergeant's face was serious.

"It may be bigger than you think, Joe," he informed. "That's why I came here in a hurry. Listen, Joe: You can't get anything tonight on the Club Cadiz business. But if you go after Gyp Tangoli – and get him – you'll have something to tell the commissioner."

"Maybe you're right, Markham," said Joe, suddenly. "After all, we might be able to pin a murder charge on Gyp. What did you find out, Markham?"

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"Well – do you remember that dead Hindu up at Gyp's apartment?"

"Yeah. We didn't identify him."

"I've found out who he was. His name was Bundha."

"Bundha what?"

"Just Bundha, I guess. Maybe those Hindus only have one name. But wait'll I tell you how I learned it. There was a Hindu uptown got hit by a truck a couple of hours ago. They took him to a hospital in the precinct where I was. The fellow was trying to talk. They couldn't understand him. The lieutenant knows a lot of lingos. He went over to the hospital and I went with him."

"Did the Hindu talk?"

"Yes. He came to and babbled in English. Saw me and gave me his chatter. Said his name was Nabu. Cousin of Bundha. The man who was killed by the gun. Then he began to curse another Hindu called Mahmud. Said Bundha died because he listened to Mahmud. Said he was dying because he was going to work for Mahmud."

"Who was Mahmud?"

"From the way this Nabu talked, I got it clear that Bundha wasn't the only Hindu there at Gyp Tangoli's. Mahmud was there, too. Both of them working for Gyp. Bundha got bumped. So Mahmud got hold of this cousin, Nabu, and offered him a job."

"To take Bundha's place."

"Sounds like it. And Nabu was on the way to work when the truck hit him. So Nabu figured it was fate. Guess he wanted me to warn all Hindus to stay clear of this guy Mahmud."

"Where was Nabu going?"

"He said to a house of a wise man. The new mahatma that the newspapers told about. So I looked through the Classic on the way down here. I spotted this."

MARKHAM pulled the tabloid from his pocket. He handed it to Cardona and pointed out the same ad that Cuyler Willington had shown Rami Zaka on the night before. Cardona studied it.

"Swami Marabout Bey," he read. "Did this fellow Nabu mention him by name?"

"No. He said he was going to the house of a wise man. But I sort of figured that might be where Gyp is hiding out."

"And he said he was going to work for Mahmud?"

"Yes."

Cardona looked at the newspaper again; then thrust it in his pocket. The address on Fifty–eighth Street was firmly implanted in his mind. Joe turned to Markham.

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"A company of Hindu mystics," he quoted, from the ad. "That means a bunch of stooges – Hindus dressed up – working for this Swami Marabout Bey."

"And Mahmud will be the chief guy of the Hindus, eh?"

"Yes. But what I'm wondering is who the swami is."

"Some faker, I guess, that just blew into town."

"Maybe. Maybe not. He may be someone we're after."

"Who?"

"Think it over, Markham. You brought in the clue."

Joe was reaching for the telephone. Markham stood scratching his head. Suddenly the answer burst upon him.

"Gyp Tangoli!"

Cardona nodded as he heard Markham's ejaculation. Then, over the telephone, he began to give orders. Cardona was arranging a raiding squad. He was taking up Markham's lead, planning a swoop upon the headquarters of Swami Marabout Bey.

HAWKEYE had gone on duty opposite the house on Fifty–eighth Street. Standing in his sheltered alleyway, the little spotter heard a hiss like the one that had reached his ears on a previous night.

"Report."

"Nothing new," whispered Hawkeye. "The joint's on the second floor front. Lights showing out from the shutters. The swami's up there. I think he's Gyp Tangoli."

"Other entrances?"

"One at the back of the apartment house. Sort of a fire escape. Looks like it opens into a back hall."

"Off duty."

Hawkeye moved away. This time he did not look back. He would have seen nothing had he done so. The Shadow's departure across the gloomy street was too stealthy to be discerned by human eyes.

Through a passage beside the old house, The Shadow reached the rear. He found the fire escape; his long arms drew down the hinged steps. The Shadow ascended. He entered a darkened window at the rear of the second floor. It brought him into a back hall.

The interior arrangement of the old house was odd. To the right of the rear hall was the entrance to a small apartment. Past that, the hall turned and ran clear across the house. The front apartment was to the left of the front hall.

Reaching that point, The Shadow observed a stairway; he also saw the door of the front apartment.

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On the way, he had noted a door leading from the portion of the hall that ran across. Unless it should prove to be the entrance to a clothes closet, that door would turn out to be a rear entrance to the front apartment.

The Shadow returned to that point. He found the door locked. He opened it with his pick and stepped into a small room where the only illumination came from the window. Across the room was another door, white in the gloom.

Approaching this barrier, The Shadow tested it. The door was locked; more than that. The Shadow's pressure along the edge of the door told him that it was held by a high bolt on the other side.

The Shadow's fingers tapped the edge of the door; not audibly, but in a fashion that indicated a dependence upon the sense of touch. It was as if The Shadow were feeling through the woodwork, picking the exact spot where the hidden bolt lay.

The tiny flashlight glimmered, its disk-like ray no larger than a silver dollar. Into that sphere of light came The Shadow's other hand, bringing a tool shaped like a bradawl. The little instrument dug into the woodwork. The Shadow was probing for the bolt.

A slow but steady task. The awl, as it entered, furrowed from side to side. Once through the thick woodwork, that tool would press the bolt; slowly, indiscernibly, it would draw back the metal fastening. Silently, careful to the extreme, The Shadow was seeking this mode of entry into the abode of Swami Marabout Bey.

Perhaps this process would lead to an encounter; possibly it would mean the opposite. The Shadow, knowing that retirement might prove the best plan, was painstaking in his work, so that he could cover it up afterward.

For it was not his purpose to deal alone with Gyp Tangoli, alias Swami Marabout Bey. Murderer though Gyp Tangoli was, The Shadow still wanted him as bait for a greater fiend. Until Gyp had managed to lure Cuyler Willington to this abode, The Shadow's work must remain hidden from the knowledge of the false Swami Marabout Bey.

CHAPTER XIX. FACE TO FACE

GYP TANGOLI was standing in a large room near the rear of his apartment. The place was bedecked with curtains. It was a seance room deluxe, befitting the new character that the dark-visaged crook had adopted.

At the rear of the room was a massive, thronelike chair that rested in front of heavy velvet drapes. Those particular curtains covered a door that lay behind them. In the center of the room, occupying the place of honor, was the elephant table that Gyp had purchased from Rami Zaka.

Gyp himself was scarcely recognizable in the garb of Swami Marabout Bey. His silken garments would have looked well upon a maharajah. Crimson and gold, they matched the turban that the pretender wore upon his head. The turban was an adornment that belonged to Hindus of the highest caste. A golden plume rose from its crimson folds.

At his side, the false Swami Bey carried a golden scimitar in a sheath of the same metal. His trappings, like his surroundings and the rug on which he stood, were gorgeous – except for the smell of camphor. Gyp Tangoli had brought the whole outfit from storage.

Two Hindus appeared from the curtained archway at the front of the seance room. They were bringing incense burners. A pungent odor filled the room. Gyp sniffed and smiled, his gold teeth gleaming in the mellow light. The incense would rid the room of camphor.

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As the Hindus took their positions at the side of the room, Gyp stroked his chin. He had adorned his face with a light cluster of false hair. The beard-like floss looked genuine. A glance at the costumes of the Hindu servitors convinced Gyp that they were ready for their part. Then the fake swami looked at the elephant table.

Gold with jet black lines, that table fitted well with the arrangement of the room. Gyp was pleased that he had bought it from Rami Zaka.

Mahmud entered, attired in a costume almost as resplendent as Gyp's. The chief Hindu was carrying a large crystal ball. Gyp took the sphere and rested it upon the stand that stood atop the elephant table.

Mahmud retired. Gyp strolled over and seated himself in the big chair. He contemplated the scene before him. Clients would be few upon this opening night. But more would come later. Gyp was looking forward to a profitable racket while he dodged the police. More than that, he counted on a meeting with Cuyler Willington.

For as Gyp figured it, the smooth crook would be lulled when he learned that his former associate had gone back into the soothsaying business. Willington would expect no harm from Gyp Tangoli.

Gyp thought of the little room in back. A good place for the temporary bestowal of a corpse. The idea brought another leer to the man's ugly visage.

Mahmud entered while Gyp was still staring at the crystal. The Hindu bowed with a profound salaam. He spoke:

"One to see you, Swami Sahib. Rami Zaka."

"Let him enter."

Mahmud retired. A few moments later, Rami Zaka appeared. The wizened man was clad in street clothes, save for a black fez, with black tassel – a form of headdress that he always wore.

RAMI ZAKA'S eyes opened in genuine admiration. Despite his secret hatred for the faker, Swami Bey, the dark-faced visitor could not restrain the enthusiasm that he felt. The fact that his elephant table occupied the center pleased him immensely. He also noted the wire he had secretly attached to the floor plug, still in place.

Rami Zaka, pointing to the elephant posts, said, "Ah, swami, you drove a hard bargain with a poor man. That table is worth twice the price you are giving me."

"Perhaps I may pay you more," returned Gyp, in an indulgent tone. "If business proves good, we can discuss that later. Be seated, my friend." He waved his hand toward a chair. "Let us talk."

Mahmud had closed the front doors of the seance room. Beyond them was a little reception room, well-furnished, with hanging draperies, as silent as a tomb. No one was in sight until a little bell tingled. Then a Hindu appeared from between two curtains and opened the outer door.

Cuyler Willington stepped in. He released the door; it closed automatically behind him. Willington looked at the Hindu.

"I want to see the swami," he declared.

"Your name, sahib?"

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"Cuyler Willington."

"Enter, sahib. The swami awaits you."

The Hindu opened the doors to the seance room. Willington, stepping in that direction, had the sensation that eyes were upon him. He fancied he heard a slight buzz from the inner room. He advanced across the threshold. He stopped short.

Straight ahead, Gyp Tangoli had risen from his chair. The swami-clad crook had drawn a revolver. He was covering the doorway where Willington stood. The Hindu servants had moved swiftly to either side: each man was standing with upraised knife.

Instinctively, Willington stepped back. He heard a sound behind him. Turning, he saw Mahmud and another Hindu who had stepped from the curtains to join the man who had admitted him. All three were closing in with ready blades.

"Enter," came Gyp Tangoli's sneer. "Enter, if you wish to speak with Swami Marabout Bey."

WILLINGTON stepped forward. He saw Rami Zaka cowering in a corner. The man with the fez had dared make no move.

The Hindus followed Willington as he moved toward the center of the seance room. Spreading, they formed a semicircle of threatening blades. Willington looked unconcerned.

"Hello, Gyp," he said to Tangoli. "I've come here to talk to you. I did not expect this reception."

"You will have opportunity to speak," retorted Gyp, "I should like to hear what you have to say – and to offer."

A pause. Gyp babbled Hindustani at Mahmud. The chief thug lowered his knife and made a search of Willington's pockets. He found no weapon. Stepping back, Mahmud again raised his knife.

"It looks like you mean business, Gyp," laughed Willington, a trifle nervous. "I can't quite understand it. I thought we were friends."

"Perhaps we are," returned Gyp, in the solemn tone he used for Swami Bey. "Perhaps we are not. Fate alone can answer."

"Going back to the old lingo," chuckled Willington. "You always did it quite well, Gyp. I coached you a bit. Remember? Picked flaws in your grammar. You listened. You didn't forget. You're a smart lad, Gyp. Even if you do intend to murder me."

"I plan nothing," Gyp's teeth gleamed in an evil smile. "I have not been certain of your purpose here. That is all. Come. Tell me what you intend to say."

The gun was still leveled. Gyp's left hand was ready. Willington knew that he was ready to give a signal. Silent murder, butchery from those Hindu knives. These thugs of Gyp's were not stranglers like their ancestors. These villains would deal in any form of murder.

"Gyp" – Willington took a step forward, the Hindus following – "I can see a prosperous future in store for us. The crystal tells me" – he paused to lower his hands and raise the crystal sphere, which he balanced in his

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right – "that much wealth will soon be ours."

Gyp's face wore a sneer. He was unimpressed. He knew that Willington realized the danger. He expected the doomed man to barter. He withheld the signal. He wanted to see Willington cringe before those knives struck.

Willington knew it. He smiled slightly as he parried. He rested his left hand upon the stand that had held the crystal ball. He shook his head.

"Friends cannot speak while one mistrusts," he stated. "Put away your revolver, Gyp. It disturbs the scheme of this oriental setting."

Gyp thrust the revolver beneath his jacket. He did not need the weapon, now that he had learned Willington to be unarmed. The knives of the thugs would bring death to the man Gyp hated.

"Beware!" declared Willington, in a steady tone. His left hand was turning the cylinder upon the table. "Beware, dark men! Doom awaits you! That is the message in the crystal."

The wire had tightened. Willington had felt the pull of the lever beneath. He had raised his head in challenge. His sneer was venomous.

Seeing it, Gyp Tangoli snarled and lifted his hand in signal. Gloating, the fake swami watched to see the knives flash downward into Willington's helpless form.

Then came astoundment. Mahmud was wavering. So was the Hindu next to him. One man, drawing back his arms, succumbed with a gargling gasp. Then the last two Hindus toppled.

Cuyler Willington chuckled as he started straight at Gyp Tangoli.

Once again this smooth murderer had released the Q-ray, dealing death to men of his own ilk. This time, but one innocent victim was due to die with the rest. That man was Rami Zaka, already tottering.

For Rami Zaka, like Congo, Brophy and Luggeto, was a henchman who might know too much. True to his evil form, Cuyler Willington was destroying friend as well as foe.

CHAPTER XX. DARK DEATH FAILS

OF all those grouped about the elephant table, but one man remained standing after the release of the deadly ray. That one was Cuyler Willington, author of the horrible death. His clear, light skin was his protection. Willington could afford to laugh as he remained unmoving.

Gyp Tangoli was a dozen feet from the center of the room. He had risen half from his chair. As at the Club Cadiz, he was frozen by the sight of the toppling men before him. His hands were trembling as they gripped the arms of the big chair.

Willington was standing with the crystal ball still poised. He could see the waver of Gyp's rigid form. He saw Gyp's wild eyes bulging from their sockets. Willington snarled insidious words.

"You are next, Gyp," he predicted. "You cannot escape tonight as you escaped before. You are too close. You wonder what has killed them. Let me tell you. The machine that Rami Zaka and I planted in this elephant table."

THE DARK DEATH

"The same device that Tony Luggeto and I put in the roulette table. The one that I shall remove tonight as I removed it before. The deadly Q-ray! It killed some; but not others. I am immune."

Willington paused. Gyp Tangoli was gasping. The man seemed weakening. His strength faded.

"Those of light complexions," chuckled Willington, "cannot be harmed by the deadly ray. Turk Berchler died. So did Nicky Donarth and Tony Luggeto. Others who were as dark as they perished with them.

"These Hindus fell quickly. Darkest of the Indo-European races, they were due to succumb instantly. Rami Zaka went next. You cannot survive – not with your dark skin. Too bad, old fellow, that your complexion is not as light as mine. You are holding out gamely, though. Very gamely –"

WILLINGTON paused suddenly. Gyp Tangoli had made an amazing effort. He was rising bolt upright from his chair. Venom had replaced terror on his face. It was apparent that Willington's words had aroused him to a ferocious pitch.

Gyp thrust his hand beneath his jacket. Yanking his revolver, he leaped toward the side of the room, away from the big chair.

Willington stood startled. For an instant, he had expected Gyp to succumb by the very frenzy of his last attempt. But the gun was swinging out. Gyp's dark face was glaring. With a wild cry, Willington drew back. He hurled the crystal ball.

Gyp ducked the big sphere. It skimmed half an inch past his head and thudded against the side curtains. It plopped to the floor and rolled about, unbroken. Gyp fired. His shot was wild.

Willington dived for the outer doorway. Gyp's gun barked again. Willington staggered, but kept on. Gyp fired, snarling fiercely as he pressed the trigger, loosing every shot from his revolver.

Cuyler Willington sprawled. The revolver hammer clicked on empty chambers. Gyp Tangoli lowered the gun. He saw Willington, mortally wounded, coughing out his life upon the floor. Gyp was gloating.

"You thought you had me, Willington," he sneered. "But you missed out – as you did before. Your guess was wrong. It looks like I've got a lucky hide against that ray you talked about.

"I took it before. I'm taking it now. You're dying. The machine is mine. Many thanks, Willington. I can use it. I'll go in for murder when I need it. But I'll never trust my own life to the ray. I'll never make the mistake you did."

Willington groaned. He had not expected this finish to his scheme. Through his dying brain flashed the hopeless thought that the Q-ray never stood the fullest test. Brophy had claimed that it would kill all of dark complexions. Brophy was wrong.

"I've murdered before," snarled Gyp. "I was the guy who killed those two patrolmen down by the Brooklyn pier. You didn't know that, did you, Willington? Well, I'll murder again. The ray is mine. Thanks to you, you ignorant fool –"

Gyp's snarl ended. Willington had given a final cough. The light-skinned crook was dead.

Gyp stepped back, still holding his revolver. He turned about, toward the big chair. He stopped, as rigid as he had been when he had seen his Hindu minions fall.

THE DARK DEATH

The curtains had opened behind the big chair. A figure stood in view. One that Gyp recognized; an apparition that might have been death himself, come to survey this new scene of slaughter.

"The Shadow!"

THE name gasped from Gyp's quivering lips. The grim avenger had arrived. The Shadow, from behind the curtains, had witnessed the death of Cuyler Willington. He had seen one fiend – the vaunted possessor of the Q–ray – go to doom.

The Shadow had seen a new monster rise. Gyp Tangoli, self–appointed successor to Cuyler Willington. Automatics drawn, The Shadow had stepped forth from the door that he had opened, ready to deal with this foe to humanity.

Wildly, Gyp Tangoli raised his revolver. He plucked the trigger as he aimed at The Shadow. Click–click–click–again. Gyp realized that the gun was empty. The Shadow had known that fact. He had counted the shots that Gyp had loosed at Cuyler Willington.

Beads of perspiration shone on Gyp's dusky brow. The Shadow's laugh crept through the curtained room. Mocking in tone, that taunt carried thoughts of doom. Slowly, The Shadow advanced.

Gyp Tangoli cringed, backing toward a rear corner. He wanted to leap for those curtains through which The Shadow had come. But Gyp, knowing that he could expect no mercy, realized that such an act would bring The Shadow's fire. Quaking, he faced the burning eyes. Gyp gasped.

Then came a sudden sound from without. The opening slam of the outer door. Footsteps came dashing through the anteroom. The Shadow, halfway between Gyp and the elephant table, turned swiftly just as figures appeared beyond the front arch of the room.

Detective Joe Cardona had arrived, a pair of headquarters men close behind him. They were dashing straight into the influence of the Q–ray, which still burned its dooming message from the interior of the elephant table.

HAD The Shadow hesitated for one instant, Joe Cardona would have toppled within the danger sphere. But The Shadow acted with a promptitude that was amazing. Forgetting Gyp Tangoli, he leveled both automatics toward the front doorway. His big weapons thundered. Tongues of flame spat toward the advancing detectives.

Amazing shots, those. With the repeated roars, each .45 loosed searing bullets that whistled inches above the heads of the detectives. With quick–timed marksmanship, The Shadow aimed to miss these approaching targets by as small a margin as was humanly possible.

Joe Cardona faltered. The other detectives went scrambling out from the anteroom, back to the front hall. Facing The Shadow as an enemy, Cardona could not understand. Had this friend of the law turned crook? With a backward step, Joe raised his revolver.

An automatic boomed. A bullet missed Joe's left cheek by a hair's–breadth. A second report. A tinge of heat swept by the tip of Joe's right ear. Wildly, the ace detective dived for the shelter that the others had sought.

Still those automatics delivered their cannonade. Sweeping forward, The Shadow reached the anteroom. He splintered the top of the outer door with zipping, burning slugs. A detective yanked the barrier shut. The Shadow sprang forward and turned the lock.

THE DARK DEATH

Swiftly, the black-garbed fighter swung about. Back into the seance room; straight to the elephant table. There, The Shadow wrested loose the top cylinder. He peeled away a glove, to show the long, pale hand beneath. Reaching through the opened top, he found the lever of the Q-ray machine. He turned off the deadly device.

Men were smashing at the outer door. Gyp Tangoli was gone. The Shadow knew which way the murderer had fled. Through that door behind the curtains; the way by which The Shadow, himself, had come.

But The Shadow kept to his work. Wrenching away the top of the elephant table, he revealed the Q-ray machine. His powerful hand twisted the lever downward. The rod jammed; it could not be used again.

The outer door was splintering. Calmly, The Shadow donned his glove. Joe Cardona would find the Q-ray machine. He would recognize it; for he had seen the original from which this one had been copied. Joe would understand.

The Shadow's laugh swept through the room. It carried a note of triumph; then broke in a grim mockery that spoke of work that still lay ahead. Just as the outer door broke from its hinges, The Shadow wheeled and headed for the curtain that lay behind the throne like chair.

When Joe Cardona and five detectives came plunging into the seance room, The Shadow was gone. Hanging curtains alone enshrouded this abode where the bullet-riddled body of Cuyler Willington lay with the dead forms of those whom he had slain.

CHAPTER XXI. THE POLICE SEARCH

JOE CARDONA had planned no puny raid upon the headquarters of Gyp Tangoli. Besides the detectives who had entered with him, Joe had stationed a force of two dozen bluecoats and plainclothes men about the house on Fifty-eighth Street.

It was the sound of gunfire that had brought Joe and his raiding squad pouncing up the stairs from below. They had heard Gyp Tangoli's fire while they were still on the street. While Cardona and his men had entered, those outside had remained alert.

One spot that they had watched was the fire escape. The back of the house was totally dark. Even with their flashlights, policemen had been unable to discern if any one was on the iron structure. But they followed the simple plan of waiting at the bottom, ready to stop any one who might come down.

The Shadow was on that fire escape. He had reached it after his swift departure. He was descending. He paused to crouch almost above the heads of those who were waiting below. It was a spot from which escape seemed impossible.

Off to the side where the hinged steps descended, a cop was holding a flashlight slightly aloft while two others were stretching to bring down the hinged section of the fire escape. The lantern was turning. In another moment it would reveal the figure at the lowest landing.

The Shadow chose that instant for action. Drawing an emptied automatic from beneath the cloak, he sent the weapon whirling with unerring precision, straight for that waving circle of light.

Crash! The Shadow scored a perfect hit. The shattered electric lantern went clattering from the policeman's hand.

THE DARK DEATH

AN instant later, The Shadow went speeding up the steps toward the second floor. He stopped before he reached the window that he had used for entrance and exit. Reaching up, he seized the sill of another window: one that opened into the rear apartment.

That window was open. The Shadow drew himself through with amazing rapidity. The policemen had brought down the end of the fire escape. They were pounding upward, swinging flashlights and revolvers. Two of Cardona's men had reached the window of the rear hall.

The Shadow, meanwhile, was silently lowering the window of the apartment. From the cries that he still heard, he knew that no one had spotted the exact place from which the missile had come. It might have been from the fire tower. Perhaps from an upper window. But it was drawing the outer men to the rear of the old house.

The Shadow was in an empty apartment. He could hear raiders pounding at the door. He moved stealthily to a side window and opened it. Detectives were crashing at the door. The Shadow looked downward from the window. The passage at this side of the house was a dark one.

Footsteps clattered through. The Shadow swung from the window and drew the sash downward. He dropped to the ground below. For a moment he crouched beside a niche in the wall.

There were shouts from all about. Officers were coming on to the roof from adjoining houses. Rising, The Shadow drew a flashlight. He strode forward through the passage and clicked his torch. The blinding glare dazzled a bluecoat who was guarding the entrance to the narrow path.

"Who's that?" challenged the officer.

"Detective Sergeant Markham," returned The Shadow in a gruff voice, still covering the officer with his light. "Inside, all of you. I'm in charge here. Get up to the second floor. In through the front door."

The officer hurried to the front door. Another policeman was on guard there. The first cop passed the word. The two stepped in. The Shadow clicked out his torch; he swung from the front end of the passage and sidled quickly against the front of the next building.

It was a timely move. Already policemen and detectives were coming back through the side passages. A patrol car was whining up from the end of the street.

Keeping close to the front of the next building, The Shadow swept swiftly through the darkness. He found a passage beyond the next house. He cut through to the rear, as a second patrol car came up from the opposite end of the street.

The Shadow had used this trick before. The drawing in of a cordon; a prompt departure while it closed. Luck, bluff and quick action had served him well tonight. Usually, in a departure of this sort, he engaged in chance encounters, spilling policemen and detectives who blocked his path at crucial moments. This time, he had managed to avoid such action.

IN the next block, The Shadow dodged new patrolmen who were coming up. He reached a spot three blocks away, entered a taxi unnoticed by the driver, and announced his presence with a quiet order.

Ten minutes later, he reached through the front window and dropped payment as the driver reached the destination. The Shadow stepped quickly from the cab into a quiet space on a side street near Sixth Avenue.

THE DARK DEATH

Another cab was waiting there. The Shadow stepped aboard. The driver of the first cab looked about. He saw no sign of his mysterious passenger. He drove away, pondering.

The driver of the new cab, however, knew that something was up. For this driver was Moe Shrevnitz, posted at an appointed spot. He heard The Shadow's order. It was to wait here for ten minutes. Moe wondered why.

Ten minutes. Then came a new order. Moe started the cab; he entered Sixth Avenue and headed northward. He wove a course as The Shadow gave it. Soon they were slowly rolling along another avenue, near Fifty-fourth Street.

Moe's cab was coasting easily, as though about to stop, when the sound of a siren came from down the avenue. The Shadow peered sharply from the rear window. He saw a limousine speeding northward. It was Commissioner Weston's car.

The Shadow knew that Weston was due back in town; that word would reach him of the raid immediately upon his arrival. Clyde Burke had furnished details regarding Joe Cardona's appointment with the police commissioner.

This avenue was the logical one by which the commissioner's car would come. The Shadow wanted to intercept it. He shot an order to Moe Shrevnitz. The taxi driver obeyed.

Just as traffic cleared. Moe swung for a left turn. He brought the cab to a jolting stop half across the avenue. Brakes screeched as Weston's chauffeur brought the big limousine to a halt. Moe sent the cab forward with a terrific jerk. The door swung open. A figure came tumbling to the street.

It was not the form of The Shadow. Cloak and hat had gone long since into a bag on the floor of Moe's cab. The personage who half sprawled on the lighted avenue was none other than Lamont Cranston.

"Cranston!" he exclaimed. "You were in that cab! Officer," – this to a traffic cop who came up – "arrest that driver."

"Please, mister," pleaded Moe, white-faced, to the commissioner. "I was trying to get clear. A car shot in front of me –"

"Let him go, commissioner," laughed The Shadow, in Cranston fashion. "The poor devil was scared stiff. I saw it myself. Here, cabby. Roll along."

He passed a bill to Moe, who sputtered his thanks and drove away. The traffic cop growled.

"Looked mighty dumb to me, commissioner," he protested. "That cab driver was plain goofy."

"Forget the matter, officer," rebuked Weston. Then, to his friend, "Come, Cranston. In my car. I have urgent business. A police raid."

A FEW minutes later, Weston and The Shadow alighted in front of the house on Fifty-eighth Street. A score of officers were about the place. They saluted Weston as he and his friend entered the house.

They found Joe Cardona on the second floor, in the swami's seance room. The ace detective exhibited the Q-ray machine. The commissioner stood aghast.

"Where did this come from?" he exclaimed. "Not from the laboratory of Universal Electric?"

THE DARK DEATH

"No," returned Cardona. "I've called there. That machine was dismantled, right enough. This must be a duplicate."

"Seth Brophy's, perhaps," commented The Shadow, in the easy tone of Cranston.

"What's that, Cranston?" quizzed Weston. "You think –"

"Merely an idea, commissioner. Brophy has not been heard from. I would advise a more thorough search of his house."

"A good suggestion. It shall be done tonight. What about this swami, Cardona? Who is he?"

"Gyp Tangoli. Markham landed a clue. We followed it."

"And he planted the machine?"

"I don't think so. This fellow – we've identified him as Cuyler Willington – looks like the bet. Riddled with bullets. The Q-ray couldn't get him."

"Where is Tangoli?"

"He made a get away. I caught a glimpse of the fellow. I think was him. Toggled up in the swami robes we found in the back room."

"Tangoli was dark?"

"Yes. But he was far enough away, maybe, to escape the ray. He fired at us; we had to duck."

A thin smile appeared upon the mask-like lips of Lamont Cranston. Joe Cardona had made no mention of The Shadow. Joe knew that again the cloaked fighter had saved his life.

"We had the place surrounded," declared Cardona. "But that wouldn't have prevented Gyp Tangoli from ducking up or down. There was some funny business out on the fire escape. Somebody used Markham's name down by the front passage on the side of the house."

"It wasn't Markham. It might have been Tangoli. We're searched this apartment house from top to bottom. There's no sign of the fellow. An old lady on the third floor. A man in each apartment on the fourth."

"Neither of the men answer Tangoli's description?"

"No. Nowhere near it. The landlord's due here to identify them, though. Markham went to get him."

Weston remembered Cranston's suggestion. He arranged for detectives to go to Brophy's house. He specified a thorough search – walls and floors as well as the rooms themselves.

When Weston had finished these instructions, Markham appeared, accompanied by a genial German.

"This is Mr. Einhorn," announced Markham. "Owner of this building."

THE proprietor nodded.

THE DARK DEATH

Cardona led the way upstairs to the fourth floor. They entered the front apartment. Two policemen were on guard. A haggard-faced man was seated in a chair.

"Know him?" questioned Cardona.

"Sure," replied Einhorn. "Good tenant" – he chuckled – "when he's not too much behind with the rent. How do, Mr. Tobin?"

"His name is Tobin?" asked Cardona. "Hector Tobin?"

"Sure." nodded Einhorn. "Didn't he tell you so?"

"He did. How long has he resided here?"

"About two years."

"All right."

Cardona led the way to the rear apartment, with the others following. Two more policemen were on duty. Their charge was a tall, stoop-shouldered man in shirtsleeves. His face was pasty and solemn; his eyes dull.

"Know this fellow?" questioned Cardona.

"Sure," replied Einhorn. "He is Mr. Dolke. George Dolke. Don't see you often, Mr. Dolke. Still traveling?"

Dolke nodded.

"How long has he lived here? quizzed Joe.

"About one year," returned Einhorn. "He goes in; he goes out. Always the rent by the first of the month – regular."

"All right."

Cardona spoke to the officers. They followed as the group descended. The other pair of policemen came along at Cardona's bidding. Weston offered no objection. It was obvious that neither of these tenants tallied with Gyp Tangoli.

"I shall leave you in charge, Cardona," stated Weston, when they reached the street. "Keep a few men at this house until the morning. Meanwhile, start the dragnet. We must trap Gyp Tangoli at any cost." He turned. "Coming with me, Cranston?"

"Sorry, commissioner," replied The Shadow, in his calm tone. "I have an appointment further uptown. I shall take a cab."

"Don't pick the driver you had before," laughed Weston.

A thin smile showed on Cranston's lips. His tall form strolled along the street. A block and a half away, Weston's friend stepped aboard a cab. He spoke an order from the rear seat.

Moe Shrevnitz responded. He had been waiting at this spot.

The cab rolled away. It doubled the next corner and turned back along Fifty–ninth Street, passing occasional policemen who were still searching the neighborhood. The cab stopped within the next block.

This time it was blackness that emerged. The Shadow, again a cloaked creature of darkness, was faring forth upon a new and important quest.

CHAPTER XXII. A MATTER OF IDENTITY

JOE CARDONA had returned to the fourth floor of the old house. Detective Sergeant Markham was with him. They were making a final round. Joe rapped at the door of the front apartment. Tobin opened it.

"Good night," said Joe. "Sorry to have bothered you, Mr. Tobin. If you hear anybody around here tonight, notify the officers downstairs."

"How long will they be here?" questioned Tobin, in a nervous tone.

"Until the morning," replied Cardona.

The detective rapped at the door of the rear apartment. Dolke answered; a weak smile appeared upon his wan face.

"Good night," said Joe. "If there's any trouble, report downstairs. Officers here until morning, Mr. Dolke."

"All right," grunted Dolke. "They would pick one of the nights when I was in town. Well, I got some excitement for a change."

Cardona and Markham descended. On the way, Joe spoke to the detective sergeant.

"I'm going over to Brophy's in a little while," said the ace. "I've got a hunch that's where the machine came from. Come along if you want."

"How soon?" queried Markham. "My duty's over."

"In about ten minutes," replied Joe. "As soon as the wagon comes for that death machine. We're sending it down to the Universal Electric laboratories so they can demolish it like they did the other."

"All right," agreed Markham. They were at the front door when he spoke. "Say – look who's here."

It was Clyde Burke. The Classic reporter was hot on the trail of a story. Cardona began to furnish details while they waited for the wagon. He also invited the reporter to go along to Brophy's.

Clyde grunted when he heard the facts concerning the Q–ray. Cardona chuckled at the reporter's annoyance.

"You had it in the bag, Burke," said the detective. "You wrote up that Q–ray machine. But you missed the big point of it."

"And I thought it was gas," admitted Clyde. "That mess up at the Club Cadiz."

Again Cardona chuckled. Clyde repressed a smile. He had long since learned the details of the Q–ray, through orders received from Rutledge Mann. Like other agents of The Shadow, Clyde knew how to play a part.

THE DARK DEATH

Up on the fourth floor, Tokin had strolled in to talk with Dole. Of the two, Tokin, haggard and sickly-looking, was the more nervous. Dole managed to smile a bit. He advised Tobin to get some sleep.

The haggard man went out. Dolke closed the door. He walked across the room. He stood before a bureau and studied his features in the mirror. He smiled. The expression was curious.

In smiling, Dolke kept his lips together, and it gave his face a sour, halfhearted look. Still watching his own expression, Dolke smiled again. This time he opened his lips. Gold teeth glittered from the mirror.

The smile broadened to a vicious leer. Dolke retained it. His eyes were steady for a moment; suddenly, they began to bulge. Dolke was looking past his own reflection, toward the door that he had closed.

Quickly, the man wheeled about. He leaped for a coat that was hanging on the back of a chair. He thrust his hand into a pocket. He stopped short as the door swung wide. His gaze was fixed upon a figure that came from the gloomy hall.

The man who called himself George Dolke was face to face with The Shadow. He saw a figure cloaked in black; arms folded, yet threatening because the hands were out of sight. Burning eyes delivered a searching gaze from beneath the brim of the black hat.

DOLKE'S lips were clamped. His eyes tried to feign startlement. Then, barely opening his lips, the fourth-floor tenant issued a question.

"Who are you?"

A soft laugh was The Shadow's answer. The black-garbed form stepped closer. A sinister voice whispered through the room.

"Who I am matters not," delivered The Shadow in slow, emphatic tones. "What matters is who you are, Gyp Tangoli."

Dolke closed his lips. He made no reply. Again he tried to feign bewilderment.

"You deceived others," hissed The Shadow. "Even Cuyler Willington – up to the moment of his death. He had sought to murder you with the Q-ray, believing that your face was as dark as it appeared.

"The Q-ray would not fail. There was only one answer, Tangoli. Your skin was not tawny. It was dyed an artificial color. One that you kept constantly. Save when you came here as George Dolke.

"Why should Swami Marabout Bey have chosen this unpretentious building for his palatial parlors? Only because it was in this house that he had his secret hide-out. That fact was plain, from the start. That was why I did not prevent your get-away, Gyp Tangoli.

"I knew the truth as I watched from behind those curtains. I saw what your course would be. I knew that you could never have passed that cordon. I went through it, so that I might return – to meet you – when I had learned your true identity."

The impeachment ended. Strange echoes seemed to follow The Shadow's words. Gyp Tangoli stood motionless. His game was ended. It had been uncovered by the master sleuth.

THE DARK DEATH

Bereft of his darkened disguise, Gyp Tangoli made a pitiful figure. His mouth was still closed; that kept his lips from forming the evil leer that showed his true character. Gyp must have realized how he looked. He began to plead.

"I was no murderer," he quavered. "You have no quarrel with me. It was Willington you wanted. I killed him, to save myself. He was a crook. A killer."

"Like the man," mocked The Shadow, "who slew two policemen. The man who boasted –"

IN a flash, Gyp remembered the statement he had made for Willington's dying ears. A confession of murder, heard by The Shadow. With that flash, Gyp swung from one extreme to the other. His lips opened in a vicious snarl. His hand swung up within the pocket of his coat.

The Shadow was moving at the same instant. His long arms swept forward, weaponless. One hand caught Gyp's wrist as the crook fired from the pocket of his coat. The bullet searing through the cloth, sped beneath The Shadow's left arm, scorching the folds of the black cloak.

Gyp shot his free hand for The Shadow's throat. With a twist, the crook wrenched the chair between himself and the avenger.

Dropping one knee to the seat of the chair, The Shadow caught his foeman in a powerful grip. Gyp's tall form went sweeping upward, a helpless burden poised upon The Shadow's back.

One snap of the arms beneath the black cloak would have sent Gyp flying through the air, as those same arms had done with the Hindu, Mahmud. But this time, The Shadow's support was not the floor. He had been forced to depend upon the rickety chair.

As The Shadow gave pressure, the chair buckled. Gyp skidded sidewise as The Shadow crashed to the floor.

Rolling toward the wall, the crook came to his knees, still holding his newly loaded gun. Grabbing for the wall, Gyp caught the side of the doorway. He fired a quick shot toward the blackness on the floor, backing for the hallway with the same motion.

The bullet was wide by inches. At the same instant, a gloved hand rose from the floor. The Shadow's automatic spoke. Like Gyp, The Shadow missed his mark. From an almost impossible position, he had fired a random shot to break his foeman's nerve.

The ruse worked. Gyp, had he paused, would have had a chance to beat The Shadow to the next shot. For The Shadow was rolling for another aim while Gyp was already on his feet. But Gyp did not hesitate. He leaped for the stairway, seeking the nearest avenue of escape.

Coming to his feet, The Shadow followed. Swiftly, he headed for those same stairs. He knew where this flight would end: where he wanted it to finish – in that front apartment on the second floor; the place where Gyp had chosen to play the part of Swami Marabout Bey.

JOE CARDONA had heard the shots. He was dashing upward. The detective reached the second floor just as Gyp arrived there.

The entrance to the anteroom was open. It was at the front, where the stairs led to the third floor. Gyp Tangoli cut through.

THE DARK DEATH

Cardona sprang for the back hall. He knew that the rear outlet from the seance room would be Gyp's chance for escape. Joe came dashing through the little room at the back. He reached the door where The Shadow had worked the bolt. The door shot inward.

Cardona, crashing shoulder-first, went sprawling across the floor. Gyp had yanked the door to speed his way. Joe rolled to the spot where the elephant table had stood. His revolver sailed on toward the anteroom. Half dazed, Cardona looked up, expecting death.

Gyp Tangoli was standing with leveled gun. But the weapon was not pointed for Cardona. It was aimed straight to the anteroom. Cardona could come later. Gyp had another with whom he wished to deal: The Shadow.

Blackness came sweeping inward. Gloating, Gyp Tangoli pressed finger to trigger. A swift action; but one that could not match the split-second speed of The Shadow. With the surge of the black-cloaked form came a burst of flame.

Joe Cardona saw the stooped figure of George Dolke as it went into a crazy sway. He saw a finger strive and falter. He watched the pasty face above. He saw a hideous expression that revealed the glint of gold teeth.

Gyp Tangoli! Cardona realized it as the tall man sagged toward the floor. The revolver dropped from listless fingers. The body rolled sidewise. The ugly face retained its evil leer.

A figure had swept into the room, unseen by Joe Cardona, who was rising to stare at Gyp's sprawled form. The Shadow swung by the detective and swished through the curtains at the rear.

The big chair had been pushed aside. Cardona, looking up, saw blackness merge between the draperies. Then the curtains were swaying slowly, in token of The Shadow's final departure.

Markham and Clyde Burke arrived as Cardona was picking up his gun. They stared at the form of Gyp Tangoli. Like Joe, they recognized the face. Removable stain, washed off in that upstairs apartment, which Gyp had reached by the fire tower. Such had been the crook's method of escape.

He had deceived all but The Shadow. That one foe had divined Gyp's scheme even before the crook had put it into action. And now, in testimony of The Shadow's craft, came the knell that sounded triumph.

A WEIRD laugh, its rising tones muffled by the waving curtains. That token came to the ears of those who stood above the dead body of Gyp Tangoli.

The mirth died with an eerie shudder. Silence alone remained.

Departing by the unguarded fire escape, The Shadow had sent back this mocking cry. Credit for the death of Gyp Tangoli would go to Joe Cardona. Such was The Shadow's wish.

But Joe Cardona, again victorious through The Shadow's vigilance, would not forget the master hand that had led the law to triumph. Once more, The Shadow had swung the scales of justice.

Dark death had met its conqueror. The schemes of master crooks had failed. Cuyler Willington, the plotter; Gyp Tangoli, the opportunist, had met in a struggle to the finish.

And The Shadow, ever vigilant, had been present to wrest the spoils from the victor. Swaying draperies, stilled with the fading laugh, were the final curtain to the drama of thwarted crime.

THE END