

DEATH HAS GREY EYES

Maxwell Grant

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DEATH HAS GREY EYES

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I

THE eyes were there again, cold grey eyes, as hard and merciless as the flack that had shredded the wings of the Flying Fortress "Sweetie Pie" before Dick Whitlock had bailed out over Germany.

And Dick was still in Germany.

The thrumm of planes, the muffled burst of bombs with the odd, crackly echoes they produced, told Dick he was somewhere in a target area that must be in Naziland, considering the pounding it was taking.

Being on the receiving end was different from handling the bomb sights, but Dick didn't mind taking it, considering that it would eliminate a covey of undesirable companions, including the man with the grey eyes.

Dick was hoping, though, that the girl had left; the girl with the dark hair and the straight lips that were as sympathetic as her eyes; those eyes that were a deep brown in contrast to the grey orbs.

The man behind the grey eyes was crisp-faced, colored like long-faded ashes. His voice, instead of being sharp, was smooth as a cat's contented purr, yet commanding in every word. It carried a nefarious

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encouragement that was somehow irresistible.

"State your case again," it ordered. "Tell me: who are you?"

"I am Dick Whitlock," was Dick's mechanical reply. "A prisoner of war – wounded –"

He was pointing across to his right arm when he found that he was raising it. Some of the numbness was still there, but the sling was absent. Dick hadn't been wearing it for days, for weeks, perhaps for months.

How could he tell with those grey eyes keeping their fixed stare?

"Wounded and hospitalized," picked up the purred voice. "Well-treated, given every consideration."

Dick's response was a mechanical nod. The voice hadn't lied, in fact it never did. Somehow its words were friendly – always so – but too sure in their persuasion to be accepted. Behind their smooth suggestion was an ever-present threat Dick had ever sensed but never tested.

"Turn to the mirror," toned the grey-eyed man. "See for yourself that you are well."

It was the same mirror, the broad one opposite the fireplace. Dick had lost count of how many times he had studied his own reflection in that glass. It was getting to be funny, even with the grey-eyed man around. Dick smiled in the mirror and heard a dry chuckle from his shoulder.

"That is good." Despite the approval there was no smile on the crisp face that Dick saw staring with him. "Have a cigarette, my friend."

Taking one from the proffered case, Dick placed it in his mouth and received a match. He snapped the head with his left thumb-nail, the trick that he had practiced recently, and watched the result in the mirror. Then Dick was lighting the cigarette and at the same time peering over the match flame to watch the reaction of the man with the grey eyes.

Only the man was no longer at Dick's shoulder.

He was talking to one of the men who wore a green cap with a feather, the chap who looked as though he was always about to yodel.

"We must hurry, Herr Doktor," the arrival was saying. "It will not be long before the bombers find the chalet. They have already blocked the road through the Pass."

The square room quivered from the force of a near-hit and the rustic furniture joggled. A picture frame crashed from the wall and Hitler's face looked wrinkled up through the shattered glass. The grey-eyed doctor gave a depreciating shrug and for the first time Dick rather liked him. Then, on the chance that his broad grin might produce an argument, Dick turned toward the mirror, letting the smile lessen gradually. The illusion was odd; his lips looked straight, almost horrified, while the smile was still upon them. Dick's expression turned to a puzzled frown which the reflection, returned in that same delayed fashion.

A hand tapped Dick's shoulder.

"Wait here."

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In the mirror, Dick saw the doctor turn and go out through the door by which the green-garbed yodeler who didn't yodel had evidently preceded him.

The whole place quivered hard from the close bash of another bomb.

Dick's knees gave, and he used his good left hand to brace against the table. He expected the mirror to crack along with caving walls, but it stood the gaff. The door flew open, but the bomb wasn't responsible.

It was the girl.

"Hurry!" she exclaimed, and the quick dart of those dark eyes meant it. "You haven't a moment to lose!"

"But the doctor said –"

"You mean you would trust Doctor Greug?" Tense though it was, the girl's face showed amazement. "Why, he's already deserted you! Come!"

Dick winced as the girl clutched his sore right wrist. Shifting her grip to his left arm, she hurried him from the square room and through a corridor he'd never seen before. Opening a door to the left, she started down a stairway, beckoning for Dick to follow.

Right then, a bomb really scored. The way the surroundings dissolved was incredible. The walls should have splintered, but instead they wilted like damp cardboard. They were pouring down the stairway, carrying the twisted door with them and Dick was lying slanted on what had previously been the hallway ceiling.

The girl had vanished, to safety Dick was sure, since she had gained a head-start. But how Dick could ever extricate himself from this debris was a mystery, or would have been, except for Doctor Greug.

Timbers yielded under hacking sounds and Dick went sliding to the right along with the caving floor, squarely into the arms of the crisp-faced doctor and a pair of men in green. Greug's guttural exclamation carried a pleased note and before Dick realized it, he was being carried along a stone-walled passage of rock.

Half-dazed by the bomb's concussion, Dick didn't hear the next blast that must have obliterated the remainder of the building they had left. From then on, the whole experience was a nightmare that outdid Dick's hazy recollections of how he'd ever arrived in this vicinity.

Doctor Greug was climbing into a waiting automobile that already contained some occupants whose faces Dick couldn't distinguish. The car gave what looked like a take-off as it bounded down a steep gully. From the window came Greug's dismissing wave and the men in green started Dick along a mountain ledge that overhung a vast ravine.

There were trees everywhere in the dusk except for jagged rocks and bare slashes where the bombs had literally trampled down the forest. Then, reaching a platform that overhung a precarious crag, Dick found himself being shoved into a crazy, dangling contrivance that he mistook for one of the Ferris Wheel cars that he remembered from Coney Island.

The men in green were with him and they were starting the thing across a cable that faded into the blackness of a lower cliff on the other side of the huge crevice. High above, the drone of bombing planes was dwindling into the distance, but now Dick heard the jab of revolvers in his half-deafened ear-drums.

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As marksmen, Dick's companions were good yodelers, nothing more. Or maybe they were shooting at an imaginary target. Certainly it was something stranger than any human.

Following the aerial tram in its trip across the mountain gorge was a cloaked figure, black against the grey cliff. Like a whirligig in a breeze it was slithering down the slightly slanted cable, gripping it with upraised hands!

In this haste for flight, Dick's companions were outdistancing this intrepid pursuer and thereby making their bad aim worse. But there was a fresh reason for their hurry. Toy-like bursts were punching the high rock that the aerial tram had left; not bombs, but grenades, that sent sickening, singing quavers along the cable. Men who formed tiny vengeful figures were throwing them, in an effort to blast the cable from its moorings!

The car stopped with a hard jolt that pitched Dick and his hounded bodyguards to the safety of the far platform. On his feet, Dick was being rushed along another brink to a spot where the path turned between two boulders.

With a last look across his shoulder, Dick sought sight of the cloaked figure on the cable but failed to see him in the gorge's gloom. Friend or foe, Dick hoped the amazing venturer had reached safety too. If he hadn't, he never would, for a fierce whine from the darkness told that the cable had snapped loose. From far away and below, came the tiny crash of the ill-fated aerial car as it reached wooded depths.

Into Dick's pounding brain floated a strange new recollection of a haunting laugh, which could only be the creation of a fevered mind. Yet that weird, parting taunt persisted with the thrum of the motor that sped the automobile in which Dick now rode.

The mental echo clung to the slap of waves, as they swashed and pummeled a jouncing boat which later carried Dick through absolute darkness, along with new companions that he couldn't see or recognize. It all seemed the continuation of an impossible dream which held Dick's reeling senses in its whirling midst.

All this motion leveled off at last. Out of an interminable lull, Dick found himself lying on a padded shelf that was carrying him head-on into the night. He never would have recognized it as the berth in a sleeping car, but for the piping whistle that kept floating back from up ahead, the shrill note peculiar to a European locomotive.

So Dick Whitlock was on a train, going somewhere, away from something he didn't want to remember, those days and weeks, during which a grey-eyed man called Doctor Greug had hurried him with probing questions that brought back every trivial recollection from Dick's past life.

One newer memory had somehow wedged itself into Dick's tormented mind. He voiced it with mechanical lips just as he was lapsing into sleep. It was a name, induced by another piping trill from the locomotive whistle and Dick's lips curled contemptuously as they spoke it.

What Dick said was: "Friedrich."

CHAPTER II

THE Starview Roof Garden had imitation stars in the form of electric light bulbs that flickered in various sizes and colors beneath its ample ceiling.

That was good enough for Dick, now that he was back in New York and among friends, though he doubted that he would call them friends much longer if they persisted in asking him to relate adventures that he

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wouldn't want to talk about even if he could remember them.

"So you found yourself in Switzerland –"

"That's right," acknowledged Dick, speaking to the group impersonally. "Riding in a railway train, though how I landed there, even the conductor didn't know."

Men were leaning on their elbows, interested in hearing more, even though it might be delivered piece-meal, when Jerry Trimm interrupted.

"Let's have another round of drinks," suggested Jerry. "Maybe with a few more, you chaps will realize that Dick wants to forget whatever he still can't remember."

Dick gave Jerry a straight stare and a grateful nod. That would have closed the subject if it hadn't been for Claire Austley. The blonde gave Dick a blue-eyed stare that would have hurt, if Dick hadn't remembered other eyes that could focus much more effectively. Dick's lips tightened hard, then relaxed into a sentimental smile.

His first thought had been of piercing eyes, cold and grey; then those eyes of brown, warm, melancholy, but understanding. Whose they were, what they signified, had become a blank to Dick Whitlock. It was as if the grey eyes had so commanded when Dick received their last icy stare, but at intervals along the line there had been rifts, pleasant interludes where brown eyes had broken the stern rigor of a strange psychological misadventure.

All that was fantasy and here was reality – or was it?

In coming back to scenes and faces that he knew, Dick felt that he had returned to another world other than his own. This was New York; but the surroundings were tinsel, the people putty. They'd thought they lived, but they hadn't; in fact they never would until they experienced that endless drift in a descending parachute with the searchlights working like pointers to pick out something on a mammoth blackboard formed by the entire sky, something which happened to be you.

It made you big and little, all at once, with the ack-acks whistling a hail that sizzled upward through the chute. You lived everything all over at a time like that, everything plus a lot you'd never lived.

Maybe Claire took Dick's final smile for one of self-sufficiency; at any rate, she didn't like it. Her gaze roved to Jerry, who made a quick warning gesture with his cigarette. So Claire threw a vacuous smile around the table, which was her way of asking an invitation to dance. A sleek male member of the party took the bait and Dick watched Claire and her party get swallowed by the throng that milled the dance floor.

Jerry said: "Let's get away for a few minutes, Dick."

They went to the Moonbeam Bar, just off the Starview Roof. Jerry ordered a couple of drinks; then tilted his sharp face and stated in so many words:

"You've changed a lot, Dick."

Dick gave a short, gruff laugh that befitted the tight set of his broad jaw. His eyes, staring steadily from beneath his blocky brow, looked as black as their surrounding hollows. If Dick had any claim to being handsome it was in a rugged way. Perhaps his toughening years of warfare had obliterated the lighter moods and manners that he once possessed.

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That could be what Jerry meant.

"Maybe other people have changed," expressed Dick. "They certainly don't look the same to me."

"You mean Claire for one?"

"Yes, Claire."

"I haven't noticed it, Dick."

"You've changed too, Jerry."

That brought a mild smile from Jerry. Toying with his drink, he showed a sudden flash of firmness that matched Dick's own.

"It sounds like the old gag, Dick," said Jerry. "Everybody being out of step except one man."

"Why not?" returned Dick. "It can happen, you know."

"Did it happen with you?"

The pointed question brought a straight-lined furrow to Dick's forehead, much like a scowl. But it was an expression of bafflement, not of anger.

"I lived a lifetime, Jerry," declared Dick, slowly, "a whole lifetime following that bail-out. Not just past, but future."

"You mean you don't remember things between then and now?"

"I remember things that were part of that experience because they couldn't be anything else. My arm for instance." Dick thwacked his right forearm with his left hand and winced. "That's why I went to a hospital. Only I didn't go to a hospital."

"No? Where, then?"

"I went to Rook's Retreat."

"You mean you thought you were at that lodge of yours up in the Adirondacks?" Jerry gave an indulgent laugh. "You must have been delirious, Dick."

"Only it wasn't the lodge," admitted Dick. "It was just some place like it. I kept telling myself that in the big mirror."

"There's no mirror at Rook's Retreat."

"I guess not." Dick forced a laugh. "You know the place better than I do, Jerry."

"I tried to hold things together for you, Dick. What else do you remember?"

"Coney Island, but what it was doing in the mountains, I don't know. It was a nightmare, Jerry, most of it, with whispers in between."

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"People conspiring against you?"

"It seemed that way." Dick rubbed his forehead. "I wish I knew what the whistle had to do with it."

Dick's maudlin mood brought no alarm to Jerry. Instead, the sharp-faced chap showed a flicker of satisfaction. Then, in casual mood:

"By the way, Dick, you like the apartment, don't you?"

"It's all right, Jerry."

"I thought it would be tough, getting the one you wanted. You probably didn't know about the shortage here in New York. Funny, though, the fellow who had it didn't mind moving out. Of course he's making a profit on the sublet –"

Jerry stopped short, because Dick wasn't listening. Those deep-set eyes were turned toward the mirror beyond the bar. Maybe Dick was thinking of something more important. Jerry decided to prompt him.

"The new place will be better," promised Jerry. "The trouble was getting workmen to install the furnishings you told me to buy."

Dick shook away his stare.

"What furnishings?"

"The auction stuff." Jerry paused, then added significantly. "From the boat."

Dick's gaze narrowed.

"It was all in the letter," reminded Jerry. "The one that came a few months ago – from Paris."

"But I wasn't in Paris," argued Dick, "not even before that last bombing mission."

"Maybe Eric Henwood mailed it for you."

Dick's eyes widened in real surprise.

"You know Eric?"

"Certainly," laughed Jerry. "He's right here in New York." Rising, Jerry clapped a hand on Dick's shoulder. "Come on, we'd better be getting back to the table."

"Eric." Dick muttered the name as they walked along. "No, it couldn't be Eric. It's another name – if any."

Jerry was holding out a case of cigarettes. Dick started to take one with his left hand, then shifted. He was getting out of that habit on trifling things that didn't bother his right hand too much.

"Another name –"

"It wasn't a girl's name, was it?" put in Jerry, casually. "Or was it?"

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"There was a girl," said Dick, slowly, "but I don't know her name. I never heard it. A wonderful girl."

"I thought so."

Dick stared at Jerry blankly.

"Why?"

"Because of the way you've forgotten Claire. You really have, you know. I don't think she likes it."

Dick wasn't in a mood to care. They had reached their table and under the flicker of the artificial starlight, Dick began to exercise his right hand with a pencil. His chat with Jerry had stirred one recollection, at least. On the back of an announcement card, Dick was drawing a picture from memory, a portrait upon which all his vague recollections seemed to gather and focus.

Leaning on his elbows, Jerry was watching, much intrigued. The music ended, but neither noticed it, until Claire's voice spoke from beside them, caustic in its light ripple.

"I didn't know you could draw, Dick."

"Learned how, years ago," said Dick, still working on the finishing touches that were putting just the right expression into the portrait's eyes. "Thought I'd forgotten how, but I hadn't. Funny, how many things came back to me."

"She's lovely," said Claire in a tone that meant the opposite. "Who is she?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe she'll come back to you. Or isn't she one of the things that you've forgotten?"

What Claire said didn't count. Holding the finished picture at arm's length, Dick sat amazed at his own skill. His right hand had certainly gained something during its idleness, for the picture was a perfect replica of the sympathetic face that had haunted Dick all during his delirium.

Unless the face had been a sheer fabric of imagination. Unaware of a stir at the opposite side of the table, Dick kept staring at the sketch until Jerry's hand started lifting at his elbow. The men were getting up to meet someone who had just arrived. A bit annoyed, Dick complied with the ceremony, raising his head as he arose.

It was then that Dick Whitlock really stared.

Straight across the card that he still held, he saw the original of the penciled face, the girl with those deep brown eyes and russet hair, who belonged in the whirl of impossible adventures that had never happened!

CHAPTER III

A DAPPER assistant manager was introducing the dream girl to Dick's companions, who, as members of the social set that regularly patronized the Starview Roof, were entitled to meet any celebrity. In his confusion, Dick didn't catch the girl's name, but he had hopes, for Claire, in a style subtly feline, invited the brunette to take a chair between herself and Dick. By this process of self-eclipse, Claire actually won a ringside seat from which she observed what followed.

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"I'm sorry," began Dick, "but I missed the introduction. My name is Dick Whitlock – and yours –"

The girl was smiling, almost to the point of laughter, a contrast to the subdued creature who had floated through the fog of Dick's nameless recollections. She wasn't looking at Dick, but at the card he held, and now she plucked it lightly from his hand, to admire the sketch of herself.

"How nice," she said, in a warm alto tone. "You must have sketched me while I was at the other table."

"Why, no," began Dick. Then, noting Claire's quick-darted glance across the brunette's shoulder: "I mean yes – of course."

"And how appropriate," the brunette added. "I really should have it printed on all the announcement cards."

She turned over the card which Dick had used by chance and on the other side, Dick saw the printed announcement for the first time. It read:

NEXT WEEK

THE STARVIEW ROOF

WILL INTRODUCE

IRENE BRESLON

FAMED CHANTEUSE

PARISIENNE

Dick looked at the girl.

"You?"

"I suppose my accent surprises you," acknowledged Irene, as she nodded. "I'm not really French, you know. I just happened to be in Paris for a long time. I was there when the war started, and I didn't get away."

Dick gave a quick look toward Jerry, wondering if this would help explain the Paris post-marked letter. Only Jerry wasn't interested; his eyes were on Claire, as though seeking profit from the diversion caused by Irene.

And Claire, briefly forgetful of the scene between Dick and Irene, was meeting Jerry's gaze with a look that was anything but vacant.

Something seemed to explode in Dick's brain with a little puff and the mental jolt cleared his thoughts.

The people around Dick looked different now, more their own selves as he had remembered them. All Dick had needed was the right perspective and now he was getting it. Claire's coy but pointed remarks; Jerry's blunter statements, all had a significance. Things had changed, but so had Dick, or he would have noticed the difference sooner.

There was something between Jerry and Claire, something they were holding back. They wanted to exclude Dick, but couldn't – not yet.

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Dick's lips tightened grimly. He'd settle that question later with Jerry, Claire, or both.

Right now, the best plan was to overlook the matter and concentrate on Irene, since Claire's jealousy – if any – would be feigned. So Dick blandly offered Irene a cigarette, using his newly active right hand to supply the light. Over the flame of the lighter, he watched the brown eyes raise to meet his own. Then:

"I'm sure I've met you somewhere before, Miss Breslon."

"In Paris, perhaps? After the Nazis left?"

"I didn't go there." Dick shook his head. "But possibly you met some friends of mine. You were singing there, of course –"

"Not very long." Irene's interruption was hasty. "I was so worried about some friends who had been stranded on the Riviera during those horrible years. I went to see them."

"Perhaps that was where we met."

"You mean you went to the Riviera?"

"I'm not quite sure." Dick's smile was very serious. "You see, I'm a bit hazy on just where I was, and all the things that may have happened to me."

Dick's voice was making a statement, but his eyes were questioning, hoping the girl would reveal some forgotten clue. Jerry and Claire, their momentary indiscretion ended, weren't missing a thing. To them, Irene was obviously a link in Dick's forgotten or well-guarded past and they were trying to learn more.

So was Dick Whitlock.

"Maybe we weren't meant to meet," Dick told Irene. "It could be part of a plan, you know, a great plan. After all, the past doesn't count, except as it concerns the future."

Even Claire was a bit amazed at the way Dick was rushing things with this girl. The blonde leaned forward on the table, hoping to glimpse Irene's eyes and observe their reaction. That in turn was just what Dick was seeking, as Jerry could tell from across the table.

Only it wasn't the future that counted with Dick except as it concerned the past. He'd put the statement the other way about, confident that Irene would understand. Apparently she did, for she nodded emphatically, though for some reason she turned her eyes away.

Nobody thought to follow the direction of Irene's gaze. If they had, they'd have noticed two men seated at a table near the broad entrance to the Starview Roof. Small men, both; one with a little mustache, the other wearing long sideburns that came to the bottom of his ears.

They were foreign looking, and they looked uncomfortable in their baggy tuxedos. Dawdling over their wine glasses, they were watching Irene without giving the fact away. Her nod was meant for them, for they resumed a gesticulated conversation the moment they caught it, and in the course of things they called the waiter and paid their check.

Meanwhile, snapping from her soulful mood, Irene was flashing the gaiety that suited her Parisian background.

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"Such flattery!" she was saying, not to Dick, but to Jerry and Claire. "And he said he did not go to Paris. Ah, well, I believe him!" she patted Dick's shoulder and tilted her head coyly. "About not being to Paris, I mean. They say the American soldiers everywhere all ask the same questions – like 'Where have you been all my life?'"

Irene was rising before Dick could reply; in fact, Irene was practically delivering him back to Claire, though the blonde didn't appreciate it. Claire turned to Dick with the acid comment:

"You'd better get a new line, soldier. That one is frayed."

Dick shook his gaze from Irene's departing shoulders which were shrugging very gracefully as the assistant manager suggested that he introduce her at another table.

"Maybe Jerry has suggestions," Dick told Claire. "Or if you wouldn't know, don't tell me."

"If you mean," began Claire, hotly. "that I've been seeing Jerry too often –"

"Only you haven't, Claire," put in Jerry. "After all, somebody had to look out for you while Dick was away. Dick said so himself. Remember?"

Jerry was turning to Dick, but Claire was ahead of him, sliding a diamond ring so smoothly from her finger that it seemed never to have belonged there.

"And here's one thing you've forgotten, Dick," Claire added. "Tie it around your own finger for a few years as a reminder we were once engaged!"

Dick slid it in his vest pocket and waved away the apologies that Jerry was making for Claire. True to her old form, Claire couldn't be humored until the day after a spat, if Dick's recollections served him rightly. Before Dick could wonder if his memory was good on that point, a waiter provided a timely interruption by handing him a telephone message.

"From Eric Henwood," Dick told Jerry. "Says he'll be phoning me at the apartment later. Guess I'd better be on my way. Look out for Claire and see that she gets home all right – as usual."

Dick rose and strolled nonchalantly away, conscious that Claire must be glaring after him and quite aware that Jerry was trying to soothe her. But Dick was more interested in the other table that he passed, where he was lucky enough to catch Irene's eyes and receive the same smiling nod that she had given him before.

The smallish men had left their table by the entrance. Even if he noticed them, Dick wouldn't have guessed that Irene's earlier smile had been a signal for them.

An artful smile and a nod, a combination that spelled betrayal!

CHAPTER IV

CERTAINLY no one going down in the elevator would have guessed that the square-jawed young man with the wavy hair who looked so at home in his tuxedo, was Dick Whitlock, former bombardier.

There was a tall, calm-faced man in the elevator whose immaculate evening attire was a far cry from the cloaked garb worn by a dangling figure that had navigated a cable crossing a chasm on the Swiss border. Dick wouldn't have believed that the two were the same, even if he'd recalled the incident itself. Right now,

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Dick was mixing all such stuff with childhood recollections of Coney Island.

As for the man in evening clothes, he didn't have to guess who Dick Whitlock was; he knew.

That was why this gentleman, who called himself Lamont Cranston, had done an about face upon arrival at the Starview Roof. He'd come there to find Dick Whitlock and meeting him going out, Cranston had followed along.

There was a side street exit on the ground floor and Dick used it, since the one-way thoroughfare promised a cab going his direction. To get a cab at this hour, you walked to a lighted spot, waved your arm and whistled at every vehicle that came along.

Only Dick didn't reach the lighted portion of the curb.

Slinking suddenly from a darkened doorway, two men with upturned collars flanked Dick on either side and prodded his ribs with knife points. So sharp were the points that a thrust could have proved fatal.

For a few surprised moments, Dick thought he was back in the outskirts of a German village under the threat of Nazi bayonets; then, remembering that this was New York, he gave a hard, short laugh.

These must be some of the "muggers" he had heard about, human dregs who came into circulation when demands of war had siphoned off the best of Manhattan's manpower. Dick thought the mugger question had been dealt with, but apparently there had been a carry-over. Something of a privilege, Dick decided, to do some settling of that question on his own.

Fists tightening, Dick didn't mind the twinge in his right arm as the ugly pair veered him toward their doorway. One knife was lifting, obviously for Dick's throat. This was the time to swing hard.

Half-poised, Dick saw the nearest knife.

It wasn't a mere jack-knife, whetted to a needle point. The thing was a regular dirk with a full-fledged blade. Its owner wasn't lifting the knife for a stab, he was bringing it to position for a cross-slash. The face with it, sallow and mustached, had eyes with a snake's glitter that said without words, that they intended murder, not robbery.

A half-step backward and Dick was under the threat of a duplicate dirk which came up with scintillating speed. A pasty-face with dark-streaked cheeks, showed the same venomous purpose that the other had displayed. Two snarls meant more than a demand for silence; they were mutual signals calling for a slash. It was just a question which killer would beat the other to the stroke.

Right then, the poised blades froze in mid-air.

A calm tone belonging to neither of the would-be murderers, was telling both to drop their knives. Between the shove and the vicious faces, Dick saw the calm visage of Cranston, whose face he remembered from the elevator but whose name he didn't know. Cranston's hands, at shoulder level, were behind the necks of Dick's persecutors and each fist was loaded with an automatic.

This was a cool antidote to murder, before the deed could be accomplished, but the savage pair did not long tolerate the threat. Like a well-drilled team, they suddenly dodged from the gun muzzles and spun about with double purpose.

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One intended to stab Cranston; the other to give Dick the slash. If Cranston had fired his guns, he might have stopped those deeds, but not with certainty. Instead he whipped into a two-way maneuver of his own.

A ward with one gun met the stabbing knife with a clang that knocked it from the attacker's hand. A swing of the other automatic forced the second man to make an arm fling which in turn shortened his knife slash, since his elbow was driven against Dick's chest. Bowled back into the doorway, Dick landed half-sprawled and the knife merely carved the air above his head.

It was then that the big guns talked.

Cranston didn't aim at the snarling pair, who seemed to melt down to the sidewalk, then come springing up again like human mushrooms, the first reclaiming his lost knife in a deft, rapid scoop. Downward shots might have found Dick instead of the two attackers.

Neatly planted, Cranston's shots were just close enough to make the two men spread and Dick thought surely they'd be taking to their heels. Instead, they dove into the scene again.

Cranston was their mutual target now and guns or no guns, Dick wouldn't have given him a chance. He was practically flattening himself, evening clothes and all, as though hoping he could drop right through the sidewalk. Now Dick was coming to his feet intending to charge into a fray that was over before he could start.

Swinging arms, driving feet came up from the sidewalk to meet those flying dives. Instead of finding Cranston, the baggy assassins were bouncing past each other like a pair of India-rubber men. The amazing Mr. Cranston must have met them with some tactics that carried these light-weights further on their way and from the tumbles they took, Dick expected a couple of broken necks where they properly belonged.

Instead, the men came up again.

This time, Dick didn't let astonishment hinder him. One of the men was rising out there by the lighted curb, intent upon regaining a knife that had clattered into the gutter. Dick made a fast lunge of his own to intercept the action, but he wasn't half across the sidewalk before Cranston's flinging foot stopped him with a well-paced trip.

It wasn't that Cranston wouldn't have welcomed Dick's intervention. He was only thinking of Dick's welfare.

Straight across the street was a darkened alley and Dick was coming into dead-aim from that passage. A rifle spoke from the darkness with Dick as its target, but it spoke too late. The sniper wasn't counting on the headlong pitch that Dick took from Cranston's foot. Sizzling half a yard above Dick's descending head, the bullet flattened against the brick wall beside the doorway.

The whine of a passing bullet wasn't a novelty to Dick Whitlock. Hitting the curb, he kept flat and rolled away from the lighted patch. From the sidewalk, Cranston punched shots at the alley opposite and forced the sniper back for the next bark of the rifle was muffled. Dick heard a bullet crackle the sidewalk and ricochet against the wall; then, like echoes, came the quick scurry of feet.

Dick was still on the roll. Coming against the bumper of a parked car, he shifted past the fender and came up by the running board. Looking for the bouncing men, he saw that they were gone. More amazing was the fact that Cranston had vanished too. In fact from the evidence at hand, Dick could have classed it all as more of his dream life, until he heard shouts and police whistles as proof that things had really happened.

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A car came scudding up the street and Dick's natural impulse was to get back to the doorway, since everyone except the vanished Mr. Cranston seemed leagued against him. But now Dick had another ally, one who appeared as suddenly as Cranston had melted, a figure that in that moment of stress awakened a peephole in Dick's cavalcade of blotted memories.

Out of blackness came blackness, alive. A cloaked figure embellished with a slouch hat, took Dick with one sweeping arm, flung him around and across the curb, as though intending to carry him over to that alley where death still lingered, for all that Dick knew. Punching the blackness and finding air instead, Dick was relieved when his trip became abbreviated. The scudding car stopped with a shriek of brakes and proved to be a taxicab with a door that flew open as if a button had pressed it.

In a sense, the cab intercepted Dick, for his cloaked friend whirled him right into it and closed the door with the same motion. Then, mounting the step, the being in black aimed an automatic as formidable as Cranston's through one open window and out the other, and barraged shots at the death alley as the cab lurched past.

There was no response from the rifle. Evidently the sniper had fled under the probe of Cranston's shots and was therefore well away when the black-clad marksman took over. From the window Dick heard a laugh, then saw the blackness clear like a disseminating mist. Passing street lights told him that he was alone, except for the cab driver, who was successfully leaving the sound of police whistles and patrol car sirens far in the background.

Somewhere in the course of things, Dick must have given his address for he arrived back at his own apartment. Shakily he stumbled to the hallway telephone when he heard it ringing, expecting that the call was from Eric Henwood.

It turned out to be Jerry Trimm, offering an apology in behalf of Claire Austley. So Dick accepted it very nicely and laid the phone on its stand, grateful for this trivial interlude that assured him of his sanity.

A moot point, that sanity.

In front of the telephone was a small round mirror that gave a reflection of the dimness between two curtains leading into the darkened living room.

Looking into the mirror just to make sure he was actually Dick Whitlock, the man who answered to that name stared in amazement.

Over his shoulder, Dick saw a face, a crisp-featured face of a color that looked ashen compared to the cold, brilliant glitter of steel-grey eyes that crystallized all of Dick's forgotten memories into one glowing focal point.

A name sprang mechanically from Dick's lips:

"Doctor Greug!"

Odd that Dick Whitlock should speak that name, both strange and forgotten. As he voiced it, he found himself staring at a mirror that was vacant except for his own disturbed countenance. Wheeling, Dick saw only darkness between the wavering curtains. Flinging them apart he found the light switch.

On came the lights and Dick swept a look around his own living room, only to find himself alone!

CHAPTER V

BEING very proud of the famous sidewalks of New York, Police Commissioner Weston didn't like to have them nicked by bullets, especially when a search of the area produced knives instead of guns. Such matters were the sort that Weston liked to discuss privately with his friend Lamont Cranston, who sometimes came up with valuable suggestions.

So two knives which had either been flung or lost in haste were lying on a table in the grill room of the Cobalt Club where Weston usually dined. They were getting attention from Cranston and a waiter, who supposed that they were merely a subtle protest on Weston's part over the toughness of the steaks that the chef had been preparing lately.

After the waiter had left, Cranston defined the exhibits:

"Apache knives, commissioner."

"So I've been told," returned Weston, testily. "They're the kind commonly used by the denizens of the underworld in Paris. So what are they doing in New York?"

"Souvenirs, probably," suggested Cranston. "The G.I.'s send home everything short of captured buzz-bombs."

"As good an answer as any," admitted the commissioner. "Come to think about it, we've had a lot of trouble from odd contrivances getting into the wrong hands."

"You picked these up near the Starview Roof," reminded Cranston. "That's rather appropriate, since they have a new singer there who is rather vague on the exact date when you ask her about the last time she saw Paris."

Weston grunted at what he thought was some of Cranston's triviality.

"In fact the Starview is going Parisian," continued Cranston. "I understand they may book some Apache dancers."

"Dancers don't use knives," argued Weston, "but maybe you have something. These cut throats may have some grudge against those dancers you mention."

"Gunning for them," nodded Cranston. "With knives."

"Have your joke," snapped Weston. "The last laugh will be mine after our investigation discloses what last night's trouble was actually about."

Perhaps Cranston felt himself better qualified than Weston to pursue such an investigation, but if he happened to be depending on Dick Whitlock, Cranston would be due for some disappointment. At present Dick was sitting in the living room of his snug apartment, personally wondering just what it was all about.

At least Dick had company in the person of Jerry Trimm, who wasn't helping much.

"I've told you about the muggers," Dick was saying, "so let's forget them. Other things worry me more."

"You mean Claire?" queried Jerry. "Or Irene?"

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"Reading from left to right," returned Dick, "we'll take Claire Austley first. Or suppose you take her."

"Now listen, Dick –"

"You're gone on Claire, so why deny it? I don't blame you, Jerry. After all why should Claire have waited for me to come back? For a while it must have looked as though I wasn't coming back."

"Maybe Claire is very glad, Dick."

"She should be, considering that my money has accumulated instead of lessening while I've been gone. Don't argue the point, Jerry" – Dick waved an interrupting hand – "because it never did elude me."

Jerry's eyes went puzzled.

"You mean you thought Claire was after cash when you asked her to marry you, Dick?"

"I wouldn't put it that bluntly," declared Dick. "Let's say that I knew Claire would want a lot but that I considered her worth it."

"And now you've changed your mind?"

"I've changed my sense of values. It didn't take me long after I was in the army to find out that loyalty and friendship aren't counted in terms of dollars. So I suppose the same applies to love."

Jerry's gaze became relieved.

"I guess you really mean it, Dick," he said. "Anyway, tossing the cash around was your idea, not mine. I haven't anything to lose."

Dick didn't notice the odd emphasis that Jerry put on the word "lose." He simply queried:

"How have I tossed cash around?"

"By insisting on my renting this apartment for one thing," replied Jerry. "Rigging up the new place was even more extravagant as you'll find out when you see it. I thought you'd really gone whacky when you insisted on my buying the whole Petite Salon from the Steamship Bretagne."

This time the puzzled stare was Dick's.

"Did I tell you to do that?"

Jerry nodded and Dick laughed.

"It wasn't a bad idea at that," decided Dick. "I rode that scow once, back when she was regarded as deluxe. So I wrote you to buy the Petite Salon –"

"And I got it cheap," put in Jerry. "At auction. It was a real bargain, Dick. Do you know I'd almost settle for the difference."

"Settle what?"

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"Our little deal – or big deal, whichever it is. You didn't make that part quite clear."

"Good old Jerry." Laughing, Dick clapped his friend on the back. "You'll always believe that some of my crack-pot notions will come through. Well, I have the capital to swing them and you're welcome to your share if they come through."

"About this deal, Dick –"

Jerry spoke hesitatingly, then halted. Apparently he was hinting for Dick to take up the details, but Dick didn't. Instead he went into one of his musing moods.

"That girl last night," said Dick. "I've seen her somewhere, Jerry. I didn't mention her when I wrote you, did I?"

A head-shake from Jerry.

"Funny about last night, too," Dick continued. "Remember that message the waiter brought me?"

"From Eric Henwood, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Said he'd phone me here, only he didn't. You say you've met Eric. What do you make of him, Jerry?"

"I'd say he was a mental case," replied Jerry, "if I didn't hope he wasn't. He seems to have some vague ideas that you were supposed to explain, but haven't so far."

"I met him in the prison camp," recalled Dick, "before they shipped me to the hospital. He'd been there a long time and was being exchanged because he was disabled. I wonder –"

"About Eric?"

"About a lot of things, Jerry, but I can make it specific where Eric is concerned. I wonder why I should remember him when I've forgotten so much else." "Why don't you ask him when you see him?" "A good idea. He's coming around here tonight. Wants to talk privately about something." Jerry took the hint and with relish. Something was bothering him and Dick hadn't explained it. The interview between Eric and Dick might be the very thing that would jog Dick's memory, if it needed jogging at all. There was much of the sly in the smile that framed itself on Jerry's sharp face as he turned out through the hallway.

"Claire is waiting over at the Celebrity Club," spoke Jerry, almost indifferently, as he paused at the door. "It might be tactful to stop over later, Dick."

"I suppose so," nodded Dick, turning back to the living room. "I'll be there – unless I think of something more important."

Outdoors, a steady drizzle was taking on the proportions of a rainstorm. From his fourth-floor window, Dick Whitlock could see the increasing storm above the roof of a three-story house opposite. The city lights produced an unearthly glow above those roof-tops.

Odd, the fantasy that could be produced by the works of nature combined with those of man. Here was a man-made chasm between a modern apartment house and an antiquated residence that might have been a mountain gorge. Electric lights, smothered by clouds through which sunlight could never have trickled, were etching the scene as if in an afterglow.

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It was a twilight that Dick remembered, though he thought that he was simply picturing it. Looking down into the street, Dick wondered if it would furnish the impression of a bottomless abyss, but it didn't. It was simply a rain-swept street, where Jerry, who had been unwise enough to go out without a top-coat, was scooting into a cab that was stopping with the same sharp tactics exhibited by the cab that Dick had taken the night before.

Maybe all New York cabs acted like that, unless this happened to be the same one. Watching it turn the corner, Dick's reflections were covering another factor in last night's adventure.

Well did Dick remember a valiant friend in evening clothes whose name he hadn't learned but whom he hoped to meet again. Nevertheless, it wasn't Cranston on whom Dick's thoughts were focused. There was someone else, as yet totally unidentified, a cloaked fighter who had relieved Cranston after the first stages of the fray.

Looking across the street, Dick wouldn't have been surprised if such a figure had come scaling from the parapet of the old house opposite. Dick's recollections of the Swiss mountain gorge with the cloaked adventurer crossing it by cable, had been subsequently obliterated, much as the abyss itself had swallowed car, cable, and the traveler in black.

Turning from the window, Dick settled into an easy chair, smiling at his own imagination. Dick preferred to believe that his mind was cluttered, not clouded to the point where he accepted the existence of singular creatures that could materialize themselves like a chunk of night turning solid.

If Dick had been staring from the window of a place called the Cobalt Club, he might have changed that opinion. There, entering a waiting limousine, was the very figure that Dick regarded as a figment of his own imagination. Lamont Cranston, delayed by a dull conference with the police commissioner, was becoming his other self, The Shadow.

The whispered laugh that The Shadow gave was meant specifically for Dick Whitlock, the man who doubted his existence. But it wasn't the sinister mirth that The Shadow uttered when he planned to cloud the minds of men. Instead it could have been defined as a laugh of pleasant anticipation.

Dick Whitlock was a man whose mind needed clearing and The Shadow was on his way to supply that service.

CHAPTER VI

A RAINY night could play hob with almost anybody's plans. In Dick Whitlock's case, it meant he wasn't going out at all, regardless of how Claire Austley might feel if he didn't show up at the noisy night-spot known as the Celebrity Club.

From the shallow closet in the corner of his living room, Dick was taking a garish dressing gown which Jerry Trimm had provided along with the apartment. A horrible combination of blood-red crimson and jaundiced yellow, the gown reminded Dick of an old-fashioned awning, nevertheless it was more comfortable than coat and vest.

Thinking of awnings reminded Dick of the windows, so he stood there as he filled his pipe, staring across at the rain-flecked roof of the old house. Something much like a head and shoulders poked itself above the parapet and Dick's eyes narrowed at the sight; then he decided that the object was simply a stubby chimney, half lost in the swirl of the rain.

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Curiously though, it vanished and reappeared like some optical illusion and Dick was so intrigued that he forgot how plainly he could be viewed from the other side of the street. The living room lights were bright, etching Dick in the framework of the window so sharply that even the colors of his dressing gown, the whitish curl of his pipe smoke were distinguishable.

But Dick wasn't caring about danger from without. There was something about the apartment itself that gave him the creeps. Any place where grey eyes looked across your shoulder into a mirror, then vanished before you could turn around, was a spooky place indeed. That was the reason Dick preferred to keep the living room brightly lighted.

If the casement window hadn't been partly open, the room's reflected lights would have prevented Dick from seeing that stubby chimney opposite. Right now, the thing seemed to steady in the half-mist that rose from the pelting rain, but before Dick could study it further, a buzz from the door interrupted. Dick went out through the hallway to answer it and found Eric waiting there, his hat brim dripping water on his rain-soaked coat.

"You're as bad as Jerry," laughed Dick. "If you'd looked at the sky when you started out, you'd have had sense enough to wear a raincoat. Come in and I'll give you some dry things."

They didn't go anywhere near the living room window on their way to the closet beside the door to the kitchenette. There Dick found a pair of slippers for Eric and peeled off his dressing gown so his friend could wear it. Putting on coat and vest instead, Dick gestured to a pipe that was on the mantelpiece.

"That yours?"

"Why, yes," laughed Eric. "I must have left it here. How do you like the diggings, Dick?"

"All right, if they weren't haunted."

"Haunted?"

"By all sorts of funny sounds. Maybe they carry through the building, but I don't see why they should. The walls are thick enough; this is a modern apartment house."

"Notice anything else?"

"I thought I saw a face, with odd grey eyes. It would have been a first-class ghost face if I hadn't remembered it from somewhere else."

"Whose was it?"

"I don't know." Sitting down, Dick watched Eric fish in the pockets of the dressing gown, then turn to fill his pipe from Dick's humidior. "There are some things I want to ask you, Eric, but let me take a good look at you first."

Eric nodded as though he understood and made allowances for the vague mood of Dick's mind.

One thing was certain to Dick Whitlock, the more he studied Eric Henwood. This man, with his thin, weather-beaten face, wasn't part of the dream fabric. He belonged to the part of Dick's later life, the period following the parachute descent. Though Dick had met Eric only at the prison camp, he hoped the fellow could help him piece some subsequent experiences.

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"Where did they send me?" queried Dick. "After I was shipped from that prison camp?"

Eric took the pipe from his mouth with his left hand, blew a cloud of smoke and looked through it, as he asked:

"Don't you know?"

"To a hospital, I suppose," stated Dick, "but I don't remember much about it."

"How much?"

"Only that I thought I was back in my old mountain lodge, but I couldn't have been. I met a girl there. Her name was Irene."

A chuckle came from Eric's thin lips.

"That's remembering something, Dick."

"Only I never heard her name," argued Dick. "Not until I met her again last night, at the Starview Roof."

"Come, come," put in Eric, a trifle annoyed. "Don't tell me some Nazi nurse would be here in New York."

"She says she is French," returned Dick, "but, she talks like an American. Maybe she was a prisoner, too."

"Did she remember you?"

"If she did, she didn't say so. I wish I could recall some names that I did hear in that place. But I spent most of my time looking into a mirror."

"At what?"

"At myself. That must have been how all my illusions began." Dick's hand swept his forehead as though to brush away the straight lines that crossed it. "I keep thinking of myself in slow motion, Eric, as though I were someone else."

"Perhaps you were something of a mental case, Dick." Pipe in hand, Eric was watching Dick closely. "I was on the verge myself, you know."

"While you were a prisoner?"

Eric nodded.

"I was shot down early in the war, you know," he said. "Very silly of me, and I brooded about it. So I was sent to some hospital where they had a psychoanalyst."

Dick took his own pipe from his mouth.

"Quite a famous chap, I understand," continued Eric. "Maybe you've heard of him – Doctor Kurtz Greug."

"That's the name!" Dick's fingers came up with a snap. "Greug! The man with the grey eyes!"

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Eric stared doubtfully.

"The eyes you saw here? In the hallway mirror, only last night?"

"I thought I saw them."

"Imagination, probably, like those sounds you've been hearing. Remember anything else?"

"A railroad whistle –"

"Here?"

"No. Wedged in my mind like a fish–bone in the throat. A whistle, piping shrill, from one of those European locomotives. Shrieking a name, it was."

"Not mine, I hope." Eric laughed indulgently. "I wouldn't want to believe the banshees were howling for me."

"No, it wasn't Eric." Dick pondered, feeling the stir of recollections. "Not Eric, but something like it – something more –"

Eyes half–closed, Dick tried to close the link. It was the way he'd been working with all his memories, only to have gaps widen, the more he fought to bridge them. This time, however, something clicked.

"I have it!" Dick exclaimed. "Friedrich!"

Eric's teeth set hard upon his pipestem. It was only the smoke that trickled from his lips that prevented Dick from noting the man's savagery, in a sudden change of expression.

"It's a name they called me," spoke Dick slowly. "I don't know when or why, but I associate it with myself. Perhaps if I'd asked Doctor Greug, he would have explained it."

Eric's tension relaxed.

"You mean Greug was sympathetic?"

"In a way, yes," admitted Dick. "Only I never had a chance to question him. He put all the questions and I answered them. All things about my past and myself."

Eric Henwood stepped out to the hallway telephone and while he dialed, he drew out a letter that he had transferred from the pocket of his coat to the borrowed dressing gown. The number that he called was Grand Central Station and Dick heard him reserve a Pullman berth for a place called Rocky Point, using Dick's name.

What Dick didn't see was the way Eric slipped the letter under the telephone. As Eric turned, Dick asked:

"Where is Rocky Point?"

"In the Berkshires," informed Eric. "You'll like it better than that Adirondack lodge of yours, only you'll go to the Adirondacks later."

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Eric handed Dick a folder that bore the name of "Rocky Point Sanitarium" and with it an application blank that bore the title "Guest Membership." Under the picture of a grim stone building, Dick saw the legend: "Mental Therapeutics Our Specialty."

"Better fill it out," suggested Eric. "You need a rest. It will do you good."

"And you need a drink," laughed Dick. "It will do you better." Turning toward the kitchenette, Dick paused to add: "Which will it be – Scotch or rye?"

"Neither." Crumpling the application blank with his right hand, Eric was reaching to his left hip. As Dick swung about, Eric's left hand appeared with a glittering revolver. "Stand just where you are," Eric added. "A few feet to the right would be better. That's it."

Though ready to take the thing as a joke, Dick was letting his hands rise and it was well he did, for he saw promptly that the glare in Eric's eyes meant business. Then came rasped words in a tone that denoted a different, vicious Eric.

"What little you've remembered," announced Eric, "is too much. You'll be guessing things next, about me for example. I was in the R.A.F., yes, but I deserted before they found me out. I wasn't shot down over Germany, I landed there, with all the facts I could bring."

Eric's leer vouched fully for his tale of treachery, and that he intended to add murder to his crimes was plainly evident. Close by the doorway leading into the kitchenette, Dick found his elbow grazing the front of a dumb-waiter that formed part of the short passage. He was wondering if he could wheel the other direction and dive into the kitchenette, but Eric had already anticipated the move and was shifting to prevent it.

Moving over to his right, Eric picked up the pipe he had discarded, hoping his nonchalance would lull Dick, which it did for the needed moments. Pipe to his lips, Eric was doing more than get his left hand into full play; he was sidling past a chair in order to have a straight path toward where Dick stood.

Too late did the purpose strike home to Dick.

Another step and Eric would be able to advance, gun ahead of him, keeping Dick under such complete control that a dive for safety would be impossible. It would then be a death march – Dick's death march.

Eric was right by the window now, vivid in the striped dressing gown that Dick had lent him, his gun aimed inward, following his evil gaze.

Right then, death was a matter of mere moments. Its moment came, and instantly.

Tuned to a distant crackle a rifle bullet sizzled through the window, met Eric just behind the ribs, and the traitor fell forward into a sickly sprawl!

CHAPTER VII

THE SHADOW heard the rifle shot and located it on the instant. Just arrived at the apartment house, he was in the ground floor doorway, an excellent observation spot, not for sighting the window of Dick's apartment but the roof top opposite. Though he couldn't see the marksman, The Shadow knew his identity, for the shot had the same precision shown on the previous night.

This was the alley sniper who was leagued with the two Apaches!

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The hidden man's shot had been a trifle late the night before. On the chance that there had been another miscue, The Shadow repeated his own tactics. Sweeping the dripping rain from his slouch hat brim, he whipped an automatic upward and chipped the stonework of the parapet with three well-placed shots. Wheeling back into the doorway, The Shadow waited a response.

None came.

One rifle-shot had evidently performed its mission. Nevertheless, remembering last night's methods, The Shadow calculated on finding other foemen. Swinging into the apartment house he ignored the elevator and took the stairs at a rapid lope. Almost at the top, he heard the scurry of feet and stopped short as two men came rushing from the direction of Dick's locked door.

They were the Apaches of the night before, as quick-sighted as they were witted. Spotting The Shadow against the white wall that flanked the stairway, they pirouetted in amazing style and darted for the elevator. Their nimble feet carried them around the corner and into the elevator before The Shadow could overtake them. All he saw were their glaring faces, and their hands brandishing ugly knives; then the door slammed.

It was a long trip back to the stairs and to try to intercept the Apaches by a mad race down would be taking on ridiculous odds. On the chance that Dick hadn't fared too badly, The Shadow hurried to the door of the apartment and began working on it with a set of combination keys and picks that promised rapid results. But other things were already happening in Dick's apartment.

Rooted in the exact center of the living room, Dick had been watching the way the red stripes of the dressing gown merged with the yellow. It was Eric's life blood that caused the queer illusion, but the fact had hardly dawned on Dick, when he felt a hand tap his shoulder.

Then the voice spoke:

"Come!"

Turning, Dick found himself facing the grey eyes of Doctor Greug!

Coldly commanding, those eyes, as they had been ever since Dick first saw them, but they were hypnotic, rather than evil. In fact, Dick could feel a friendliness in the strange man's stare.

Memories were coming back, those of Dick's last meeting with the man, when Greug had rescued him from the wreckage of a bombed chalet. It was Greug who had sent him on the road to safety and apparently the man meant to do the same again.

With his one-word command, Greug included Eric's body with a gesture and a few moments later, Dick was helping Greug lift the burden, not toward the door, but in the direction of the kitchenette.

There, where his own elbow had been not long ago, Dick saw a gaping cavity, the front of the dumb-waiter.

Inside was a sizable elevator, large enough to hold a person, which it promptly did, in the shape of Eric's body. Greug rapped a signal and the elevator slithered down with such rapidity that Dick was still staring when it popped up again, empty.

"Get in."

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Obedying Greug's order, Dick felt the lift drop like a plummet. The trip ended with a modified jolt that rolled him out into the waiting hands of a pair of square-faced men who sat him in a chair beside Eric's body. Then the lift was speeding upward again.

This time it was Greug's turn.

His face a study in utter rigidity, Greug was standing between two open doors, one the door of the living room closet, the other, the window-like entrance to the dumb-waiter shaft. Over his left arm, Greug was holding the coat, vest and hat that belonged to Eric Henwood.

In his right hand, Greug gripped a Luger automatic, aimed toward the curtains leading to the hallway. He was prepared, though, to make a sudden shift, for he was sighting in that same little mirror above the telephone table, where Dick had seen his face the night before.

Greug was listening for sounds from the outer door and if they brought any of the enemies that he expected, this frozen-faced doctor would instantly go into action. He was using the mirror to increase his angle of vision and if the door should shove inward, it was obvious that Greug would accept it as the gauge of battle.

What relieved the tension was the sudden arrival of the dumb-waiter, up for its final passenger. Hearing the clatter of its arrival, Greug heeled about, entered the lift and slid the sash down. Muffled taps sounded from within the shaft and the dumb-waiter slithered downward.

Still seated in his chair, Dick was watching the square-faced men place Eric's body in a pine-wood box that had the general appearance of a coffin. They must have found it somewhere in the cellar, Dick decided, and they were putting it to good use. At least Greug thought so, for he nodded his approval as he stepped from the cellar.

Turning toward Dick, Greug tilted his head slightly and listened. The slight change in the doctor's rigid lips might have been termed a smile; if so, it was a self-compliment on his skill at long-distance hearing. Glaring guttural orders to his men, he waved them out through a doorway with their pine-wood box, while he gestured for Dick to accompany him by another route.

They were actually in the rear street, before Dick heard the sounds that had registered earlier on Greug, the whine of approaching sirens. Windows were clattering around the neighborhood indicating that the reports of earlier gunfire must have spread.

Past the next corner, Dick saw a truck that looked like a hearse, as it made a rapid departure, and guessed that it was carrying Eric's body in the improvised coffin. What would happen when the truck encountered police cars was a puzzle, or would have been if Greug hadn't provided that it didn't.

Very methodically, Greug raised his Luger and fired three echoing shots in air. Then, with the same trip-hammer precision, he drew Dick rapidly across the street and into a passage where they moved unmolested by the rain, thanks to the high walls on either side. The police cars must have been attracted by the bait of fresh shots, for Dick could hear the wailing sirens change direction and converge to the spot behind the apartment house.

Then, drawing Dick across the next street, Greug gestured him into a bar-room and bluntly ordered two beers. They drank them in silence, Greug plunked the change on the bar, and bowed Dick out through a rear door leading into another alley. Around a corner, they came to a subway entrance and the methodical Greug waved Dick down the steps.

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There was more than mere coincidence in the fact that so many siren-bearing cars had arrived outside Dick's apartment house. Before the local patrol crew could learn where the shooting had begun and what it was all about, they found themselves under the command of Commissioner Weston, who was alighting from an official car.

With the commissioner was a very earnest young lady, Irene Breslon, who was insistent on the point that Dick Whitlock could have been the object of last night's attack outside the Starview Roof. Before the commissioner could check on the number of Dick's apartment, another patrol car wheeled up, pacing a cab which stopped to let out Jerry Trimm and Claire Austley.

"You see?" Claire was telling Jerry. "I said you shouldn't have left Dick here alone. Something may have happened to him already, or all these police cars wouldn't be here. If something has –"

Clipping it short as she saw Irene, Claire stopped accusing Jerry and concentrated on the other girl.

"If something has happened," Claire charged, "you're responsible!"

"I wouldn't be here if I was," returned Irene, coldly. "Suppose you tell us where to find Mr. Whitlock. I don't even know his apartment number."

Jerry supplied the information and they crowded into the elevator to go upstairs. On the fourth floor, Weston led the procession with drawn gun, and when he found that Dick's door was unlocked, he strode through like a hunter intent upon a kill. Entering the curtained living room, the commissioner stopped short, his revolver lowering itself of its own sheer weight.

Seated in a comfortable chair, blandly confronting the commissioner, was Lamont Cranston!

"Hello, commissioner," Cranston greeted. "I was expecting you, but not so soon. I intended to call you after I talked to Whitlock."

"You mean you knew that the attack was meant for him last night?"

"The notion occurred to me," returned Cranston, indifferently, "but I thought I should inquire first."

"Have you?"

"Whitlock wasn't here when I arrived. He must have gone out some time ago. By the way, commissioner, I heard some sounds like shooting in the neighborhood."

"So did a lot of other people," snapped Weston, "but it couldn't have happened in this apartment. Not unless you slept through it, Cranston, but I credit you with more intelligence than that."

"Thank you, commissioner."

Claire and Irene weren't crediting anybody with anything, particularly each other. They were looking around for traces of Dick, even to opening the door of the living room closet. While Claire was letting her glance rove from one piece of furniture to another, Irene took a look at the telephone table in the hallway, but found nothing there.

Weston could have interfered with that process but since Dick's rival girl friends were doing his work for him, he let the matter pass. Meanwhile, Jerry Trimm was seated quietly in the corner, wearing a troubled

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expression that only Lamont Cranston could understand.

"I guess Dick left for the Adirondacks," said Jerry at length. "He was getting bored with town life. Felt rather cramped in this apartment, so he said. We'll hear from him after he reaches the lodge."

Agreeing that he'd been brought on a fool's errand, Commissioner Weston decided to leave and beckoned the others along. It was Cranston who proved thoughtful enough to close the closet door. Since that made him the last to leave, he had no difficulty removing a black cloak and hat that he had stowed out of sight, behind some of Dick's wardrobe.

"I left Dick before the rain started," Jerry was telling the commissioner, as they went out through the hall. "He wasn't worried about anything then –"

A low, whispered laugh was Cranston's summary of that departing statement. Taken on face value, it could explain an odd fact. Not the various papers, including a letter addressed to Dick that Cranston had found on the telephone table, all pertaining to a place called Rocky Point. They were evidence of a future sort, whereas Cranston was thinking in terms of the recent past.

Lack of a dressing gown and slippers in Dick's closet might be negative evidence, but they fitted with something very positive, showing on the floor inside the closet.

Dick Whitlock couldn't have come into his apartment wearing wet shoes if he hadn't gone out before the rain started. Some visitor was connected with recent events in this apartment; how deeply it would be The Shadow's business to learn!

CHAPTER VIII

DICK WHITLOCK was learning the human side of Doctor Kurtz Greug, so far as the latter would – or could – reveal it.

They were in the hotel suite where Greug lived and as usual the grey-eyed man was putting questions, but he was running out of them, hence Dick was looking forward to a reversal of the process.

"So Henwood came there to murder you?" Greug gave a slight head-shake. "I am not surprised. Were you?"

"Frankly," replied Dick, "I was."

"But you managed to dispose of him?" persisted Greug.

"No," returned Dick. "The shot came through the window."

"Do you know who fired it?"

"I haven't an idea."

"Did you ever hear of a man named Leo Dolbart?"

Shaking his head at that one, Dick waited politely for another question; then, finding Greug at a loss, started his own interrogation.

"If it's the same to you, Doctor Greug," began Dick, "could you tell me just a trifle of what this is all about?"

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Greug gave a faint smile.

"You seem to have learned that for yourself," he reminded. "The man who called himself Eric Henwood was both a spy and a traitor."

"But who is this Dolbart that you mention?"

"An equally obnoxious character, wanted by every legitimate government in Europe as well as the Undergrounds."

"Then why did he kill Eric?"

"Because he thought that Henwood was you." Greug kept his trace of a smile. "Hadn't that dawned on you?"

Dick nodded that it had; he merely wanted to corroborate the fact. Then:

"What does Dolbart look like?" Dick queried.

"Very ugly," Greug defined. "He has a long scar here." Running his right hand from temple down to chin, Greug made the gesture all the more graphic by giving it a zig-zag. "A scar from a knife" – those eyes of Greug's were cold in their significance – "an Apache knife."

"That links him with the pair last night," nodded Dick. "Or does it? If Apaches are out to carve up Dolbart, they wouldn't be leaguings with him – or would they?"

"In the underworld of Paris," explained Greug, "it is a common practice for bands to fight among themselves with the same intensity that they exhibit when combating the authorities. Dolbart's scar was a trophy of years ago and he regarded it as distinction. He has found it a handicap since he ventured into a larger world."

"That's why he can't show his face?"

"Exactly. Among the scum who are roving Europe, selling their services to the highest – and therefore the most heinous bidders – Dolbart was perhaps the worst. In a sense he became the most dangerous when forced to rely on others in order not to reveal himself. He is a lone hand turned brain."

It was interesting information, but it was leading further from the main fact that Dick wanted. Hoping to make the most of Greug's present talkative mood, Dick shot home the question:

"What has Dolbart to do with Friedrich?"

Cold, unyielding was the fixed expression in Greug's eyes, but they were helpful, not spiteful. They seemed, by their hypnotic stare, to be opening Dick's field of forgotten memories. He remembered now, meeting that very stare once before, when its effect had been the opposite.

Then, as Dick's memory returned, he knew he had been listening to a shrill, fierce voice delivering what seemed to be an oration in a language he didn't understand. It had penetrated to the room where he had been, there in the lonely mountain chalet, and Greug, arriving at the time, had given Dick a hypnotic treatment.

"Do you remember Friedrich?"

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Greug asked the question impassively, but pride in his hypnotic prowess was evidently at stake. Dick felt he shouldn't have remembered.

"It was only because Eric reminded me," stated Dick. "Just before he drew the gun."

"A great fool, Eric," declared Greug, relaxing his gaze. "Did he mention the rest of Friedrich's name?"

Dick shook his head.

"It was Friedrich Von Reichfrid," spoke Greug, solemnly. "It stood for freedom of the state, the sort of freedom that would mean new slavery. Friedrich Von Reichfrid, the Future Fuehrer."

The grim significance of the statement was gripping Dick. Observing it, Greug added:

"If you would like to see the perfect portrait of this man Friedrich, look there!"

Facing the frame toward which Greug gestured, Dick Whitlock stopped short in unfeigned horror as he met his own reflection in a mirror!

It couldn't be a joke, not coming from Greug, the man who didn't jest. Moreover, Dick could see Greug's eyes, gazing across his own shoulder as they had so often before, fixed in that same solemn manner.

"Yes, you are Friedrich's double," spoke Greug. "There were another hundred who might have done as well, but you were chosen for the distinction, if it could be called such."

Shaking off his own reflection rather than Greug's hypnotic stare, Dick swung from the mirror.

"Who chose me?" he demanded. "Eric Henwood?"

"He recommended you," replied Greug. "Eric was just one of numerous agents deputed to find a double for Friedrich. The coming generation of Nazis do not intend to make the mistake that their fathers did with Hitler."

"What has that to do with me?"

"Very much. It was decided that the future Fuehrer should be allowed to thrive on foreign soil and return as a conquering hero, well-acquainted with the world, at the time his day arrives. To accomplish this, he would have to live as someone else."

"So I was to be the front and play the stooge for the next twenty years –"

"You overestimate your importance," interposed Greug, his tone cold in its irony. "Your existence was to cease immediately. Friedrich Von Reichfrid was to become Richard Whitlock in fact, until the day when he could declare himself."

It was clear now, except for Dick's abandonment in the doomed chalet, and Doctor Greug was coming to that matter.

"My task was more distasteful than yours," stated Greug, in that dry way of his. "I was requested to probe your past and it was one of those requests I could not refuse. I was also to groom Friedrich for the part he was to play."

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"If he was to be me," put in Dick, "why did I hear him squealing like a stuck pig?"

"He was looking to the future," replied Greug, "practicing some of the speeches he expects to make about the year nineteen sixty-five."

"Rather a pretentious chap, this Friedrich."

"He was trying to imitate his idol, one Herr Hitler, but he realized that the example might not exist long enough to be copied later."

Greug's smile of contempt brought a flash-back to Dick's mind. He was remembering the crash of Hitler's picture when the bombing knocked it from the wall and he recalled the disdain that Greug had registered then.

Still smiling, Greug was pouring two glasses of wine. He extended one to Dick, raised the other to his lips, and declared gravely:

"To the memory of the future Fuehrer."

"You mean Friedrich –"

Greug's nod interrupted as he finished his sip.

"Yes, Friedrich is dead," completed the crisp-faced doctor. "It was your life or his. I found my opportunity to preserve the right one."

"For which I am grateful, Doctor Greug."

"You need not be." Greug's tone was crisply indifferent. "Lacking sympathy with the scheme, I took the one course which I knew would destroy it. The Underground had learned that there was something important happening at the obscure mountain chalet and through them, bombers were sent there."

"I was prepared for the occurrence, thanks to my connections with the Underground. I arranged for Friedrich to be in the chalet and I removed you in his stead. Since I was considered to be a loyal Nazi – a misconception which I encouraged among my associates – my ruse was not suspected."

At least Dick could offer Greug a hand-shake, which he did, and found it warmly received. Then:

"That makes twice you've saved my life," Dick affirmed, "but if Eric was working on Friedrich's side, why did he try to kill me tonight?"

"Because Eric suspected the truth. He was the one man that I feared might recognize who you really were."

"That's right." Dick rubbed his chin as he gave a reflective nod. "Eric saw me at the prison camp. I suppose I didn't change enough – or Friedrich couldn't have become quite enough like me – to fool Eric."

Greug's bow acknowledged the accuracy of Dick's analysis. The doctor was pouring a refill from the wine bottle when Dick put another question:

"What could Eric hope to gain by murdering me?"

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"Much. Very much," specified Greug. "It would have been quite easy to prove your true identity after death. Your army finger-prints, for instance, are records which so far have not been reached. The Nazis would have rewarded Eric highly, once they learned that he was right."

"And they'd have hounded you the rest of your life."

"Which might not have been very long," declared Greug, as though that was some slight solace. "Hence it was quite on my own account that I preferred to have you live."

"Then the sharpshooter across the way was yours?"

"Unfortunately not." Greug's tone was a trifle sad. "I should have arranged that little plan myself, all for Eric's benefit. Instead, others arranged it for you."

"They mistook Eric for me?"

"Of course. Because of the dressing gown. Only they have already mistaken you for Friedrich, just as I understand they did when you were crossing the mountain gorge into Switzerland."

No wonder that gap across the street had seemed familiar. Dick realized now that the shape on the parapet hadn't been a chimney, but an assassin like those who had tried to blast the cable line. Linking this fact with Greug's earlier statements, Dick put the question:

"You're talking about this Dolbart and his crew?"

Greug responded with a nod.

"And they're trying to kill Friedrich?"

"To reinstate themselves with the Underground, yes," replied Greug. "But they would probably kill you instead, if they were offered the right price. The difference between Dolbart and Henwood is that Dolbart requires payment in advance."

With that, Doctor Kurtz Greug delivered a convincing smile, an expression that he had reserved until he was sure Dick Whitlock would not need it and therefore would appraise it at face value.

Dick Whitlock was already convinced that in Doctor Greug he had a powerful friend, though not the only one who could help him through his present complications.

There was one other: The Shadow!

CHAPTER IX

WHATEVER Dick's opinions on the subject might be, Commissioner Weston was quite convinced that Irene Breslon had Dick's welfare much at heart.

With his usual one-cell logic, Weston argued mentally that the girl wouldn't have insisted on a rush trip to the apartment unless she really feared that something serious had happened there.

It didn't occur to the commissioner that Irene could have hoped the thing had happened; that by playing the opposite game, she would not only be giving herself an alibi but would have a chance to do some cover-up

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work for her friends.

Those were the sort of details that would occur to Lamont Cranston, so lately The Shadow.

Obviously a death-thrust had been well-timed. The knife men had gone to Dick's apartment while their sniper friend was stationed at a key-spot opposite. His work was to get in a long-distance jab should close tactics fail; also to cover any flight of the knife men.

Seeing some opportunity, the sniper had played the first hand and his rifle shot, to say nothing of The Shadow's answers, had served as a signal for the other Apaches to be on their way. They'd known, unquestionably, that Irene was already coming here, under auspices that would keep her own escutcheon unblemished while she was viewing the results of the Apache attack.

Even Claire Austley was fooled by Irene's solicitude for Dick, but Jerry Trimm was another story.

There was a twitch to Jerry's sharp face which told he was puzzled over something, and badly. He wasn't just annoyed with Claire, who for once was actually apologetic. He had something deeper on his mind and at moments looked ready to express it, only to stop short.

All this took place in the lobby of the apartment building, where Weston finally left the decision to Irene.

"If you think Whitlock is in danger," declared Weston, "we'll send out a flier for him. It would help if you had a description of those men last night, so we could round them up. If you know anything –"

"Nothing, nothing at all," interposed Irene, quite hastily. "It was only that it happened – well, so soon after Mr. Whitlock left us."

Irene turned appealingly to Jerry and Claire, who couldn't very well deny that she'd been with them just before Dick left the Starview Roof. Jerry gave a quick nod, because it helped his own dilemma; while Claire, feeling she'd been very stupid, decided it was policy to follow Irene's lead.

"Dick's taken a trip," assured Jerry, as soon as Claire had murmured a few words in Irene's behalf. "Like he said he was going to, that's all. Guess we'd better be getting back to the party, Claire, if it's all right with the commissioner."

It was all right with the commissioner, so they left in their cab, while Irene, abashed at having caused all this trouble, insisted on taking the subway rather than returning in Weston's official car. Cranston in turn decided to stay around in case Dick did return, which was agreeable with Weston.

That was why Cranston soon was on Irene's trail. She didn't go by subway; he didn't stay at the apartment house. Only Irene didn't know she was being followed, for Cranston had again resumed his guise of The Shadow.

The rain had lessened to a misty drizzle, the best of elements for enveloping the blackness of The Shadow's cloak. He was a living blot in darkness of which he seemed an actual part, as he stalked the dimly lighted street only a few paces behind the click of Irene's high heels.

At a little drug store, the girl turned to make sure that no one had followed her. Thinking in terms of police, she soon decided that she was quite clear. It didn't occur to her that the blackness forming the frame of the store's show window was actually alive. Its complete rigidity deceived her.

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Through that same window, the keen eyes of The Shadow watched Irene dial a number and read the motions of her lips as she talked to someone she called Leo. When the girl came from the booth, her face was quite as perplexed as Jerry's had been; perhaps more.

Irene had insisted that there hadn't been a body on the floor of Dick's apartment; Leo's retort was that there must be. How anyone so lackadaisical as Cranston could have had a hand in changing things, Irene didn't know. At least Leo said he was where he could find out something and had left it for Irene to do whatever else she could.

At present Irene was in a quandary; hence it was better that The Shadow should be checking on Leo, which was exactly the mission he had undertaken. Gone from his post outside the window, The Shadow was speeding to Leo's vicinity, using the number dialed by Irene as a clue.

In the heavily subscribed telephone exchanges of Manhattan, certain numbers were traceable within range of a few blocks. If The Shadow didn't find Leo Dolbart where he expected, he could check it closer by a call to Burbank, his contact man, who kept a special phone book with reversed listings, giving numbers in order, and the names and addresses that belonged with them.

Perhaps Doctor Greug had some inkling as to Leo's present location, for he was showing new tactics in his hotel suite, much to the interest of Dick Whitlock.

Turning out the lights in one room, Greug beckoned Dick into the darkness and lifted a window-shade at a slight angle so he could peer through the side.

"They're around," assured Greug, grimly. "Trust Leo Dolbart to guess that I might have brought you here."

"If he knows this place," returned Dick, "how does it come you're safe here?"

"Leo would never murder me," stated Greug, "not while he thinks I am a lead to Friedrich. But afterward —"

Pausing, Greug turned from the window with a shrug.

"Remember, please." Greug spoke the words like an order. "This man Dolbart has no status. He is wanted as a criminal, everywhere; that is why he carried the favor of the Nazis when they came to Paris. They would have none of him."

"So he switched to the Underground?"

"He pretended to, yes," replied Greug, "but the Maquis did not want him. In Germany, where he went as a worker, he managed to contact the Underground because it was feeble and poorly informed. As a Frenchman, Dolbart was accepted; his game was to betray the German Underground to the Nazis, for a price and the favor previously denied."

"A nice sort, this Dolbart."

"Fortunately his schemes were too slow. The turn in the tide of war made him change his mind. Hearing the rumor regarding Friedrich, he saw his chance to return to Paris as a hero. How poorly informed he was, can be proved by the fact he did not know the part I really played. So he contacted the girl instead."

"You mean Irene?"

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Greug nodded. Then, bluntly he asked:

"Did you know how she happens to be in America?"

Dick shook his head.

"She is to marry the future Fuehrer," chuckled Greug. "As an American, of European parentage, she was an excellent choice. It was a great honor for her to become Friedrich's spouse.

"Of course that was to happen after Friedrich became you and was living on your fortune."

"No wonder Irene lined up with Dolbart –"

Dick caught himself before saying more. After all, as the double of Friedrich he wasn't flattering himself by excusing Irene for wanting to murder anybody who had a face like his. Greug must have caught the humor of the thing, for he laughed indulgently; then became serious.

"Irene really tried to rescue you," Greug told Dick. "If she had succeeded, it would have helped matters. But she would never believe that I performed the task in which she failed."

"Maybe she would," suggested Dick, "if I told her."

"She would believe you even less," said Greug, with a shake of his head. "She, for one, is convinced that you are Friedrich. You must avoid her until all this can be straightened. I have saved your life twice; I can hardly guarantee to do more."

Dick nudged toward the drawn window shade.

"Can you get me out past Dolbart?"

"I think so," nodded Greug. "Yes, there is a way, which my men have apparently avoided, rather than have Dolbart notice them. It leads through to the annex of this hotel, as I shall show you. But you must leave New York."

"You're telling me," returned Dick. "Nothing could gladden me more."

"Good. You have a lodge in the Adirondacks. Did you mention it to Irene?"

"Never that I can remember."

"Go there, then. At once. Say nothing to anyone until I contact you there."

When Dick Whitlock reached Grand Central after successfully slipping past the notorious Dolbart faction, he had gained another notion. Dick had reasoned out one thing which he hadn't discussed with Greug, a thing that concerned the traitor–spy, Eric Henwood.

If Eric had managed to murder Dick, he would have been smart enough to build a false trail. That, to Dick's mind, explained the chatter about Rocky Point with all the sanitarium propaganda. By leaving literature around the apartment, Eric could have sent the police to a place that didn't count.

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Just as a neat blind, Eric had ordered a Pullman berth to Rocky Point in Dick's name. It meant nothing now, since Eric's body had disappeared along with Dick's departure. The fact that it meant nothing, made it valuable. To be smart in his own right, Dick could do nothing better than go to the Adirondacks by the roundabout way of Rocky Point.

So Dick stopped at a ticket window, called for the Pullman reservation that was waiting in his name, and received it. He jostled a man who was standing next in line; made a passing apology and hurried in the direction of the train gate, since he had only a few minutes to make it.

The man that Dick jostled was bulky, enough to well conceal the slender person who was waiting just beyond him. In his hurry, Dick didn't even glimpse the girl who turned away, though she would have found it quite unnecessary.

That girl was Irene Breslon.

As soon as she heard the cry of "All Aboard," the brunette hurried to a phone booth and made another phone call.

The only person that Irene Breslon would logically be phoning was Leo Dolbart, the arch-assassin whose squad of notorious Apaches were only too anxious to make up for past failures where Richard Whitlock – known to them as Friedrich Von Reichfrid – was concerned!

CHAPTER X

DULL, grey dawn greeted Dick Whitlock when he alighted at Rocky Point. It was misty, here beside the river, with the fog hanging low over the hills.

It had been an all night trip, because the sleeper had made a lay-over in order to be picked up by a rambling mail train that served this local line. The slow train had stopped everywhere; Rocky Point was proof enough of that, because otherwise Dick couldn't see any reason why this station was a stop at all.

The station had a forlorn waiting room, with its ticket window tightly shut. No agent on duty, no telephone in the place; only a potbellied stove that wasn't needed at this season. A mail sack was lying out on the platform, dumped there from the train, and Dick could only wait until somebody came along to pick it up.

Probably the sanitarium had a station wagon that met trains when customers were expected; in that case, Dick should have sent word ahead. Still, he had no interest in the sanitarium for he was convinced that Eric Henwood never had stayed there. As a proper blind, Erie would naturally have picked a place where he wasn't known; naming a sanitarium was equally smart, because it had fitted with Eric's story.

What Dick now regretted was that he hadn't driven here instead of coming by train. He could have made it in less time, even with night driving, and he wouldn't have to wait until afternoon for another train to come along and take him away from this forgotten region.

The railroad was on the east side of the river and beside the station ran a rutted road that showed some gravel patches as it climbed into the fog bank representing the hills on the right. A short stretch of road led down to the river and there Dick saw a ramshackle excuse for a pier with a cable running out over the river, into even thicker fog.

Probably an old-fashioned ferry for taking cars across to a good road on the other side. To anyone but Dick Whitlock, that cable would have looked anything but ominous, but Dick was allergic to cables and all that

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they represented.

A frank gentleman named Doctor Greug had refreshed Dick's mind on a cable adventure across an Alpine gorge, and Dick couldn't help but be wary, even of this innocuous river cable. Moreover, last night's whistling death, caused by an arriving bullet, was a further reminiscence of the sort that Dick didn't like.

Pacing inside the station, Dick kept staring through the grimy window, with the rather sickening hunch that should some menace come out of the fog, it would be from the river, at the exact spot of the cable crossing.

Maybe the cable was to blame for what happened. At least it kept Dick's mind away from other sources of danger. The wheeze of an arriving car, on the road beside the railway track, was something that Dick attributed to the local mail-man, only to find himself wrong.

Too many foot-steps on the platform; the peculiar creaks that accompanied them, were the elements that warned Dick too late to avoid the consequences.

The door suddenly clattered inward and with it came two men, who seemed to be shaking off the fog. Both carried knives, as was to be expected, for they were the same pair of Apaches who had so persistently crossed Dick's path.

This time they weren't alone.

Shouldering through the doorway behind them was a man with a nicely-polished rifle whose ugly face answered the exact description furnished by Doctor Greug. Here was Leo Dolbart, scar and all, leering in such distorted fashion that it was difficult to tell where his mouth ended and the scar began.

Behind Leo, Dick saw the person who was the arch-traitor of this occasion: Irene Breslon.

This wasn't a time to be thinking of beauty; nevertheless, Irene was something to delight the eye, as she stood there in the doorway, her brown hair catching the struggling sunlight with a radiance all its own.

Perhaps she wanted to give Dick an idea of what the angels were going to look like, but at least she wasn't singing, which was a help. Seeing Irene was bad enough. He knew now that Greug was right; no explanations would suffice where this girl and her vindictive associates were concerned.

Through Dick's half-frenzied brain was running the thought that he couldn't blame them for the deed they intended; at the same time, he was looking for a way to prevent it. His only shield was the pot-bellied stove, and Dick sidled in back of it, only to hear a sharp command from Dolbart.

Like creatures from a nightmare, the two Apaches stepped quickly to the corner of the room, ready to flank Dick should he attempt an escape. Working around the stove, Dick saw them poise their knives and change positions rapidly, always with that same light step that formed a terpsichore macabre.

A harsh order from Dolbart stopped them. Turning, Dick saw himself squarely in front of the rifle muzzle. The terrible Leo was ready to kill personally. Only he preferred for the moment to hold Dick spellbound with the gun muzzle, while his confreres closed in silently.

Irene had moved in from the doorway. Her eyes were flashing hate, mild compared to the expressions of the Apaches, particularly Leo. At least Irene was better to look at, so Dick faced her, as he let his arms spread, in invitation for the Apaches to make their attack and finish with their fun.

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Dick's arm struck something that clanged to the floor. It was an old poker which belonged with the stove and was leaning beside it. Dick's eyes followed the clattering object, came up again, and met Irene's stare.

With that, Dick's gaze went black.

He wasn't going out without a fight, not Dick Whitlock. Diving for the poker, he snatched it up, transferred it to his strong left hand, and made a wide, terrific swing through the air that sent the knife-bearing Apaches dodging. Then, coming about, Dick raised the poker as a bludgeon and drove straight at Dolbart, intending to down the fellow with one clout.

Rushing Leo's rifle-muzzle wasn't sense, not the way that man could shoot, but amazingly, it worked. For some reason, Dick's drive had an effect upon Irene.

With a sudden, frantic shriek, the girl threw herself against Leo's gun, turned its muzzle upward, and made a mad wrestle to prevent him from firing. She was exclaiming something half in French, half in English, that was probably as incoherent to Leo as it was to Dick, for the scarred man was savagely trying to beat Irene away and bring the rifle into action.

Dick whirled with the poker, ready to slug the Apaches away. He didn't realize that he should have been a dead duck, despite Irene's interference with Leo. Dick had given the nimble-footed Apaches a wide-open chance to stab him in the back, but they weren't doing it.

Things had gone black before Dick's eyes.

Literally, blackness had swarmed in from the open doorway, in the shape of a cloaked attacker who was hurling aside the two Apaches. It was The Shadow again, in action at dawn instead of twilight, and his opponents respected him.

They were diving behind the protection of the fat stove, hoping to be there before The Shadow's guns began to rip. Rather than waste time with his automatics, The Shadow delivered a defiant laugh, swooped upon Dick as he had done that other time, and gathered him in a whirl that carried them both out through the station door.

Next, they were around the corner, with Leo's savage snarls far behind them. They went down the ruts to the river bank and onto a flat boat that was planted there. Then, they were out on the river itself, using the cable crossing. The Shadow was back to his Alpine feat.

So was Leo Dolbart.

A window smashed in the station; from it came the sharp crackles of rifle, and Irene's excited cries. She was still trying to stop Leo from shooting, and perhaps she did her part in making his fire wide. Then the fog completely swallowed the ancient one-car ferry.

Along with the lap of water, Dick Whitlock heard The Shadow's trailing laugh, flinging back a departing taunt to the men who had lost all sight of him and the victim he had rescued.

A creature from the depths of the river fog, The Shadow was returning to that element, triumphant!

CHAPTER XI

LAMONT CRANSTON took the steep, sharp turn leading up to the bridge across Leyden Kill and sped his trim car onto the old wooden bridge. There was a sharper turn on the other side, but Cranston made it in the same easy style, without the help of any comment from Dick Whitlock.

Then they were twisting for the climb beside the old flume, toward the place where the road ran around the cliff edge, the most dangerous stretch of all, but still Dick didn't talk. When Cranston drove, you sat back, held your breath, and knew you'd come through anything.

Dick Whitlock had been finding that out all day. They were far from the Berkshires, where this trip had begun and were now deep in the loftier Adirondacks, on the final lap to Lake Sheen, which nestled in a high hollow, close to Dick's lodge, Rook's Retreat.

Briefly, Dick's thoughts drifted back to the start of this ride, where Cranston had taken over in place of The Shadow. So far, Dick hadn't even begun to define The Shadow and Cranston as one.

Nor was it logical that he should.

Darkness had covered the switch of identities the first time; today, the fog formed the blanket. Safely across the river at Rocky Point, Dick had found himself in a car where Cranston joined him.

Obviously, The Shadow had gone back to settle matters with Leo Dolbart and his Apache crew. It was the only way The Shadow could have rescued Irene Breslon, who deserved consideration for giving Dick last minute aid.

Or did she deserve that consideration?

His thoughts troubled, Dick put the question to Cranston, while the car was covering the last stretch of the journey.

"About Irene," said Dick. "What made her risk her own life for mine?"

"That question was answered beforehand," replied Cranston. "At least so you said."

"Answered by whom?"

"By your good friend Doctor Greug, if the report you gave me was accurate."

Having told Cranston about Greug's rescue and the subsequent interview, Dick felt the subject had been fully covered. Cranston's calm statement was therefore sufficiently cryptic to puzzle Dick. While pondering, he waved to some logging men who were working at the side of the road; then, as the car sped on, Dick rejoined:

"But Greug said that Irene was working with Dolbart."

"That wasn't all," reminded Cranston. "He said that Irene was to marry Friedrich."

"She only pretended that she did."

"Have you asked her?"

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"Well, no." Dick gave a short laugh with the admission. "I didn't even know that Friedrich existed until Greug told me last night. But now, Friedrich is dead."

"Does Irene know it?"

"Of course not. I'm the one she thinks is dead –"

Cutting himself short, Dick flashed Cranston a look that combined anger with amazement.

"Say!" Dick's voice came sharply. "You don't mean that dame could have suddenly fallen for Crown Prince Kraut!"

"Such things have happened," observed Cranston, veering the car to avoid some hunters who were plodding along the road. "After all, with Friedrich's future, your money – and your mutual looks –"

Dick had swung to wave a greeting to the hunters; now he was watching Cranston again, to see if he were smiling, but Cranston's expression was immobile.

"You mean Friedrich would be a good bet," growled Dick. "That is, Friedrich as me. Yes, I have money, but not a tenth of what he'd need; maybe not a hundredth."

"You have enough for a front," remarked Cranston. "It's easier for wealthy people to hide their spendings than their earnings."

"So that's why I was hand-picked!" expressed Dick. "Friedrich was going to live as me, tapping barrel-loads of dough, and dodging income taxes by only declaring mine. I like that!"

"It gives us something to investigate," stated Cranston, "now that you're in circulation instead of Friedrich. Maybe we can learn how the die-hard Nazis intended to finance their Cub Fuehrer."

Dick drove his right fist into his left palm, winced a trifle at the twinge his right wrist gave. Cranston noted it from the corner of his eye.

"Starboard flipper still weak?"

"And plenty," acknowledged Dick. "I used the old left mitt when I handled that poker. And did I swing it! Say, maybe Irene thought I was a modern Siegfried, out to slay a parcel of dragons. That could have changed her opinion of Friedrich, alias me."

"Is Friedrich left-handed?"

"How do I know? I never saw the bloke."

"But he must have seen you."

"That's right," nodded Dick. "It's the only way he could have copied my style. I should have asked Greug about that. He'd know."

"Wouldn't Irene?"

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"Yes, she'd know too, because she was around a lot. Things have cleared in my mind" – Dick was giving his forehead a habitual sweep – "but I still can't fit Friedrich into it. Seems that most of my time was spent in self-admiration in front of a big mirror. But getting back to Irene; she's fallen for Friedrich, has she?"

"It would appear so." Cranston swung the car between the gates that bore the name of Rook's Retreat. "Only things are not always as they appear, even in mirrors."

"She certainly picked a bad time to stage the rescue act," continued Dick, reverting to Irene. "I guess that finishes her with Dolbart's cutthroats. Or to be precise, they've finished her – unless a friend of ours went back in time to help her."

Dick was practically asking Cranston to give an opinion on The Shadow, but Cranston was busy swinging the car where the narrow road bent among the trees. So Dick took the hint and stared ahead, too, changing his gaze only to wave to a stolid man who was coming down the pathway from the lodge, and who didn't bother to wave back.

"Funny about that woodsman," remarked Dick. "The same with the hunters and the loggers – even those fire rangers we passed earlier. None of them seemed friendly."

"Do they usually?" queried Cranston.

"Around this region?" returned Dick. "I'll say. They always used to give the high-ball. Maybe the section is getting too populated, but that's odd too, considering the man power shortage. I'll have to ask Foxcroft about it."

"Who is Foxcroft?"

"The old caretaker. Here he is now, coming from the lodge."

Cranston halted the car in front of an attractive lodge built of half-logs and from Dick's pleased expression it was plain that the place hadn't changed. The same however did not apply to Foxcroft, a gaunt man in rough clothes, who was hurrying out to meet the car. One look at Dick brought a low but hoarse-toned exclamation from Foxcroft.

"Mr. Dick – don't tell me it's you –"

"Now go on, Foxy old fox," interrupted Dick. "Of course I'm myself and this gentleman is –"

"Don't tell me his name," broke in the caretaker. "I just want to say two strangers came by, but didn't stop. If you're going to Bald Knob, sirs" – Foxcroft raised his voice to a high pitch – "you'll have to go down the hill again, over the bridge by the flume, and around to your right. Up past the old dam, you'll find –"

Foxcroft was making an odd series of gesticulations which Dick promptly interrupted by climbing out of the car. He did some gesturing of his own to Cranston.

"Swing up in back of the water tank," directed Dick, "and you'll find a shed that will do for a garage. I'll have a drink when you come down to the lodge, if Foxcroft hasn't used up all my Scotch, though it sounds like it from this double-talk he's handed me."

"But I haven't seen you, Mr. Dick," insisted Foxcroft. "Leastwise I'm not going to say so. You and your friend are just two strangers, if you'll only believe me!"

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"Which I won't." Dick was already striding toward the lodge, with Foxcroft following in helpless fashion. Calling back, Dick added: "I'll be seeing you later, Mr. Cranston."

Pondering a few moments at the wheel, Cranston decided his best course was to take the car to the shed garage. He found it readily amid the gathering dusk and stepped to the path from which he could see the ledge below. As he paused to study the mountain landscape, Cranston heard a rustle in the brush behind him.

No snake could have been more furtive, but the sound was too ample to be of reptilian origin, unless this Adirondack region happened to be infested with tropical boa constrictors. Another crackle answered from the other side of the path; this time it was more like a Cooper Indian stepping on a favorite broken twig.

Snakes or humans, it was good policy to stand one's ground, so Cranston did, drinking in the gorgeous view as though it alone intrigued him. It was indeed a rare sight, this mountain setting, the sunset throwing a singular area of light upon the broad clearing that fronted Rook's Retreat, while darkness loomed high above, where a towering summit cut off the glow from the rest of the mountainside.

Across a lower range, thunder clouds were gathering, grumbling, their ominous approach with reflected lightning flashes, but the muffled roar wasn't sufficient to drown the other sound that Cranston heard, the thrum of an airplane, its sound difficult to trace.

Then Cranston spotted it, above the near side of the lowering peak. On the heels of the thunder's mumble, brush crackled nearby and voices, too guttural to be whispered, reached Cranston's ears from directly behind him.

Those lurkers from the brush thought that Cranston could neither hear them nor understand their language if he did, but he was doing both. From what he caught, he was making calculations while he watched the hovering plane. Then, from the climbing ship came a puff that looked like grey smoke against the darkening sky. It billowed outward; filled itself into the shape of a parachute and floated downward toward the lighted patch of slope land that formed a perfect target.

Lamont Cranston didn't watch it long. Two heavy-set men sprang suddenly upon him, showing surprising speed in their attack, thanks to the steepness of the path on which Cranston stood. Wheeling too late to even reach for a gun, Cranston was sprawled by the overwhelming drive.

A few moments later, the two attackers were lifting a figure that lay silent and inert. If Dick Whitlock still depended upon Lamont Cranston as a friend in need, his hopes had faded faster than the dying sunlight!

CHAPTER XII

THE old lodge looked the same and the approach of a heavy thunderstorm wasn't unusual in these parts. To Dick Whitlock, the only thing that looked different was Foxcroft, and he still couldn't understand it.

In fact, to prove his sobriety, Foxcroft hurried into Dick's own room, just off the center hall, and came out with an untouched bottle. With a smile, Dick laid the bottle aside and questioned:

"What's come over you, Foxcroft? It can't be the storm. You've weathered dozens of them."

"I've just been worried, Mr. Dick," explained Foxcroft. "So many things to be managed, so few people to help."

"I've seen more people around than ever before –"

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"I know," put in Foxcroft hastily, "but they're all busy. When the old dam needed repair" – Foxcroft pointed from the window to the blue bowl of Lake Sheen – "I was afraid it would burst before I could get helpers. At that, it was only a patchwork job at best."

A heavy pound of thunder interrupted Dick's reply. The lightning was flashing now, in vivid competition with that last strong show of sunlight. To Dick, the glowing patch that fronted the lodge was something like a bombing target, and as he smiled at the whimsical comparison, he heard an odd echo of the thunder's rumble, from beneath the floor of the main hall.

"What's that, Foxcroft?"

"I don't know, sir." Foxcroft's eyes shifted. "Maybe some boxes that the thunder jarred loose from the pile."

"You're talking in terms of earthquakes," retorted Dick. "Now if thunder knocked something loose from the sky –"

Dick didn't go a word further. Through the window he saw the very phenomenon he mentioned. With the pound of louder thunder, the target of sunlight took a missive squarely in the bull's-eye, not in the shape of a bomb, but a parachute with a man attached.

Rolling down the slope, the arrival cleared his chute, came around rapidly to gather it in before the arriving wind could bustle it. By then, Dick was over his surprise.

"What goes on here?" Dick demanded. "Who would be flying over this country, let alone bailing out? Come on, Foxcroft; if you know, spill!"

Dick's hands were clutching the stammering caretaker but before Foxcroft could really get a word out, another voice took over, and crisply:

"I can explain, Mr. Whitlock."

Turning, Dick looked into the muzzle of Greug's Luger, with the dry-faced doctor right behind it.

"You heard half the story last night," declared Greug. "Certain facts eluded you, and fortunately. It was odd that you didn't put one and one together to make two: Eric Henwood and his coffin."

Odd in itself that Greug should mention that combination. In telling Cranston how Greug and his two huskies had packed Eric's body in a handy six-foot box, Dick had noticed a curious interest on the listener's part, but hadn't understood why.

"If you had been a trifle less naive," continued Greug, fitting his words between thunder peals, "you might have realized that the coffin was meant for you. Unfortunately, we couldn't have bodies found around the place. Having Eric's was our problem, so we gave it precedence."

Gesturing at the word "we" Greug indicated two men who had stepped from a doorway leading down into the lodge's slanted, hill-bank cellar. Eric recognized the pair of the night before and they took over long enough to tell Greug something in their customary Deutsch.

"Your friend is nicely roped down in the cellar," said Greug, turning to Dick. "My orders are to keep strangers alive until we have questioned them. Don't worry" – Greug's gesture referred to Cranston – "because he isn't hurt. Not yet. If he talks, he won't be."

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Getting Cranston to talk might be a problem, but it was Greug's, not Dick's. Right now, Dick sensed that his own plight was probably worse than that of his new friend. As lightning ripped, making the oil lamps of the lodge seem dull, Dick shot a question:

"You mean you sent Eric to kill me?"

Thunder bashed while Greug waited patiently. Then, as the fierce pelt of rain began, the doctor answered:

"Certainly. He was our man all along. He was to call me so that he and I could remove your body as we actually removed his. We couldn't afford to have you found dead, the way Dolbart and his Maquis would have liked, because –"

Footsteps were pounding the broad porch of the lodge, like something left over from the thunder clap. With a pause, Greug gestured to the door and it opened at that moment, revealing the man who had parachuted from the passing plane. As lightning flashed again, Dick saw his own face etched in every detail, as though a mirror had supplied it in the flesh. Dick gasped the name:

"Friedrich!"

Greug's two followers clicked their heels and delivered a Nazi salute to the newcomer. His gun trained on Dick, Greug couldn't copy the move, but bowed; then, at the finish of another powerful rumble, Greug announced:

"Friedrich Von Reichfrid, come to take his temporary heritage, to which he shall add certain resources our agents have supplied for him. Friedrich left the border chalet before you did, Whitlock. He was waiting for me in the car that took the gully road."

Quite puzzled, Dick kept staring at Friedrich, who obligingly explained further.

"Our good friend Greug is clever," declared the coming Fuehrer, in perfect English. "He decided not to let you die so soon as we originally intended."

"To say 'as soon as' would be better," corrected Greug. "It is the phrase that Whitlock would use."

"As soon as we originally intended," spoke Friedrich in a tone which Dick realized was a replica of his own voice. "You were good bait for the Maquis, Whitlock, and besides, it was better that you should return to America as yourself."

"To avoid complications," put in Greug, "and for a final check-up, or adjustment – if necessary."

Something in Greug's tone caught Friedrich's attention.

"You mean it wasn't necessary, Herr Doktor?"

"Not at all. Whitlock behaved quite according to expectations. Unfortunately Eric failed us. The Maquis killed him."

A spasm came over Friedrich. His expression became a crazed distortion that Dick could never have duplicated. Breaking into German, Friedrich delivered it in the piping shriek that the Swiss locomotive had so aptly imitated. Then, calmed by Greug's cold gaze, Friedrich subsided.

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"We were able to dispose of Eric's body," stated Greug. "To have it found in Whitlock's apartment would have left you the heritage of becoming a suspected murderer, mein junger Fuehrer. Unfortunately the Maquis stayed too close for me to liquidate Whitlock, so I told him to come here."

Vicious, triumphant was the leer that a sweep of lightning livened on Greug's face. In opposite was the morose gaze that Foxcroft gave to Dick, who realized now how helpless the old caretaker must have been.

"Don't be downhearted, Foxcroft," admonished Greug. "We shall allow you to collaborate, as you have to date."

Foxcroft turned a pleading look toward Dick, who nodded his approval of the caretaker's action in accepting the only terms by which he could have aided Dick. In the whine of wind, the fierce batter of the rain, Dick could sense his own death as something imminent, judging by the tightening of the pistol in Greug's hand.

Then Friedrich interrupted.

"What of Irene?"

"I am not sure," returned Greug. "We must learn later, for a certainty. At least she believes that Whitlock is you, Friedrich, for she is sure she saw him die, the night when I arranged his escape. We shall discuss the question of Irene in the presence of one less listener –"

Lightning blazed and thunder crashed, all in one momentous instant, during which Dick Whitlock knew that this was it. He was going out on his feet, but not without another fight. Madly, Dick rushed Greug's gun, knowing he could never beat the cold, merciless finger that was on the ready trigger.

Dick almost made his lunge suicidal.

The gun jolted upward as Dick charged, and if he'd gone a trifle faster, he'd have beaten the lift of the muzzle. As it was, the gun hoisted ahead, and the nine millimeter shell breezed the fringe of Dick's rumped hair.

Greug was sprawling backward, struggling to strike out with his gun, but he couldn't get at the attacker whose firm forearm was hooked around his neck. As for the two square-faced men who formed Greug's very special murder squad, they were staring more amazed than Dick at the face they saw beyond Greug's snarling, choking visage.

It was the face of their recent prisoner, Lamont Cranston!

CHAPTER XIII

THE fray in the hunting lodge became so kaleidoscopic that it seemed out of this world and into unreality.

As a man back from the dead so often that it had become a chronic habit, Dick Whitlock could count this episode as the maddest dream of all.

Cranston was flinging Greug against the doctor's stupefied pair of stooges and in the same sweep, he was upsetting a table that held a burning lamp. Foxcroft, starting to Dick's aid, was saved by Cranston, putting him from harm's path and flattening the second table.

The crashing lamps spilled their kerosene and the flames gobbled it with ravenous licks; but with the ending of those flares, there were only the lightning flashes, and the scene seemed dreamlike.

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Sprawled in the corner where he had landed, Foxcroft began to see why he wasn't needed.

The real dream–stuff was the struggle in the center of the room, where a frenzied fighter seemed to be grappling with himself. Actually there were two participants, but they were too much alike to be distinguished.

Friedrich had foolishly lunged for Dick who had accepted the gag without realizing how smart the procedure was. For as it stood, there was no telling Dick from Friedrich, which left Greug and his gunners at a total disadvantage.

Of course there was a target that all three wanted, as a temporary substitute for Dick; namely, Cranston. But he knew it and was keeping behind the grapplers who held the main attention. Neither Greug nor his square–mugs could get around to flank Cranston, the way Dick and Friedrich reeled.

Out of the two–man tangle came the piping, hysterical orders that Dick could neither duplicate in tone nor language, but the flicker of the departing lightning wasn't enough to fully identify the future Fuehrer. So the whirl continued until Cranston put a sudden stop to it.

With thunder rumbling dully in the distance, the terrific sweep of the torrential rain was the main sound now in progress, but it didn't drown the hammer of new footsteps from the porch. Cranston knew what they signified, as did Foxcroft. Reserves were arriving to aid Friedrich's cause. All those phony rangers, loggers, hunters and woodsmen, who didn't know how to wave a greeting without going into a Nazi salute, were coming here to rally around the future master they had seen descending from the sky.

Having drawn them in by prolonging the battle, Cranston now saw opportunity for escape. If alone, he might not have chosen that course, but it was the healthiest prospect for Dick as well as Foxcroft.

A gesture to Foxcroft brought the caretaker over to Cranston's vantage spot beside the cellar door. As the grapplers reeled past, Cranston flung into their fray and broke them apart, grabbing the one he thought most likely to be Dick. Getting no opposition, Cranston knew that he was right, and spun Dick into Foxcroft's grasp.

Before Cranston could turn to deal with Friedrich, Greug and his two huskies were on the surge, augmented by others who were charging in through the door from the porch. Finishing his whirl, Cranston whipped wide the cellar door, flung himself bodily upon Dick and Foxcroft. With a combined sprawl the three went hurtling down the cellar stairs, Cranston's flying foot hooking the door into a closing slam behind them.

It was Dick who took the hard brunt of their landing, but Cranston and Foxcroft brought him to his feet. With their groggy burden between them, they shoved out through a door beneath the porch, sidestepping some scattered ropes that Greug's helpers had used for binding Cranston.

Amid the wailing lash of the rain, Foxcroft thought he heard a singular laugh, but his overwrought nerves never connected it with Cranston, the man who had used his own capture as a route to rescue, without adopting his customary character of The Shadow. Up on the slope, Cranston had translated the statements he had overheard and learned that his captors–to–be intended to bind and gag him in the cellar of the lodge.

So Cranston had simply played the come–on and let them use their clumsy roping methods, which he knew he could shake off in mere minutes.

But it was no come–on now.

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The race up the steep path, with Dick mushing in the mud, was a longer task than Cranston had anticipated. He knew that pursuers wouldn't overtake them, but bullets were another problem, particularly as the business of maneuvering Dick put Cranston and Foxcroft on the flanks of a target that was three men wide.

Two elements helped: the lightning, because it lessened; the rain, because it increased.

There weren't enough chances for Greug's sharpshooters to spot their broad target; when they did, the visibility was ruined by the downpour. Under the shed, Cranston had Foxcroft help him dump Dick's groggy figure into the roadster; then Cranston was shoving Foxcroft down into the rumble seat, telling him to keep low.

Sweeping gestures in the darkness put Cranston into the guise he now needed: The Shadow's.

Out from the shed roared the roadster, looking like a self-driven vehicle in the occasional flicker of the dimming lightning. The Shadow was practically invisible; Dick was slumped in the bottom of the car, while Foxcroft was deep in the rumble.

All that really bothered The Shadow was the surprising shortage of opposition.

By rights, the roadster should have run the gamut of Lugers and shotguns, but only a few weapons barked. Foxcroft, too, must have recognized the discrepancy, for he kept poking his head up from the rumble seat as The Shadow whizzed the car down the zigzag turns that he'd committed practically to memory.

Foxcroft didn't see The Shadow at all; but then, the old caretaker wasn't looking toward the front seat. Foxcroft was thinking of the lower end of Lake Sheen and a chance lightning glare gave the view that horrified him. A few moments later, Foxcroft was shrieking above the storm:

"They've pulled the old dam! The water will reach the bridge before we get there! It will take the bridge out sure!" That Foxcroft was right was proved by the mighty roar hitting the straight route down the gorge, while the speeding car was making its roundabout turns. But to stop would mean that Greug and his whole tribe of massacre artists would overtake the car before The Shadow could get Dick and Foxcroft to any sort of shelter.

Swinging above the gorge, The Shadow saw a white wave sweeping almost to its brink. Foxcroft spied it too and turned his face away. Catastrophe was certain, as Foxcroft realized when he looked to the other side. They had reached the last turn, the spot where the log flume slanted away from the bend of the gorge.

The flume, a great triangular trough on struts, was the landmark just before the bridge. Head raised, Foxcroft listened for the thing he didn't want to hear, and heard it. A mighty crackle past the bend, and as they reached that turn, Foxcroft saw the flay of flying timbers that were proof too graphic that the bridge had gone.

It was too late now, even to stop the car. The mad driver had tried to beat the flood and had failed. Foxcroft closed his eyes and waited for the end.

The effect was a terrific, wavering slide, in which the doomed car seemed literally to be swept along on the water's surface. To be skating the brink of a mighty flood was just too much for the imagination, so Foxcroft opened his eyes.

The car hadn't even reached the gorge.

At the bend, The Shadow had taken to the flume. A crazy track, but a straight one, the sides of the big wooden V were holding the wheels within its angled confines. The result was a continuous skid, at so terrific

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a speed that every moment threatened outright disaster, but the climax never came.

The very insecurity of this slimy, slanted trough was the feature that rendered it secure. Each time the wheels tried to climb one bank, the reliable old law of gravitation functioned in greater proportion and hauled those wheels down where they belonged.

Up the other side, down again; the car rollicked happily, but with diminishing returns, until the ride leveled into a smoothly perfect slither, to a road a full mile away from the gorge. There, The Shadow jounced the car from its track by bearing all his weight upon the wheel until the roadster went broadside.

As an improvised highway, the problems of a flume were getting out of it, not into it.

Cloak dropped from his shoulders, slouch hat laid beside him, The Shadow had again become the calm Mr. Cranston, telling Foxcroft that Dick was reviving from the effects of the swift fresh air. Then, driving leisurely along this road, Cranston reached the lower stretch of the gorge and paused that his companions might view the result of the vest-pocket flood.

Along with fragments of the splintered bridge were great boulders, huge masses of turf and mud, along with the debris of uprooted trees. The gorge was strewn with such trophies, which might have completely buried or obliterated an unfortunate car, if carried with the flood. Cranston's whispered laugh – The Shadow's – was drowned in the raging tumult, but it stood as a marker to the road of future victory.

To all intents, three men – Cranston, Dick and Foxcroft – had been washed out permanently. Their enemies would count them dead and forgotten. No situation, even of his own design, could have better suited The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV

IRENE BRESLON looked up from her dressing table and felt her eyes freeze from the icy grey that gripped them.

Here, behind scenes at the Starview Roof Garden, she was meeting a man she had hoped never to see again: Doctor Kurtz Greug.

The sympathy between Irene Breslon and Dick Whitlock could be attributed – if for no other reason – to the fact that they had both undergone a similar psychological experience; that of coming under the dominating sway of the master hypnotist, Doctor Greug.

Irene couldn't even shudder, but she did steel herself for the ordeal. Fortunately she'd been preparing for it and unless Greug probed too deeply, her replies to his coming questions might prove superficial.

Irene turned in her chair, her face as white as the soft shoulders beneath the dressing gown which the girl had carelessly donned before preparing her make-up. Greug's crisp grey visage was visible only to his chin. He had folded a cape around his body with one arm, Faustus style.

Like a living head, floating in midair, such was the illusion of Doctor Greug; in the manner of some Teutonic myth, he had become inquisitor as well as oracle.

As the close-up effect of Greug increased, Irene felt more conscious of her own entirety, but with it she seemed to have calcified into a statue of solid marble, proclaiming itself by its own chill. Only Irene's eyes remained warm, the lone fact which told her she might still fight off Greug's spell.

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The living oracle spoke.

"You have joined with Dolbart and his friends. Why?"

"Only to save his life." Irene's lips moved as though mechanized. "They would kill him – if they could."

Which Irene meant by 'him' – Dick or Friedrich – she did not specify. To Greug, it could only mean Friedrich, since Greug was reasonably sure that Irene thought she had seen Dick die, back in that chalet on the Swiss border. Still, Greug's eyes probed steadily.

Perhaps Greug recognized the sympathy which the warmth of Irene's eyes displayed and it certainly wasn't sympathy for Greug himself. Knowing nothing of the episode at Rocky Point, Greug was unaware that Irene had already displayed her feelings toward a certain man by risking her own life in a turnabout against the vengeful Maquis.

It was better perhaps that Greug was unacquainted with that incident involving the real Dick Whitlock!

Coldly, Greug declared:

"You care for him."

"I do." Irene's words were truthful. "I might even love him."

"Love does not matter," Greug's lips relaxed into a sneer, "except as it influences your loyalty to our right cause. Friedrich was honored when he was named to be our future Fuehrer. You are merely privileged to be chosen as his consort. Guard that privilege, for you are replaceable; Friedrich is not."

A sudden chill was Irene's only reaction to this declaration of her chattel status. Greug must have sensed it for he gave one of his heartless smiles. Eyes coldly appraising of the girl's motionless form, Greug added:

"Friedrich is displeased, but I shall talk to him. Since it is better that all should proceed as planned, there is a way in which you can prove your worth."

Irene heard herself say:

"How?"

"By making what the friends of Dick Whitlock would term a "play" for him. It would simplify matters between Friedrich and the girl."

"But I thought Claire was through with Dick – I mean with Friedrich –"

"With Dick!" interrupted Greug, his eyes glaring like livid orbs. "Use that name only! You understand?"

"I understand."

"The other girl wants Dick back," explained Greug. "Your task is to end all thought of such folly and at the same time convince Friedrich that you are worthy."

Greug's tightening smile specified the rest and with it, the strange doctor wheeled, strode from the dressing room and swung the door shut behind him. The slam brought Irene to her feet; springing to the door, she

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planted her hand on the key.

Then, with mad afterthought, the girl caught up her dressing gown from the chair, bundled it tightly about herself with one hand, while she used the other to scoop a small automatic from the dressing table drawer. A moment later, Irene was out in the corridor, ready to deal with Greug if she found him.

The man of Faustus bearing had disappeared. Not realizing the moments she had wasted, Irene was amazed at what seemed an absolute vanish. All that was needed to make it perfect was for the devil to pop up in Greug's place.

And the devil did pop up.

He appeared suddenly in flaming red, with costumed tail and a boot resembling a cloven hoof. His features, streaked with the color of brimstone were truly demoniac beneath the horns that jutted from his forehead. At sight of the glaring image, Irene choked a grateful sob and sank into the arms of his Satanic Majesty.

The devil took off his mask to prove how handsome it was in contrast to his own face. The man who was wearing the Mephistophelean outfit was Leo Dolbart, the scar-faced leader of the Maquis.

"I've seen him!" gasped Irene. "Here!"

"Why not?" Despite its ugliness, Leo's smile was kindly. "It is time that he came to thank you."

"I don't mean Dick. I mean Greug! And he talked about Friedrich, as though Friedrich were here too!"

Leo looked sharply about; then tapped lightly at the door of a dressing room. In a low tone, he said: "Pequin!" then stepping to another door, he rapped and spoke the name: "Franchot!"

The two Apaches promptly appeared, wearing fancy pantaloons and tunics of gaudy-hued velvet, with berets tipped over their eyes. Nobody would have recognized Pequin and Franchot, dancers newly added to the bill at the Starview Roof, as the lurking assassins who had previously stalked Dick Whitlock.

In French, Leo ordered them to search the dressing rooms on the chance that Greug might still be around. Leo personally went to a large window at the end of the corridor and stared along a narrow ledge, but saw only blackness in the night.

Joining the man who could facially give the devil more than his due, Irene said solemnly:

"It seemed like Greug; but I've seen his face so often, floating into those hideous dreams of mine!"

Leo nodded, his sharp eyes still studying the blackness of the ledge.

"Sometimes I think his influence carries," continued Irene. "It may be that his thoughts can reach me – like spoken commands."

Satisfied that the ledge was vacant, Leo turned and demanded:

"What was Greug's command?"

"That I throw myself at Friedrich, to convince him that I belong to the Future Order!"

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"I thought we were dealing with the man you call Dick. We believed you when you said he used his left hand as he always did before the mirror, something Friedrich did not."

"But can't you understand? Friedrich may be here too!"

"How can you tell?" Leo gave a hopeless shrug. "It is only when excited that Dick will use his left hand, now that his right is well again."

Pondering as they walked to the final dressing room where Pequin and Franchot were concluding a fruitless search for Greug, Irene decided in a low-voiced tone:

"I must do as Greug wishes – or as I think he wishes. Should it be Dick I reach instead of Friedrich, there will be a way to make him understand."

The last dressing room was empty. It belonged to Karnak, the Egyptian Fakir, the main attraction at the Starview Roof. But neither Karnak nor his assistant, Abu, had arrived to prepare for their show. All that the room contained was an empty oval basket, a large coil of rope, some incense burners and a compressed steam tank.

In the corridor, blackness was moving inward from the window that led to the ledge. It was cloaked blackness, the living shape of The Shadow. Close enough to hear Leo Dolbart speak to his men and tell them to end the foolish search, The Shadow suddenly reversed his course and merged with the window's blackness.

A soft laugh whispered from the figure that moved along the outside ledge, a shape which Leo had only noticed while it was motionless and had therefore given it no further thought.

Though too late to learn whether Greug's visit had been real or a product of Irene's imagination, The Shadow had formed his own conclusion!

CHAPTER XV

UNDER the twinkling lights of the Starview Roof, Jerry Trimm and Claire Austley were watching the Montmartre Trio finish their Danse du Diable. Claire sat back and reigned a polite yawn as Irene Breslon took the floor.

The other members of the party weren't bored. They regarded Irene as the most captivating singer of recent months. In fact it was rumored that several important producers were present nightly, largely on Irene's account, but that so far, she hadn't signed with any musical show.

At least Dick Whitlock wasn't present, though Claire wasn't too solaced by the fact. Dick had been keeping close to his new and lavish apartment, the one that Jerry had decorated with the unusual interiors including the Petite Salon from the steamship Bretagne.

Dick's excuse was that he had caught a cold during a hunting trip at Rook's Retreat, but when Claire talked to him on the phone she hadn't noticed any thickness to his voice. Maybe Dick was avoiding her, but he seemed to be avoiding Irene, too, which squared matters temporarily.

A camera man was taking flash shots of Irene as she sang, and Jerry turned to Claire to say:

"They're rating Irene as the most photographed star in New York. With all the magazine publicity she'll be getting, Dick will be running into competition from the wolf-pack."

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"I can't see that Dick cares," returned Claire. "At least he isn't interested in protecting his priority."

Whether Claire meant Irene or herself, Jerry wasn't sure, but his expression showed some sort of determination. Evidently Jerry wasn't setting too fast a pace in his own wooing of Claire and he seemed to know why.

When Irene's song ended, the orchestra left its platform and a huge drum was pushed away from the side where it protruded. Claire saw other photographers gather and was pleased that Irene had a rival until the person turned out to be a brown-faced mystic wearing Egyptian robe, head-piece and other regalia.

This was Karnak, the celebrated Fakir, starting his routine with the basket trick wherein he intended to vanish his tawny assistant Abu and make him reappear. Magic bored Claire because it made her think, so she was quite pleased when Irene suddenly joined the group at the table.

"Oh, hello," said Claire, sweetly. "I've heard you've been taking the photogenic laurels lately, Irene."

"Mostly for publicity," returned Irene, modestly. "Of course there have been a few requests from show managers."

"To be really popular," suggested Claire, "you should turn yourself into a human pin-cushion like that Abu chap. He's probably hiding in the basket where Karnak is punching all those swords. Or is he?"

"I really wouldn't know," said Irene. "Only the photographers aren't here to shoot the basket trick. What bothers them is the famous rope trick, Karnak's feature number."

"You mean the thing from India where the boy actually climbs a rope and disappears?"

"Exactly. Karnak claims he brought it here by way of Egypt. Anyway, Karnak does it, and nobody has caught on. I'm surprised Dick hasn't been around to see it."

That was the opening for which Claire had parried and she made the most of it.

"Dickie-bird is moping, poor dear," informed Claire. "After all, I'm hardly to blame. I wasn't adamant, you know, when I gave him back his ring. Jerry says he sits staring at it all day, without a thought for any other girl."

Irene flashed a look at Jerry to learn if Claire's statement might be in any sense reliable.

"Perhaps Dick is just waiting to be invited here," suggested Jerry. "He wouldn't like to unbalance the party, you know."

Irene looked calmly at Claire and asked:

"Should I invite him?"

"Why not?" Claire tossed her pretty shoulders. "After all, I hold no claim on Dick – not now."

That declaration pleased Jerry, who shifted his chair closer to Claire's. Seeing how matters stood, Irene gave a slight nod, with just a trifle of a smile that bothered Claire.

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"Dick might not remember me very well," decided Irene. "I'd better let Jerry take along some of my latest camera studies. Dick might appreciate them."

"Why not?" smiled Claire. "I know he'd just love those gowns of yours, what there are of them."

"These are outdoor pictures," explained Irene. "He'd like them better, being the more rugged type." She turned and gestured toward the floor. "Here comes the rope trick, so we'd better watch it. Don't ask me how it's done. Nobody knows except Karnak – and probably Abu."

As the others faced the floor, Irene glanced about to see who else was there. She didn't expect to see Dick Whitlock, but she was wondering about a certain friend of his, Lamont Cranston, who had something of a yen for things mysterious.

Cranston wasn't present, but there were other men whom Irene noticed; stolid, set-faced individuals, whose expressions were the sort of blank she didn't like. They had been here regularly and their repeated attendance was a slight mystery in itself, though Irene was afraid she could explain it.

One man that Irene scarcely noticed was a doddering old chap who was turned in his chair and leaning on a cane. He came here often, too, and Irene didn't care to notice him for fear she'd encourage him. His name was Isaac Twambley and he was worth a lot of money, so Irene had heard, and could believe.

What she couldn't have believed was that the senile Mr. Twambley was none other than Lamont Cranston in disguise. Considering it an absolute certainty that Kurtz Greug or his representatives would be around the Starview Roof, The Shadow hadn't considered it good policy to appear there in his character of Cranston and thereby raise questions as to another dead man, Dick Whitlock.

And then – the rope trick!

A rope was actually rising in air above the front of the orchestra platform, at the magic command of Karnak who despite his pose, looked a lot like a camel driver. Then Abu, wearing a loin cloth, went climbing the suspended rope and clung to it, a dozen feet above the floor.

Karnak's more imposing self came to the fore. With only the twinkle of the ceiling's fake stars as illumination, it might be easy to deceive people with the business of the rising rope; but to vanish Abu from the top was something else again.

Yet when Karnak spread his broad hands, all witnesses were hushed; the photographers tense, hoping they wouldn't muff their flashes if all this happened to be hypnotism of the mass variety.

"Allah Akbar!"

A half-circle of incense burners disgorged a mighty curtain of steam from the pipes that connected with the compression tank. Abu's clinging form was bathed in solid cloud that dispelled itself a few seconds later, under the blinking of the artificial stars. Down fell the rope, coiling as it came, but the audience was still staring upward aghast and agape.

The bronzed figure of Abu had evaporated into the thin air!

Even Claire was too impressed to think it could be done with mirrors, so she said "Hypnotism" as though she knew what such a force could really be like. Studying the blank-faced men, Irene saw that their faces, too, had actually registered amazement. Of course old Twambley was utterly bewildered, but that was to be

expected.

Then came Claire's pussy-cat purr:

"Dick certainly wouldn't miss that wonderful rope-trick. I'm sure he'll accept your invitation, Irene. Don't forget to give Jerry your camera studies, but include a picture of the rope-trick, if you can get one!"

"I probably can," returned Irene. "I know several of the photographers who took them. I'll have one for Jerry when he stops by."

Back behind the scenes, Irene stopped the red devil who figured in the Montmartre dance. Nobody else was close, except Karnak, the silent Egyptian who never spoke anything except his native tongue. Ignoring the blanketed fakir, Irene confided to the attentive demon:

"I've arranged the invitation. He'll be around if he's the man we think he is."

"Tres bon!" assured Leo, through the devil's mask. "We shall use the routine, our Danse de la Morte, especially for him – like this!"

From the way Leo Dolbart sliced his hand across the throat of his devil's mask, Friedrich Von Reichfrid was to be a strictly one-time customer at the Starview Roof!

CHAPTER XVI

Playing the part of a dead man was beginning to prove a bore to Dick Whitlock, even though he had another alleged corpse for company in the person of Foxcroft. Though Cranston had installed them in a comfortable hotel suite, Dick was getting tired of the place. Particularly he couldn't understand why Cranston felt it safe to roam at large, though Dick and Foxcroft couldn't.

At last, however, the lid was off. They were riding in a cab with Cranston, whose only admonition was not to face the windows, since dusk had hardly settled. Arriving at an old house, Cranston took a quick look up and down the street; then ushered them through a door, up a flight of steps and into what Dick thought was the closet of a deserted hallway.

There, the most singular of scenes revealed itself. They were upon what seemed to be a narrow balcony, walled with velvet, except for one side, which constituted a great sheet of clear glass. Through that pane, Dick saw a lighted room which he recognized, by its furnishings, as the exact replica of the Petite Salon of the steamship Bretagne!

A man was in the room, his back half-turned. He was shaking a drawer that he had removed from a large cabinet; angrily, he threw it on a cushioned lounge. As the man turned toward the great glass pane, Dick drew back instinctively. The man's face was his own; the room's occupant was Friedrich Von Reichfrid!

"Don't be disturbed," remarked Cranston, calmly. "Friedrich can neither see nor hear you. The sheet of glass is an Argus mirror."

"An Argus mirror?"

"Yes. A one-way affair, except when lights are turned on from this side, which they won't be."

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"I get it now!" exclaimed Dick. "Friedrich was behind a job like this, in that mountain chalet! He was copying everything I did, so that he could learn to act just like me!"

"Even more than that," said Cranston. "When the rear lights were switched, Friedrich replaced your image, so Doctor Greug could see how well he played your part."

The last vestiges of the dream were clearing from Dick's mind. He realized now why some of his motions had seemed slow or delayed. Friedrich hadn't quite been up to snuff on certain imitations.

And Dick was learning something else.

Friedrich was drawing a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and for the fun of it, Dick started to copy the move. Only it didn't fit, because they were both working right handed.

"Nice picking on Eric's part," laughed Dick. "He found Friedrich the perfect double, a chap who was only left-handed through necessity, so the reflections would match.

"Say" – he turned to Cranston – "you suspected it all along, didn't you?"

Cranston nodded.

"That's why I looked for this Argus mirror," he explained. "From what you told me about Greug's methodical bent, I surmised he'd have one installed here too, in case he felt that you and Friedrich required further adjustment."

"What if Friedrich should come back here?"

"He won't. Since you're supposed to be dead, the mirror is just an ornament. Stay here a while and report whatever you learn, after you come back to the hotel. It's dark now, so you won't be running any risk."

Whatever Cranston's other business, Dick didn't inquire. It promised good entertainment, staying here and watching Friedrich act Dick's part, with Foxcroft as an added witness. Soon after Cranston's departure, a thing happened that increased Dick's glee. Somebody knocked on the door and the sound carried plainly to the velvet-padded balcony. The hidden watch-post was wired to carry sound from the salon that Friedrich occupied as Dick.

The man who knocked was Jerry Trimm. Laying aside a large square package, he began to talk earnestly to Friedrich and two hidden listeners heard all that was said.

"I've waited long enough, Dick," began Jerry. "I must have some of the money you promised me."

"Be patient," returned Friedrich. "You will be paid in due time. Come, help me straighten this room."

"But at least you can tell me when –"

"When you will have the money?" Friedrich's teeth gritted in a fashion that wasn't quite Dick's. "I should be able to say right now."

"Then why not?" Jerry's face went anxious. "Didn't that deal go through? The one you wrote me was sure, though you didn't say what it was?"

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"Yes, it went through."

"But I still don't understand!"

"Look, you fool!" Friedrich gestured to the disarray around the room. "Can't you guess?"

Jerry stood momentarily perplexed. Then:

"Why, you're looking for something!"

"Something I haven't found," impressed Friedrich. "Something that should be here. Why else do you suppose I would have asked you to buy these fixtures? Bah! These French furnishings, so delicate, so effete, are distasteful to me. This bar!" Friedrich stepped to the corner and pounded a small bar until its wine glasses rattled. "It could never stand the pound of heavy beer steins!"

"Only you don't drink beer," reminded Jerry. "Anyway, Dick, this rig was built for champagne parties."

Friedrich gave a shrug; then eyes narrowing in a fashion that Dick used often, he demanded:

"Champagne parties? What do you mean?"

"Why, there were cases of the stuff," explained Jerry, "ear-marked for the Petite Salon and reserved for the return voyage that the Bretagne never made because she was interned."

"The champagne was auctioned too?"

"Of course. It was bought by a famous French restaurant, the Cafe Bourbon, right here in New York. They needed it to replenish their wine-cellars."

Friedrich was gripping Jerry's lapel with an eager right hand. He relaxed now, much as Dick might have. Giving a well-practiced laugh, Friedrich picked up the telephone; as he dialed, he said:

"Our troubles are ended, Jerry my boy."

"You mean I'll get the cash?" Jerry was eager. "All fifty thousand?"

Dick raised his own eyebrows. That sum just about constituted his own fortune. Friedrich however didn't bat an eyelash. He just nodded.

"Good." Jerry sank to a chair. "That clinches Claire. I can tell her that my imaginary uncle died at last and that I'm as rich as you are, Dick. It isn't that Claire just wants money" – Jerry was insistent on the point – "she just doesn't want regrets. Having been engaged to you once, Dick, she's sort of planned her budget –"

Friedrich wasn't listening. He was talking on the telephone and gesturing for Jerry not to interrupt.

"Yes," Friedrich was saying. "Four will be enough... We'll bring it all here and wait for you... After the last show, of course. We couldn't expect you sooner... The invitation? No. Jerry didn't get around to it yet... Oh, I see... Yes. I'll tell him I'll be there a little later... Of course. That changes everything."

As Friedrich hung up the telephone, Jerry asked quickly:

"Was that Irene Breslon?"

Friedrich hesitated only momentarily; then nodded. His back was toward the Argus mirror, hence Dick couldn't see the smile on his double lips. It was one of Dick's best, the kind he gave people when they were very dumb, but he didn't want them to know it.

"Claire will be here any moment," said Jerry. "Can I tell her –"

"Tell her nothing," came the interruption. "Give that uncle of yours time to die properly."

"All right, Dick. Only I hate to have Claire acting jealous about Irene."

Friedrich gave a careless nod. His eyes were on the package, though Jerry hadn't yet mentioned it. Apologetically, Jerry said:

"I guess Irene mentioned that I brought along these camera studies. Claire wants to see them too." Jerry turned as a knock sounded at the door. "There's Claire now. Help me along, won't you, Dick? After all, I didn't exactly steal your girl, now that you've found another."

Dick could have crashed right through the Argus mirror when he saw Claire enter. To think of that blonde snip playing Jerry for a dope so that Dick would get the run-around until their respective cash questions were settled, was enough to make any man boil.

Any man except Friedrich, of course. In Dick's estimate, Friedrich wasn't human any more than Claire. What a pair they'd make, except that Friedrich was to be counted out completely. It was better that Jerry and Claire should be teamed, for the pair of double-crossers that they were.

Which brought Dick's thoughts right back to himself and his own rivalry with Friedrich, the real question being Irene. If Friedrich thought he was going to win Dick's dream girl under false colors, he was wrong.

Except for that telephone call!

It bothered Dick badly to think that Friedrich had actually talked to Irene and made arrangements to meet her later, probably at the Starview Roof, though he had said something about coming back here. Those points were to be factors in Dick's future actions.

Though he didn't recognize it, Dick Whitlock was planning a play right into the enemy's hands!

CHAPTER XVII

FRIEDRICH was stiffly courteous when he bowed to Claire, but he had sense enough to refrain from clicking his heels. Apparently Claire expected such a reception for she gave him one of her vacuous smiles which she mistakenly thought was vivacious.

Then the blonde's inquiring eyes turned upon Jerry, asking if he had delivered Irene's invitation for Dick to visit the Starview Roof. Already unwrapping the package, Jerry came promptly to the case.

"You remember Irene Breslon, of course," Jerry said to Friedrich. "She wonders why you haven't been around to hear her sing."

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"And admire her costumes," put in Claire. "She changes gowns every show. In fact, she simply insisted that Jerry bring along these photographs."

The pictures were bound in a large-sized album, which Friedrich had begun to open. The book was fairly thick, and with each succeeding page, Claire's amazement held her silent.

The scenes were laid in a gorgeous outdoor garden, with Irene forming the loveliest flower in all the natural resplendence. Whatever Irene happened to be wearing wasn't visible amid the brilliant foliage that intercepted her from the camera, so to all appearances the blossoms themselves formed the varied gowns that Claire expected.

Friedrich evidently had an eye for color photography, as did Jerry, for they continued right through the book, passing over a few black-and-white inserts which showed the different stages of the Indian Rope Trick as presented by the famous Fakir of Karnak.

One study presented Irene twined in honeysuckle, pressing vines aside to the right and downward to the left. Another showed her on tip-toe amid an interlace of magnolia branches, her left hand tilted lightly against a bow, while her right stretched its finger-tips to a blossom that was tantalizingly out of reach above her head.

Half-lost among the sunflowers, Irene was reaching downward to the right to pluck one flower that coyly bent its head; again, she was pressing cautiously through a bower of rambler roses that encroached downward from the right and inward from the left.

Other photographs showed Irene decked with lilies; they included her among the hollyhocks and chrysanthemums, all in their pristine beauty. Claire observed that several of the pictures were duplicates, but neither Friedrich nor Jerry seemed to notice it, their appreciation of flowers causing them to overlook the repetition.

When Friedrich closed the album, his eyes narrowed to a distant stare as though he were visualizing the garden as part of his future domain.

Scowling back through the Argus mirror, Dick growled to Foxcroft:

"Come along! I'm going over to the Starview Roof and talk to Irene. I want to know who she had in mind: Friedrich or myself."

Foxcroft threw a restraining clamp on Dick's arm, long enough for Dick to pause and watch Friedrich consult a watch that had been a Whitlock family heirloom.

"Tell Irene that I shall see her later," Friedrich said to Jerry in Dick's most blase tone. "Meanwhile thank her for letting me judge these excellent photographs. Here" – he planted the album in Jerry's arms – "you may return them for me."

Claire was a bit piqued by Friedrich's hauteur, which was a considerable departure from Dick's manner. Knowing nothing about Friedrich's sudden desire to stock his new premises with champagne, Claire decided that Irene's bid for interest had failed, so she gave a smiling farewell to the man she mistook for Dick.

Meanwhile, the real Dick was hurrying out through the door of the other house, dragging the protesting Foxcroft along. The caretaker's pleas for Dick to be less foolhardy found a slight response, for Dick did restrain himself long enough to let Jerry and Claire pass the corner.

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Then, with Foxcroft still in tow, Dick overtook his former fiancée and her present boy–friend; without ado, he snatched the album from Jerry and plunked it in Foxcroft's possession.

"Maybe I'm supposed to keep that souvenir," asserted Dick. "Anyway, I'll leave it with Foxcroft until I learn if Irene wants it back. Since you're going over to the Starview Roof, I'll come along and ask Irene what musical show intends to star her as a shrinking violet."

As a keeper of a hunting lodge, Foxcroft had considerable experience with wild life, but not of the Manhattan variety. Standing on the sidewalk, watching a taxicab depart with his three companions, the old caretaker found himself quite bewildered.

However, he'd seen Dick hail the cab and say "Starview Roof" as he got into it, so Foxcroft felt he'd grasped the formula. Clutching the picture book under one arm and frantically waving the other, Foxcroft stopped another cab, gave the name of his hotel as soon as he could remember it, and sighed gratefully at being on his way before Friedrich could come from the apartment and discover him.

Reaching the hotel suite, Foxcroft placed the unwieldy album on a table and paced back and forth, clucking to himself over the impetuosity that had caused Dick to cast off Cranston's explicit instructions. There was some way of reaching Cranston, but Dick – not Foxcroft – knew the telephone number, a fact that increased the old caretaker's quandary.

Then, sooner than Foxcroft had hoped, a rap sounded at the door. Recognizing Cranston's knock, Foxcroft admitted this much–needed friend and began to pour the story of Dick's disobedience.

Calmly, Cranston opened the album and steadily turned its pages, pausing only on the pictures of the famous rope trick, which evidently fired with some theory of his, for his slight nod increased. Then, running rapidly through the garden scenes, Cranston turned to Foxcroft, who was staring over his shoulder and queried:

"Did Dick study these photographs carefully?"

"Why no, sir," replied Foxcroft. "He only saw them through the Argus mirror, at a considerable distance, and a most disadvantageous angle."

"The latter was decidedly so," agreed Cranston. "He could hardly have recognized that several were duplicated."

"I didn't notice it myself," expressed Foxcroft. "At least not until just now, Mr. Cranston."

"As an army man, Dick would be familiar with the semaphore code," said Cranston, "Are you, Foxcroft?"

"Decidedly so, sir. Mr. Dick insisted that I learn it, long before he entered the service. I used it to send him messages when he was at a distance from the lodge."

"Then read these arm positions."

Turning the pages one by one, Cranston heard the amazed Foxcroft call the letters "S–T–A–Y." Then came a picture of Karnak beginning the rope trick, marking the space between two words.

The next four pages, which included two duplicates of Irene plucking a sunflower, as letters one and three, with a replica of the rambler roses for the fourth letter, spelled the word "A–W–A–Y." Again, a picture of the rope trick in progress spaced a word; then came more of Irene's poses spelling "F–R–O–M," next "T–H–E"

and finally "R-O-O-F."

Foxcroft spoke the whole sentence slowly:

"Stay away from the roof."

"The Starview Roof," specified Cranston, tersely, "which is where you said he went."

"Precisely, sir."

"Call this number." Cranston dashed it on a slip of paper. "A man named Burbank will answer. Tell him to tip off the police to a crime that will be occurring on the Starview Roof by the time they get there."

With that, Cranston was gone. Five minutes later, Shrevvy's cab was nearing the Starview Roof with a different passenger than the one with which it had started. Dick Whitlock might consider it safe to play the part of a dead man come to life, perhaps on the chance that with his double in circulation, he'd be mistaken for another person. But that wasn't Cranston's technique.

When Lamont Cranston played dead, he went around as someone else entirely. During this cab trip, he had again obliterated his original personality.

The man who clucked a crackly laugh as he saw the lights from the cab window was that most ancient and honorable of current playboys, old Isaac Twambley.

CHAPTER XVIII

Too late to catch the first turn of the Montmartre Trio, Dick Whitlock was at least in time to hear the silvery voice of Irene Breslon. Dick was more fortunate than he realized in missing the dance of the men in velvet and their devil-masked companion; but he acted as though he'd rather have seen them than listen to Irene.

Both Jerry and Claire noticed Irene's glances toward their table, but she didn't indicate that she intended to join them later. It wasn't necessary that she should, for as soon as Irene's turn was finished, Dick started back stage.

Karnak the Fakir was on the floor, starting the basket stunt with Abu, when Dick arrived at Irene's door and knocked so hard that the latch jounced loose and sent the door inward. At the dressing table, where she was starting to change gowns, Irene turned with a little cry.

It was bad judgment on Dick's part again, using his right hand to pound the door. As usual, he hurt it and gripped his sore paw with his left hand so instinctively that even Friedrich couldn't have duplicated the trick. In a flash, Irene's face underwent a complete change, beginning with alarm and ending with alarm, but of a different sort.

Running to Dick, the girl demanded excitedly:

"Why did you come here?"

Dick scarcely noted the glance that Irene flashed across her shoulder toward the door, but it was lucky that she gave it. Two velvet-clad men with drawn knives drew back to join a masked red devil, as they saw Irene's quick head shake.

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"Why shouldn't I have come here?" parried Dick. "Or did you expect Friedrich?"

"I hoped Friedrich would come," replied Irene earnestly, "but I was sure you wouldn't." Then, realizing that she was botching matters entirely, Irene added:

"Didn't you understand the message?"

"What message?"

"This." Irene stepped back and stretched her arms. Her wig-wagged gestures were reminders of honeysuckle, magnolias, sunflowers, rambler roses and more. "I was telling you to –"

"Stay away from the roof!" interrupted Dick. Then grimly: "If I'd only had the right angle when I saw that album! But why couldn't you have gone heavier on clothes and lighter on flowers?"

"Because of Friedrich, stupid! Suppose he'd received the book instead of you? If I'd been wearing yachting costumes and riding habits, wouldn't he have wondered why my arms were sticking out like clothes-trees?"

"I suppose he would have," decided Dick. "He probably knows semaphore, too. Only I don't think he got it, the more credit to you."

Irene's eyes went wide.

"You mean Friedrich saw the photographs too?"

Dick nodded; then briefly explained the business of the Argus mirror. Brief though the time required, Irene's eyes had gone troubled before Dick finished.

"But Friedrich should have come here!" Irene exclaimed. "We expected him anyway. Maybe he did understand –"

Out on the floor, Karnak had finished the basket trick and Abu had bowed off. As an interlude before the celebrated rope miracle, the fancy-robed fakir was performing a lesser wonder with colored sands reputedly from the Sahara. Everyone was watching Karnak, except old Isaac Twambley, who had just arrived at the table he always kept reserved.

Old Twambley, looking up from the head of his heavy cane, was studying the flickery artificial stars that formed the night club's ceiling.

Signal systems were in vogue tonight.

Clever indeed for a girl to pose semaphore codes in the setting of a modern Eden; but flashing Morse messages with stars that were already delivering irregular blinks was even more ingenious.

It couldn't be Irene's idea. She could personally contact Leo Dolbart and his Apaches. This smacked of the master mind that belonged to a certain Doctor Greug.

"He is here – he is here –"

The fake stars were repeating it as though no more were needed. Old Twambley could understand why, considering that the audience was honeycombed with flat-faced gentry who looked very like the hunters,

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loggers and what—all that Cranston had met in the Adirondacks.

Getting up from his table, old Twambley used his cane to steady his tottering walk in the direction of back stage, hoping that he'd find the switchboard and the man with it.

Twambley found both.

The man was Abu, Karnak's tabbed helper. Working the switch deftly, Abu stopped as he heard a sharp hiss behind him; turning and seeing Twambley, the fellow snarled and clutched for the old man's throat.

What Abu took was a triple somersault that carried him out into the corridor to the door of Irene's dressing room. Following rapidly, Twambley pinned him with the cane, but it wasn't necessary. Abu was out cold.

Attracted by the sprawly clatter, Dick arrived with Irene. New amazement gripped Dick when he heard Cranston's voice coming from Twambley's lips.

"Get him into Karnak's dressing room," was the order. "Switch to that one-piece costume of his. You're working in the rope trick."

"But anybody can tell I'm not Abu!"

"Not after you use the liquid dye," came Cranston's tone. "It's quick-drying stuff."

Dick was staring at Abu.

"But this fellow is really brown-skinned," began Dick. "He doesn't need any dye."

"Greug does," was Cranston's retort. "He couldn't be passing as Karnak without it."

Further explanation was superfluous. Dragging Abu into the dressing room, Dick slammed the door. It was Irene who gripped The Shadow's arm and stared wide-eyed into the face of Twambley.

"Then Greug was really here – that night –"

"Of course," came the calm acknowledgment, still the tone of Cranston. "He coiled inside the basket, the way Abu disappears there."

"And last night," mused Irene, "Greug must have overheard –"

"Overheard what?"

"The plans I made with Leo. About trapping Friedrich here. That's why Friedrich didn't come! Karnak received a phone call just before the show. It must have been from Friedrich, checking on a warning Greug had already given him!"

"Tell Leo," was Cranston's next order. "Have him be ready. He and his men will be needed."

As Irene left, The Shadow tilted his head and listened for sounds from the floor. They were coming, the faceless men who had watched the star signals and had noticed where Dick had gone. The Shadow rapped the door and Dick came out, wearing the loin cloth and finishing the rub-in with the dye. "Get to the floor," ordered The Shadow, in Cranston's tone. "Keep looking down after you have climbed the rope. You will see

—"

Gesturing Dick ahead, The Shadow had brought him to the short passage leading directly to the night-club floor. The men who had read the flashes given by Abu were coming around the other way. All Dick had to do was get out there and bluff Doctor Greug, the man who was bluffing on his own.

Only the chance for bluff was over. Right in the middle of the passage, Dick stopped short. Recognition passed between the faces of the false Abu and the faking fakir who had come to summon his tardy assistant.

Doctor Kurtz Greug, alias the Fakir of Karnak, had suspected the very thing that had happened and was here to close the trap on the doomed man whose life was to be lived by Friedrich Von Reichfrid!

CHAPTER XIX

GREUG'S triumphant glare included not only Dick Whitlock, but Isaac Twambley, the doddering old fool who had somehow blundered his way back stage. Not for a moment did Greug connect Twambley with Lamont Cranston – at least not during these particular moments.

His eyes fixed in their powerful stare, his hands moving ahead of him, Greug was showing full force of his hypnotic command, aided by the booster that his present guise supplied. As Karnak; Greug looked the part of the super-mesmerist and was making the most of it.

A strange force, the power of suggestion. Already in a mood to follow whatever was told him, Dick succumbed in a totally inept fashion. Backing away from those eyes of Greug's, he would have found himself in the midst of the Nazis who were hounding him, if Twambley hadn't blocked him. Seeing Twambley's scared face just past Dick's, Greug thrust the false Abu aside, to give the old man a real hypnotic jolt.

Cold as steel were those eyes of Greug's. Equally so was the object that confronted him, as he brushed Dick from his path. Looking straight at Greug was the muzzle of a .45 automatic which the surprising Mr. Twambley had drawn under cover of Dick's backing form.

And now, from Twambley's disguised lips, came the whispered laugh that told all that Greug didn't want to know.

Looking from the muzzle to the eyes behind it, Greug knew too well that this man was The Shadow, a being whose own use of hypnotic influences rivaled Greug's own. The question of superiority didn't matter; there was another difference that counted.

That difference was the gun.

One blast of the .45 and there would be one less master hypnotist, and he wouldn't be The Shadow.

"Proceed with your performance." The Shadow's sinister tone brooked neither argument nor delay. "Your assistant is here; the rope is ready."

Greug's hand went to his throat as though thinking in terms of a different sort of rope. His dyed face knotted into a scowl, Greug turned and stepped out to the floor, followed by Dick, who came back to his senses when The Shadow delivered a sharp finger-snap, close to his ear.

From the dressing room corridor, prowling men saw Karnak and Abu starting the rope trick. They knew that Karnak was Greug and they learned that Dick was playing the part of Abu. But they totally ignored old

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Twambley, who was leaning on his cane, in the gloomy passage. They took him for what he looked to be, a privileged old meddler who liked to watch an act from back stage.

What Greug was up to, his followers weren't sure, but they buzzed a bit among themselves. Then, going around the long way, they paused while one of their number worked the switch. New flashes came from the stars and Twambley noticed them. They were saying:

"Watch Greug – Watch Greug – Look at Abu – Look at Abu – Watch Greug – Watch Greug –"

The flashes resumed their normal twinkles as the investigating crew stole back to their tables. They had given the word to the rest of their tribe, who were beginning to understand. They knew Greug to be Karnak; now they were sure that Abu must be Dick Whitlock.

What they didn't know was the secret of the Indian Rope Trick as performed by the Fakir of Karnak.

For Greug to go through with it would be ridiculous. Doubtless he would fail for once in his amazing experiment. There would be a bow-off, with Karnak drawing Abu along. If this fake Abu tried to make a break, ready Nazis would overwhelm him and spirit him away, letting the real Abu replace him.

Nobody gave a thought to old Twambley; nobody except Kurtz Greug.

The dye was beginning to run down Greug's face, actuated by the perspiration from his usually sweatless forehead. Greug alone knew that the huddly man back there in the darkened passage was keeping him covered with a deadly gun, hidden by the forward stoop of low-bent shoulders.

In true Karnak style, Greug tossed the rope. Dick clambered up the suspended line, a bit slower on the uptake than Abu, and not quite as high.

Up came the curtain of steam from the battery of incense jars. Maybe Greug was hoping Dick wouldn't know what to do next, but Dick did. Looking down, Dick saw what happened; remembering The Shadow's order, Dick swung backward and let go.

Coiling downward the rope struck the floor while all eyes were staring toward the evaporating steam. Greug's eyes, too, were riveted with horror. The false Abu had taken the cue and had vanished!

Never before had a hunted man made so startling and complete a getaway. To be trapped on the top of an upright rope, surrounded by a dozen hostile guns, was an experience in itself. To be gone before those guns could fire, packed one impossibility upon another.

Yet Dick Whitlock had accomplished it, under The Shadow's tutelage!

Greug's men had held their fire, awaiting his signal. It hadn't come; their prey had gone; and the fakir who called himself Karnak was taking a bow, as if mocking the very followers who served him. Through every one-tracked Nazi mind ran the thought which was always uppermost.

Treachery!

And Treachery called for Purge.

That word applied to Greug. He'd kept the secret of the rope trick to himself, which could only mean he'd intended to use it for fell purpose, and had.

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Greug saw it coming, as the men rose from their surrounding tables. He couldn't take to the passage, because The Shadow was there to stop him. Wildly flinging away the robe and head-dress that cramped him, Greug rushed across the floor, hoping to reach the exit.

The mad dash only proved the case against the fear-crazed doctor. Guns blasted as he tripped from the edge of the low platform. Amid excited cries from patrons, Greug flattened between the tables.

From the exit door, a squad of men surged upon the scene. They were the police who had come here suspecting a publicity stunt, but taking no chances, none the less. If Greug had been a set-up, so were his followers.

Under the twinkly light, every Nazi follower in the place had declared himself by joining Greug's firing squad. Still on their feet, smoking guns in their hands, they were marked as plainly as if they'd been waving swastika banners.

Like Greug, they suddenly wanted to get out.

They took to the floor that Greug had left, hoping to reach the short passage that led back stage. Old Twambley was no longer there; he'd crossed rapidly to his table, where he was tossing aside his cane, sweeping a cloak across his shoulders, and planting a slouch hat on his head.

No matter what his guise, The Shadow saw no reason to stay in the groove that police bullets were to follow.

Half of the swastika tribe hit the floor before they reached the passage. Others were clipped while dashing through. Beyond, the mad wave of fleeing men was met head on by a three-man crew of Apaches, two in velvet, with the devil as their leader.

They took their toll, Leo and his fellow Maquis. Still, there were Nazis surging onward, confident of escape, prepared to out-blast anyone who blocked them.

Anyone except The Shadow.

He was there, his big guns ready. His muzzles pumped while snarling foemen were trying to tug their triggers. The last of that murderous throng became a spent wave, plunging to its finish at The Shadow's feet.

From the blackened window that led out to his favorite ledge, came the departing laugh of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XX

DICK WHITLOCK opened the curved top of the immense drum, thrusting its hinged sections outward. The floor of the night-club was deserted, as Dick expected it would be, from the way sounds had lessened.

A clever trick, this product of Greug's ingenuity, which he had performed as Karnak.

Only The Shadow had heeded the fact that the orchestra never used the huge drum that was moved out of the way before Karnak's act began. Likewise he'd noticed – and checked by the pictures – that the instrument's new position placed it just within the circle of incense jars that formed outlets for the steam pipes.

From the rope, the thing was plain. You looked down into the vortex of the surrounding steam, saw the drum lift open, and tossed yourself right down inside it, while the jets still formed their curtain.

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That was Abu's job and Dick had taken over. The drum had clamped shut when he landed on the actuating lever in the bottom, the same lever that the steam pipes operated on the uptake.

Dick went back to the dressing room, found his clothes and put them on. Then he came out to see who else was around.

They were in Irene's dressing room, talking it all over, the three Maquis who included the devil who could now show his face, scar and all. It was Irene who gave the glad cry when Dick entered; then, half-sobbing, half-laughing, she handed him a big jar of cold cream, so he could remove the dye that he'd forgotten was still on his hands and face.

"We didn't know what happened to you!" Irene exclaimed. "We almost thought that Karnak – I mean Greug – had vanished you permanently!"

"Only temporarily," returned Dick. "It was Greug who took the permanent treatment – or did he?"

"We don't know," declared Leo, solemnly. "As one who played the devil, I give Greug his due. How many bullets reached him" – Leo shrugged, as though he couldn't tell – "we may never know. But he picked up those robes of his and staggered out, so they say, after the police came through."

"Nobody thought to stop him," added Irene. "He looked like a victim, not a killer. He went down in the elevator, but he couldn't have gone much farther."

Leo's ugly face made itself less ugly with a grimace.

"Greug is still the devil. He could do anything. But come, mes amis. The lost has returned." He clapped Dick on the shoulder. "We shall have a drink."

A sudden thought struck Dick.

"Champagne!"

"Bah!" Leo shook his head. "There is no good champagne any longer, anywhere."

"There is at my place, if Friedrich managed to get it. Stuff that came over on the Bretagne, when she made her last trip."

The statement produced an effect that to Dick was totally unanticipated. Irene exclaimed the common thought.

"Did you say the Bretagne?"

Dick nodded.

"That's it!" Irene turned to Leo triumphantly. "The Bretagne brought them!"

"Brought what?" asked Dick.

"The diamonds," declared Irene. "What did you think Friedrich intended to live on for the next twenty years? Your income? You knew he was counting on big wealth."

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"The diamonds came from Holland," explained Leo. "They were sent to Paris, when Amsterdam was threatened. But of course, the Nazis knew that such would happen. The messenger was their man" – Leo's tone lowered sorrowfully – "and an Apache. That was how we learned. We settled scores with him, but we did not find the diamonds." "Neither did The Shadow," added Irene. "He arrived in Paris before the Nazis were driven out and did much to prevent their taking loot. But the diamonds, three dozen of the finest, were never found."

"Each worth a ransom," stated Leo. "Only Bouchard, the traitor, knew their hiding place. We disposed of him, thinking we could learn from someone else. But no one knew; not even the men who hired Bouchard."

"The high Nazis behind Friedrich," specified Irene. "They have no other way of financing him, except with those stolen diamonds."

Remembering Friedrich's deal with Jerry, done in Dick's own name and the thorough but unsuccessful search that Friedrich had made of the furnishings from the Bretagne, Dick saw how the whole thing fitted. Bouchard must at least have informed his Nazi sponsors that the Petite Salon was a clue to the riddle of the missing diamonds.

"Let's go," said Dick, grimly. "Maybe we'll still find Friedrich."

When they reached the apartment, it was Irene who knocked at the door, prepared to lull Friedrich when he answered it. The others were waiting in the background: Dick and Leo with guns; Pequin and Franchot preferring their knives. A thick voice muttered: "Come in!" Then the door itself was hauled open, to reveal Friedrich, half-reeling on the threshold.

Everybody went in, all at once, bowling Friedrich ahead of them. All about were opened champagne bottles, on the tables, on the bar in the corner. Apparently Friedrich had poured out what he hadn't drunk, but there was still a case of full bottles, beside the two cases of empties.

Staggering to a couch, Friedrich looked at his visitors as though he didn't recognize them. He brushed some champagne corks to the floor, leaned back against the cushions, and began to laugh crazily. His laugh began to worry the listeners who half-surrounded them; then Friedrich sobered suddenly.

At Friedrich's accompanying gesture, the group turned around. It was then that Dick recalled some mention of the number "four" in the phone call which Friedrich had made to Greug, but which Dick – thanks to Jerry's stupidity – had connected with Irene.

There were four, sure enough.

Four members of Friedrich's elite guard who hadn't gone to the Starview Roof along with the rest. They'd accompanied Friedrich to purchase champagne; they'd been drinking it with him, but divided proportionately, none had taken enough to capsize.

"And now," snarled Friedrich, "tell us where those diamonds are. We can't find them in the champagne bottles and there's nowhere else to look."

Covered by the Nazi guns, Dick and the Apaches remained silent, their own weapons lagging in their hands. Coming to his feet, Friedrich caught Irene's arm, flung her around and about, with a final thrust that staggered her against the wall. Drawing a Luger, he placed it against Irene's breast.

"She'll be the first to go," promised Friedrich, "unless you answer my question."

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"It's one we can't answer," stated Dick. "We came here hoping to ask you about it."

"And if you think you're threatening me," defied Irene, "you're only giving me a happy choice, compared to the other plans you had. I talked my way out of Germany, by making you think your grand promises flattered me." Irene paused, took another breath and laughed straight at Friedrich. "And I'm never going back there, not even twenty years from now!"

"No?" Friedrich's tone was vicious. "So you would rather die? I am glad to know that. I shall make better plans for you; long term plans. But first" – his tone rose to its hysterical pipe – "those diamonds!"

Dick was ready to tighten his grip on the dangling gun, but Irene flashed a warning look to wait. It was a tight spot, but still with hope, as long as the diamonds remained unfound. Then, breaking the tense silence that held all nerves taut came a slow, dragging sound from the hallway; slow, ominous, like a death beat.

It could well have been exactly such.

As all eyes turned, a ghastly figure dragged itself into the room. Clad in his heavy robes and head-gear, Karnak had returned. His bowed face lifting momentarily, he showed a dyed face streaked with bloodstains, so distorted in expression that it no longer resembled the crisp countenance of Doctor Kurtz Greug.

Sagging to his elbows, this man who had clung to the last shreds of life, wormed across the floor. His fingers plucked the tufted rug, then found something that bobbed away, only to be caught again.

The thing was a champagne cork; with fumbling fingers, Karnak began to twist it. Then, from the lowered face came the deep intake of a triumphant hiss. The cork had unscrewed and from between its sections popped the contents of a hidden cache, a brilliant, scintillating bauble the size of a child's marble.

One of the lost diamonds!

With fiendish triumph, Friedrich put the prisoners to work, picking up corks and unscrewing their neatly fitted caps. It was perfection in the art of smuggling, this concealment of gems that mounted to millions of dollars, in such unsuspected hiding places as champagne corks.

On the floor lay the man whose mind had guessed the forgotten secret, Karnak, silent in his robes, his strength so spent in this final effort that death seemed his at last. As a knell for Kurtz Greug, the diamonds were rattling on the table, while popping corks, handled by Friedrich personally, were bringing new mines in miniature for the slave labor to work.

And for the finish, Friedrich was pouring fresh glasses of the golden champagne to let his prisoners taste it as a bitter fruit. With every cork accounted for, the diamonds piled in as amazing a heap of gems as the human eye could wish, Friedrich ordered a toast, with a glare that signified his captives must drink.

"To that man of genius, the provider of our future: Doctor Kurt Greug!"

Reluctantly the vanquished raised their glasses with the victors. The toast was drunk; it remained for Friedrich to break the first glass. The future Fuehrer turned with a snarl, as someone usurped that prerogative; then, his face paled at the sight of the man in question.

Doctor Kurtz Greug had risen to drink the toast to himself. There he stood, in the full regalia of Karnak, as though the champagne had been the elixir of life itself. Yet for a brief moment only did this new illusion persist.

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The dead could not be brought to life, not even by Kurtz Greug.

With a fling, the robes of Karnak were tossed from the shoulders that bore them. They revealed, instead, a black cloak, shrouding a figure more limber than Greug's. The oversized head-gear, in its turn, disclosed a slouch hat drawn down over the features beneath.

It was The Shadow who had borrowed these borrowed robes to produce the most startling climax of all this strange series of adventures. He was here to take back the borrowed wealth that he had personally uncovered.

One against five, The Shadow still had the odds. Having deluded his enemies to the absolute, he was holding them transfixed by the mere hypnotic influence of the jutting gun muzzles with which he covered the whole criminal group.

Friedrich was the first to break. With one of his shrill screams, he sprang for the massed diamonds, hoping to grab them during the melee. Dick went after his double with mad desire to prevent him from laying hands upon those baubles. That broke the spell, but as Friedrich's followers sprang to action, The Shadow was already among them, sweeping hard with his guns, beating down the weapons that they raised in return.

Leaving Irene in the comparative safety of her corner, Leo and the other Maquis rallied to The Shadow's cause. Friedrich's men went reeling, helpless against the human tidal wave that came with its cloaked leader. Yet they could still hear the piping cry of their own master, Friedrich.

Tangled with Dick, who was struggling to gain his gun, Friedrich was calling for a last effort from his followers. He wanted them to give their dying hands to the cause of their future Fuehrer, that he, that leader of another generation, could escape with all his pelf.

They gave those followers, even as The Shadow and Leo withered them with the shots they deserved. They used the old, sure formula of distinguishing between Friedrich and Dick. The man who clutched the disputed gun with his right hand could only be Friedrich; the man who worked left-handed must be Dick.

Of four bullets, three reached the mark. Dying men saw their target sprawl, the gun gripped in his left hand. Yet as he struck the floor, his identity was announced.

Announced by the triumphant laugh of The Shadow!

The Shadow recognized the ways of Friedrich Von Reichfrid; hence he had let the man's followers go through with their fatal mistake.

From the right hand of the figure on the floor spilled the hoard of diamonds. Friedrich had used his firmer hand to seize that prize, trusting his gun to his other fist.

The Shadow had observed the clumsy result; had known that Dick's success with his own right hand, to which he now gave proper preference, had been due to Friedrich's great mistake in thinking more of wealth than safety.

The weird laugh faded and with it, The Shadow was gone, merged with the blackness beyond the doorway, leaving only the robes of Karnak as a reminder of his road to final victory.

Dick Whitlock heard that parting laugh. So did Irene Breslon, as she met the face of the man she loved and recognized that only he could be Dick Whitlock. Those two and their friends, the Maquis.

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But the ears of Friedrich Von Reichfrid were deaf to that victorious mirth, which proclaimed that the menace of the Future Fuehrer was ended – by The Shadow!

THE END