

DEATH FROM NOWHERE

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. CRIME TO COME

THERE were very few patrons in the Club Cadiz at the early hour of five in the afternoon. Archie Dreller noticed that when he came up the stairs from the street. A smile formed on his sallow, weak-chinned face, bringing a twitch to the feeble tips of his half-grown mustache.

Passing a row of tables, Archie sneaked to a short hallway beyond the telephone booths and knocked at the door of Silk Elledge's office. A smooth voice invited him to enter and Archie did so, after casting a shoulder look along the dim passage behind him.

That short hallway was not as deserted as Archie supposed. A tall, hawk-faced patron had risen from a table when the young man went by, and had taken the same route. Near the passage, however, the personage in question had merged with the gloomy background, thanks to garments that he had drawn over head and shoulders.

Attired in black cloak and slouch hat, he was a thing unseen as he glided toward the closing door of the office. With gloved hand, he turned the knob slowly, imperceptibly, and edged the door inward a mere half inch.

The Shadow, strange being who trailed crime to its source, was looking in upon this interview between

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Archie Dreller and Silk Elredge.

Usually, chaps like Archie visited Silk because they owed him money lost at the faro table on the floor above. This, however, was Archie's fourth call during the past week: and the frequency of those visits told that something else was afoot. Apparently, they had settled the details previously, for this conference proved very brief.

Across the desk from Archie sat Silk Elredge, faced partly toward the door. His roundish face had a smoothness that went with his oily tone; the only expression that he ever betrayed was a slight flicker of his eyes. Silk was listening, with poker-faced attitude, when Archie questioned eagerly:

"Then I won't have to talk to my uncle?"

"Not a word," purred Silk. "Have your friends in for the poker party as usual tonight."

"And tomorrow?"

"Start on that cruise we talked about. You've made the arrangements, haven't you?"

"Yes. But I was afraid you'd changed your mind—"

"I seldom change my mind."

Silk spoke that sentence with a final note, that meant the interview was ended. Archie arose, gave a grin.

"I'll run along and meet my sister," he declared. "She's got to be somewhere at five-thirty, and I'm taking her there. Anything else, Silk?"

"Yes." Silk's eyes showed a flicker. "You'd better hold that poker game to a five-ten limit, so you won't be broke when you go on board ship tomorrow."

There was vacancy in the passage when Archie Dreller went out. Silk Elredge followed, a few moments later, and paused to look around the night club. He saw a tall, hawk-faced customer rising from a corner table, and approached.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Cranston," greeted Silk. "It's rather unusual, seeing you here so early."

"I enjoy solitude," returned Cranston, in an even tone, "and no place could be more quiet than a night club at five in the afternoon."

The statement brought a nod of agreement from Silk. The proprietor of the Club Cadiz started across the dance floor. Halfway to the bar, a sudden thought struck him; he decided to return and give some pretext for talking further with Cranston. But when Silk finally turned about, he noticed the early customer going down the stairway, carrying hat and coat across his arm.

MEANWHILE, Archie Dreller had reached a sporty roadster, wherein he slouched behind the wheel and lighted a cigarette, expecting a prolonged wait before his sister Louise joined him. To his amazement, she arrived within ten minutes.

Though Louise had features that resembled Archie's, she was quite attractive. Archie's profile consisted of a sloped forehead, a sharp nose, puffy lips, and no chin—a very poor combination.

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As for Louise, her fluffy blond hair produced an attractive forehead; her nose, though thin, had an aristocratic touch. Her lips were definitely languorous, and her chin could be properly described as small.

She was gifted, too, with a dimply smile and baby-blue eyes that carried a trustful gaze. Archie, however, considered the smile and the stare as proof that there was no brain behind them. He gave a snort when Louise told him that she wanted to go to an address in the East Fifties.

“I thought so!” he exclaimed savagely, as he wheeled the roadster from the curb. “You're going to see that fortuneteller again!”

“Rahman Singh is not a fortuneteller,” reproved Louise. “He is an adept!”

“An adept at what?”

“He holds the wisdom of the East.”

Archie thought that one over, while they paused in front of a traffic light. He gave another snort.

“Wisdom of the East Side, you mean! If Rahman Singh is such a hot-shot, why isn't he on Park Avenue?”

“His surroundings are unimportant to him,” replied Louise. “His occult powers are superior to all else. He has proven that by the remarkable things that he has told me.”

Archie nervously slipped the car into gear. Giving a side glance toward his sister, he asked anxiously:

“What did he tell you?”

“He told me,” replied Louise, “that I had an uncle named Adam Rendrew, from whom I shall inherit a trust fund of twenty-five thousand dollars. He said I had a brother—that's you, Archie—who was to receive the same amount.”

“He pumped that out of you!” snapped Archie. “You're a fool, sis. A crazy little fool!”

Louise didn't notice the comment. Staring straight ahead, she continued her account:

“Rahman Singh also told me that Uncle Adam has a stepson named John Osman, who lives at the house with us. He said that John would receive the rest of the estate, about two hundred thousand dollars, because of the faithful way in which he has managed Uncle Adam's business affairs.”

Archie's attempted mustache was performing wigwags with its tiny tips. This was going too deep into family affairs! But Archie was to hear more—and worse.

“Besides,” declared Louise triumphantly, “Rahman Singh told me all about our cousin, Dwight Kelden!”

Traffic started a pile-up behind the roadster, when Archie jammed on the brakes.

“You know what Uncle Adam has always told us!” he exclaimed. “We're never to mention Dwight's name to anyone!”

“But I didn't mention it—”

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“You must have! Listen: if Dwight ever found out that Uncle Adam swindled his father, years ago, there'd be a lawsuit that would take every nickel that Uncle Adam has got. If—”

Honking horns interrupted. Starting the car, Archie continued with incoherent mutters, which ended only when Louise assured him that Rahman Singh had said nothing about the money. He had merely stated, so Louise said, that her cousin, Dwight Kelden, lived in California.

The car pulled up in front of a basement doorway flanked by heavy-curtained windows. Louise alighted, and was admitted by a dark-skinned servant in Hindu attire.

Archie drove away, intending to be back in half an hour. He didn't care about the dusk and heavy traffic. He just wanted to be on the move, so that he could mutter as much as he pleased without having people stop and stare at him.

CONDUCTED by the servant, Louise went through a shabby anteroom, across a larger room where chairs were set in rows in front of a platform. She reached a corner door, hung with frayed velvet curtains. The door opened, revealing a bearded man with glittering eyes, who wore a Hindu costume complete to turban.

“Enter the sanctum, Miss Dreller,” said Rahman Singh, in a rich, deep tone. “The crystal foretold your arrival. We shall consult it further.”

As they sat at a table centered by a crystal ball, Louise produced a letter from her handbag. It bore an air-mail stamp and was postmarked San Diego.

“It came this morning,” said the girl. “From Dwight. I wrote him, as you suggested. Of course, I didn't mention any of those family matters that you learned from the crystal. But—”

She paused. Rahman Singh was drawing the envelope across his forehead. It pressed the band that marked the lower border of his turban. A liquid that Louise did not notice was sponged against the face of the envelope.

Lowering the letter toward the crystal ball, Rahman Singh was able to read the message, for the liquid had rendered his side of the envelope transparent. Laying the envelope aside, he stared at the crystal.

“I see a journey,” declared the Hindu, “to the south—to Mexico. Dwight Kelden will be gone for two weeks.”

“Oh, marvelous!” exclaimed Louise. “That's exactly what he told me in the letter!”

She was reaching for the letter, but the Hindu's hand stopped hers. The envelope was not yet dry; he had to fill in more time.

“I see a dark-haired woman—”

Louise interrupted with an exclamation; then laughed.

“It must be a Mexican senorita,” she decided, “but I thought for a moment that it might be Helene Graymond. She's the girl who comes to our house and works as secretary for John Osman. She met Dwight when he was East, a year ago, but I suppose that by this time she has forgotten him.”

Soon afterward, Rahman Singh completed his study of the crystal and returned the letter to Louise. He reminded her that there was to be a special seance at eight-thirty that evening.

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“I’m so sorry!” exclaimed Louise. “I won’t be able to come. I’m going to a party.”

“With your brother?”

“No,” returned Louise. “This is the night when he and his friends play poker at the house. Why, you should be able to see all that, Rahman Singh!”

They had reached the anteroom; the Hindu gave an apologetic bow, showing a white-toothed smile from the black beard that adorned his darkish face.

“Without the crystal,” he accented, gesturing back toward his sanctum, “I am helpless. But with the crystal—ah!—you have seen my power to learn all.”

Louise was still nodding when the servant ushered her out to the street, Rahman Singh returning to the inner premises. The girl looked at her watch, noticed that it was not yet six o’clock, which meant that she would have to wait awhile before Archie returned.

DURING the seven minutes that she stood outside the darkened doorway, Louise became vaguely conscious of a stir from a passageway beyond a neighboring house. Staring, she thought that she saw a sliding patch of blackness. It faded as she watched, and Louise, from then on, was gazing in the wrong direction.

The shape had flitted along the wall beside her, to merge with deep darkness. Eyes were watching from the gloom, when Archie’s car pulled up. Hovering closely, the unseen observer heard Archie say:

“Listen, sis, if that fake Hindu is throwing one of his shindigs tonight, you’re not going.”

“There will be a seance tonight,” returned Louise, icily, “but it happens that I accepted an invitation to a party at the Witherspoons’ apartment, and am going there instead.”

Archie seemed satisfied, when they drove away. So did The Shadow, as he emerged from darkness. Keeping clear of the doorway, where Rahman Singh’s servant might be on watch, The Shadow chose a rapid course along the gloomy street.

Later, The Shadow arrived in his own sanctum, a room with shrouded walls that spoke of actual mystery. Compared to the headquarters of The Shadow, the tawdry parlor that Rahman Singh termed a sanctum was a pitiful sham.

The Shadow’s sanctum was hidden away in an old building in the heart of New York City.

Plucking earphones from the wall, The Shadow spoke to his contact man, Burbank, and gave him certain instructions that were due to end the false career of the self-styled Hindu, Rahman Singh. Then came a whispered laugh, eerie and prophetic in its tone.

Apparently The Shadow, through methods of his own, was quite conversant with circumstances that surrounded Adam Rendrew, and his various relations. The Shadow was to prove a figure in those affairs, as much as either Silk Elredge or Rahman Singh.

Just how those two fitted into the picture, only The Shadow knew; but from his findings, he knew that crime would soon be due. How soon it would strike was evidenced when he inscribed in ink the single word: “Tomorrow.”

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The written word faded from the paper, as was the way with all The Shadow's secret writing; for he wrote with disappearing ink. Tomorrow, The Shadow would be prepared to battle coming crime!

CHAPTER II. MURDER IN ADVANCE

AT night, the Rendrew mansion looked very much like a morgue. Standing on a side street in Manhattan, it loomed above other forgotten residences, as if proud of the fact that it had dominated the neighborhood for more than fifty years.

The mansion's only rival was the house next door, but that structure had long ago fallen into decay. Separated from the Rendrew mansion by an inner courtyard, the next-door house showed lines of windows that had been boarded up for the past ten years.

The interior of the Rendrew house was anything but cheerful. The rooms were large, but gloomy; the hallways seemed like caverns. The only place that bore a modern touch was the ground-floor room that had been converted into an office.

A girl was seated there, staring reflectively at the wall. She was Helene Graymond, the secretary whose name Louise had mentioned to Rahman Singh. Usually, Helene left the house at five o'clock and did not return until the next day.

Tonight, she had remembered some important accounts and had come back here on her own. She had finished her work, and the silence of the old house had stirred her recollections of those who lived in the place. Never had Helene encountered a more curious menage than the Rendrew household.

Of course, old Adam Rendrew was the cause. He was a crabby old tyrant, whose meanness forced others to adopt protective measures. About the only person who could handle him at all was his stepson, John Osman.

Middle-aged and methodical, Osman handled Rendrew's affairs to perfection; in fact, had pulled them out of serious difficulties.

The old man had overinvested in real estate, which he had been unable to sell. To offset that, Osman had become a rental agent, with his office here in the old house, and was making the properties show a profit. Whenever he could manage it, Osman went to his club for dinner, as he had done this evening, for he disliked the smugness that he had to show in order to please old Rendrew.

Archie Dreler had developed into a whiny weakling, through living with his uncle. He was always trying to please the old man, so that he would not lose the trust fund that Rendrew had promised him. Archie's one refuge was a room that he called his den, which was in the basement underneath the kitchen.

There, once a week, Archie brought in friends for a poker game, a practice which his uncle tolerated because the den was so remote. This evening, Archie's pals had been going through the hall on tiptoe, until they had all assembled.

Louise had always managed to offset Rendrew's tyranny by playing dumb. When she went out evenings, she was supposed to be in by half past ten, and the side door was left unlocked until that time. Old Rendrew never checked to find out if Louise did return by ten thirty.

He assumed that should Louise ever arrive home late and find the door locked; she would become a wandering, shelterless creature, who would return the next day broken by the cruel world.

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New York, however, had changed a lot since Uncle Adam's day. Louise had many friends, and if she couldn't get home by half past ten, she simply stayed out all night. In fact, she had sometimes dropped into Helene's apartment along around three o'clock in the morning, to sleep there until noon.

There was another member of the Rendrew household. He was Froy, the old servant, who moved about like a human cat and had probably moved into the house along with the original furniture. Froy, more than any one, seemed to have been completely shaped by the influence of old Adam Rendrew.

In the two years that she had worked for John Osman, Helene had met only one person that she really liked. That person was Dwight Kelden, a nephew of Adam Rendrew, who had visited the house a year ago. After staying two nights, Dwight had gone to a hotel, but he had called Helene from there; and she had seen him often while he remained in New York.

For some reason, Dwight's name was seldom mentioned by his relatives. What the mystery was, Helene had never been able to learn— not even from Dwight, who never seemed to take the matter seriously. Nevertheless, it was a problem to which Helene gave much thought and hoped some day to find an answer.

FROM the hallway came a sound that ended Helene's reverie. It was the chiming of the big clock; Helene counted the strokes that followed it. There were nine, and the hour presaged an event that had never varied on any of the nights that Helene had remained here.

Slow, draggy footsteps approached. They were shuddery as they echoed through the old mansion; but the paces simply meant that old Adam Rendrew was on his way to bed, as he always did punctually at nine o'clock. He based his habits on a never-changing schedule that might have been actuated by the mechanism of the old clock in the hall.

Outside the office door, the footsteps stopped.

That had never happened before. Suddenly, Helene had the reason. This was the first time that she had ever worked late without Osman being in the office. That must have aroused either Rendrew's curiosity or suspicion. Turning toward the door, Helene saw the old man bristling from the threshold.

Against the hall's gloomy background, Adam Rendrew looked like a gray monstrosity matched by the house itself. His eyes were gray, so were his bushy eyebrows, that seemed miniatures of his shocky hair. Even his withery face was gray; down past his thin nose, a chin tapered beneath the points of his wing-tip collar.

Helene was meeting the stare of tyrannical eyes that had never before seemed to notice her. From deep in his throat, Rendrew croaked:

“Why are you here?”

Remembering how Osman met such challenges, Helene used the same system; a methodical manner of reply.

“I had work to finish,” she declared, “so I came here.”

Rendrew's lips curled a smile of doubt, produced by a forward thrust of his chin.

“I heard John say he would not need you,” asserted the old man. “He told you he was having dinner at the club.”

Helene replied coolly that she had not remembered the extra work until she was having her own dinner.

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Swinging to the typewriter table, she began to gather typed sheets and arrange them. At moments, she turned in Rendrew's direction and was conscious that he had remained to stare.

It wasn't surprising that the old man should give the girl close scrutiny. His gray eyes saw a rounded face that had every claim to beauty. Brown eyes shone beneath brows that had a penciled curve. Helene's nose was one of sculptured fineness, above lips that were delicate, yet firm. Clearly outlined against Helene's dark hair, that face was completed by a perfect chin, that showed determination in its thrust.

That challenge was the sort that old Rendrew would accept from no one. He lingered, seeking a pretext that would enable him to prove the girl at fault merely because of her presence.

"I heard no ring at the front door," he creaked suddenly, "nor did I hear Froy admit anyone."

"I happened to remember that it was Froy's night off," returned Helene, "so I came in by the side door."

"Who granted you that privilege?"

"Mr. Osman. You may ask him to-morrow.

The direct reply settled Rendrew for another three minutes. Then he found a chance to issue a command that Helene would have to obey.

"Froy always returns by ten thirty," reminded Rendrew, harshly. "When he does, he will lock that side door. Be sure that you leave before that time!"

OBLIGINGLY, Helene nodded. Satisfied that he had scored a triumph, the old man moved from the doorway and started toward the stairs. It had been a long strain for him, postponing bedtime for a full ten minutes. Helene decided that Louise would enjoy hearing that, but probably wouldn't believe it.

Smiling as she gathered up the papers, Helene hit upon the humorous thought that those ten minutes might be regarded as the most important period in the life of Adam Rendrew. She was to remember that later, but from another viewpoint.

Footsteps were dwindling up the stairs. They halted, as if the old man had paused to listen for some sound. Helene could picture Rendrew starting a downward sneak; then the footsteps sounded again, traveling higher.

There was a second pause, and Helene, tense, was startled by the most amazing sound that she had ever heard. It was lower than Rendrew's paces and sounded like an echo to the old man's footfalls!

Then Rendrew's gait was a climb no longer. He was moving along the second floor. But the echoes still were climbing in uncanny fashion. Helene was gripped by an unreal horror which seemed to filter in through the walls of the old mansion. Then, in a flash, she placed those ghostly footfalls.

They weren't echoes. They came from the side stairs beyond the office partition. Those steps were the route that led from the side door that was left unlocked for Louise.

Someone was sneaking up that other stairway, but Helene couldn't place who it might be. It certainly wasn't Osman; he always stayed late at the club. It couldn't be Archie; he was busy, at poker, in the den. As for Louise, she was at a party, which meant she wouldn't be home at all.

Nor Froy. If he had stayed in the kitchen, as he often did on nights off, he might be going upstairs; but Froy,

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the velvet-footed, never made a sound anywhere he went about this house.

The echoes ended. Whoever the nocturnal visitor, he had reached the top of his stairway, Helene listened tensely; as if in answer to her own emotion, the girl heard other sounds.

First, a voice. Not Rendrew's, for the tone was deep. Beyond that, Helene could not identify it, because the long halls produced a hollow effect. It might be anyone except Rendrew, which was proven when Helene heard a croaky, incoherent voice reply. That must be Rendrew's.

The heavy voice was repeated; the croak followed it. Stepping out of the office, Helene moved toward the front stairway. Still she couldn't catch the conversation, until Rendrew's voice took a higher pitch.

“Get out of here!” The croak had become a wild cackle. “Get out, I tell you, before—”

The other voice drowned Rendrew's words, but, like the old man's tone, it was forced. No longer heavy, the intruder's speech was savage in its hoarse response:

“Stop! Stand where you are, or—”

A gunshot sounded.

The report was muffled; but its intervention was so startling that Helene stood frozen. Then, oddly, she was jarred back to her senses by another shock.

First, she heard a man's mad scramble somewhere in the upstairs hallway; then another gun burst, this time a loud report that must have come from the hall itself. With it, there was a sudden tinkle, the shattering of a window pane, probably in Rendrew's room.

Despite herself, Helene screamed. The shriek that she gave was probably louder and more harrowing than any of the preceding sounds, though she didn't realize it. Then, amid the echoes of her piercing cry, the girl heard a clang close by.

It was the old clock, chiming the quarter hour. Its four-note melody seemed a knell, tolling an end to the career of old Adam Rendrew!

CHAPTER III. MURDER'S CLUES

MURDER had struck in advance of the time when The Shadow had expected crime to begin. Though Helene Graymond knew nothing of the black-cloaked investigator and his conjectures, she recognized intuitively that death had occurred on the floor above.

Heavy footsteps were pounding down the side stairway. The invader was seeking exit. Her natural bravery returning, Helene dashed along a hall toward the kitchen, intending to cut through and head off the murderer.

She saw the little passage, the side door straight ahead. A single light was glowing, as it always did, as a beacon for the wayward Louise. Then, as the man plunged suddenly from the side stairs, Helene was bowled over by another person who was also intent to cut off the intruder's escape.

It was Froy. The old servant had not gone out on his night off, had been in the kitchen. Hearing Helene's scream, he had come to give aid. The girl saw Froy lock with the invader; together, they reeled out through the side door the intruder had opened.

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Froy was taller than his adversary; that was all that Helene observed, except that the other man was wearing a tan overcoat and a light-gray hat.

For a moment, the two were lost in darkness; then Froy came sprawling in through the doorway, sent there by a well-directed punch. Coming from hands and knees, Helene was passed by a surge of men, who had arrived just in time to see Froy's fall. The newcomers were Archie and his fellow poker players. Froy had called to them down the basement stairs.

The shirt-sleeved band took up the chase. Outside the door, Helene saw them pursue the fugitive through a tiny alleyway that led to the rear street. They were yapping like hounds, with Archie at the rear of the throng; but their prey outdistanced them. From the rear street, Helene heard the whine of a departing motor.

A curious sensation seized the girl. She had wanted to stop that unknown fugitive, but she couldn't suppress an instinctive sympathy toward the hunted. She was almost glad that he was safely away. Then, biting her lips at thought of such disloyalty, she turned to help Froy, who was groggily coming to his feet.

"You heard the shots?" she questioned.

Froy gave a puzzled squint; then licked his pinched lips. His voice was croakish, like Rendrew's, but with a servile touch.

"I heard no shots, Miss Graymond," he replied. "Nothing but your scream. How many shots were there, and where were they from?"

"Two shots," informed Helene. "From upstairs."

The poker players were back, this time with Archie in the lead. Catching what Helene had said, Archie gave one of his twitchy smiles, then suggested that they go upstairs and see what had happened.

They took the side stairs. At the top, they looked into a small room that Rendrew called his study and beyond which lay his bedroom. Both rooms were dark.

Froy found a lamp near the door, but it didn't come on when he pressed the switch. Archie found a wall switch and produced a glare of lights from the ceiling.

Directly in the center of the study lay Adam Rendrew. He was turned half on his side, with his face twisted upward. The bristly look had left his features; instead, they had a gruesome gape, intensified by the goggly bulge of his glazed eyes.

His knees were doubled, his shoulders huddled; but his back was arched, as if it had been poked forward by a sharp jolt against his spine. Rendrew, in fact, had received just such a spinal thrust—from a bullet.

Darkness hadn't saved him from that first murderous shot. A hideous splotch of crimson dyed the gray cloth of his coat. Considering his whole back as a target, the bullet had reached the pin-point center of a bull's-eye.

Across the room were high, built-in bookshelves with their lines of regularly arranged volumes. In a far corner was Rendrew's writing desk, beside the door that led into his bedroom. Straight opposite the doorway from the hall, where everyone stood, was a shattered window, the one cracked by the second shot.

Helene drew the others from the threshold. Archie retired willingly, but Froy remained to stare. On his face, Helene saw a faint smile, as though the servant welcomed Rendrew's death in the manner a slave would be

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pleased by release from long bondage. Sharply, Helene brought back the servant's drab expression by her command:

“Froy! Go down to the office, call Mr. Osman and tell him what has happened. Ask him to summon the police.”

WITHIN a quarter hour, there were many new visitors in the Rendrew mansion. Chief among them was a stocky man, swarthy of complexion, stolid in expression, who introduced himself as Police Inspector Cardona. Standing in the study doorway, Joe Cardona cast an expert eye upon the scene.

Here was a squarish room, entered from a rear corner, for it ran frontward in the house. Starting from the shattered window, Cardona let his gaze rove to the right. He noted the high bookcases, with their lines of volumes all in even arrangement. His eye reached the writing desk near the front corner.

With a sudden stride past Rendrew's body, Cardona reached the desk. On it he saw a daily calendar, turned to the correct date, which happened to be Tuesday, the tenth. That calendar leaf was torn; its lower section was missing just below the date title.

Maybe Rendrew hadn't torn that sheet. Possibly the murderer had. Inspector Joe Cardona did not leap to conclusions. Instead, he poked about in a wastebasket near the desk, found the bit of paper that he wanted.

It was slightly crumpled, so he smoothed it, touching only the edges, and checked it by the torn leaf on the calendar. The edges fitted.

The bit of paper bore handwriting which Cardona decided must be Rendrew's, judging from samples on the desk. Its writing was penciled, and stated:

Expect Dwight Kelden tonight.

Placing the paper with the calendar, Cardona opened the desk drawer. He found a revolver, loaded but unfired, with a permit made out to Adam Rendrew. The gun was properly registered; that point covered, Cardona turned around and pictured how the crime had been committed.

Someone had probably accosted Rendrew in the hall. The invader had displayed a gun, to support some threat. Rendrew had scrambled into the darkened study, perhaps to get his own gun from the desk. That had given the murderer an obvious opportunity to shoot the old man in the back.

Springing back into the hall, the killer had fired another shot from there, getting the window that time. He had heard Helene's scream and fled. That reconstruction made Cardona decide that Rendrew, and not the killer, must have torn the half sheet from the desk calendar.

Pacing across the room, Cardona came to the unlighted floor lamp. He observed that the cord was plugging into the wall socket, and as he stooped he found a bit of cloth just past the lamp.

It was an eyeglass wiper, that bore the printed advertisement:

WEEKER & SONS

OPTOMETRISTS

NEW YORK BOSTON

CHAPTER III. MURDER'S CLUES

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Adding that to the exhibits, Cardona went down to the first-floor office, where detectives were in charge of the witnesses, who had already given their first testimony. They consisted of Helene, Froy, Archie and the poker players.

With the group was John Osman, who had arrived from his club. He was short, pudgy, and baldish, a man of about fifty. His large forehead, stubby nose, and bulgy chin gave him a profile like the inside of a crescent moon.

In Cardona's experience, men with that type of profile were usually serious-minded and methodical. The analysis fitted Osman, for he had brought his attorney with him from the club.

None of the witnesses could be regarded as suspects. There were too many of them, and their stories fitted too well. Helene Graymond had given a very accurate description of what she had heard, even to the point of an exact time element.

The clock had been striking nine when Rendrew stopped at the office door. After his talk with her, he had gone upstairs; she had heard the other footsteps follow. Then the voices; the shots—the first muffled, the second louder, accompanied by the window smash. Her scream, at the moment of the murderer's mad dash, had been echoed by the clock's chime of quarter past nine.

Froy's story supported Helene's, for the servant had heard her scream and had met her dashing to the side door after the fleeing invader. His claim that he had shouted to the poker players, was supported by Archie and the others.

ONLY one flaw seemed likely: Froy's claim that he had not heard the shots. Cardona tested that by going into the kitchen, while a detective fired two blanks in the second-floor hall. Froy was right; the shots couldn't have been heard there.

But when Helene, from the front hallway, obligingly supplied a scream, Cardona heard it very plainly. Sounds in the old house carried easily along one level, but not from floor to floor.

Asserting that fact when he returned to the office, Cardona was rather surprised when Osman remarked stiffly:

“It seems odd to me, inspector, that those shots were not heard in the basement.”

“They weren't heard in the kitchen,” argued Cardona. “How could they be heard a floor below?”

“Because of the hot-air pipes. This house used to have a system of registers, before we installed radiators.”

Cardona noted that the office wall had a squarish bulge between its windows, a peculiarity that he had noted in other rooms. Tapping the wall, he discovered that it was hollow, with the register papered over.

“Some of the upstairs registers are not covered,” declared Osman. “They are behind bureaus, bookcases, other furniture. Yet I should think that they would carry sound.”

Mutters were coming from Archie and the poker players, who did not like this doubting of their testimony. It was Archie who became their spokesman.

“The furnace is at the front of the cellar,” he declared. “The poker den is at the back. Besides, those old pipes have been closed off. Go take a look, inspector.”

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Cardona went down to the cellar and found that Archie's statement was correct. The pipe ends had metal caps that looked like box lids. Though the squarish pipes measured only a foot and a half across, Cardona managed to bump his head against one that followed the low ceiling; and when he returned to the office, he decided to waste no more time with secondary details.

“About this fellow who got away,” said Cardona to Archie. “You say he jumped into a cab that was waiting in the back street?”

“Right,” agreed Archie, “but it reached the corner before we could yell after it. We couldn't spot the license number.”

The other poker players nodded their corroboration. Cardona mused a few moments, then said:

“You've testified that you didn't get a look at the man's face. But tell me, Dreller—do you think he could have been somebody that you knew?”

“I don't think so.”

“All right. Tell me then, who is Dwight Kelden?”

Archie's response was a stare featured by wide-mouthed astonishment. Fortunately, Cardona was too busy watching him to observe Helene. The girl's face, at that moment, revealed an expression of horror. It was John Osman who answered the question; in his blunt style.

“Dwight Kelden,” he declared, “is a nephew of Adam Rendrew, and he lives in San Diego.”

Cardona swung about, took in both Helene and Froy with his gaze. He asked them if the killer could have been Dwight. By that time, the girl had steadied enough to declare that she did not know; and Froy made the same reply.

Taking Osman as the best person to question, Cardona asked if Dwight wore glasses. Osman did not remember; this time, it was Froy who volunteered a reply.

“Mr. Kelden had reading glasses, sir,” said the servant. “He left them here, at the house, the time he was East a year ago.”

Cardona produced the exhibits from the death room. The calendar with its torn-off sheet was proof that Rendrew had expected a visit from Dwight. The eyeglass wiper could easily have fallen from the killer's pocket when the man pulled his gun.

“I'll check on the optometrist,” assured Cardona. “When I find out that Kelden was in town—”

“He couldn't have been,” interrupted Helene. “Louise received a letter from him this morning, and it came from California, by air mail!”

Helene didn't mention another letter that she, herself, had received—one that might have proven very damaging to Dwight Kelden. The news of Louise's letter, however, was a surprise to both Osman and Archie, and it brought a prompt response from Cardona.

“Who's Louise?” demanded, the inspector.

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“My sister,” answered Archie. “She’s at a party, over at Madge Witherspoon’s apartment. Call her up, inspector. She’ll talk, if she hasn’t had too many cocktails.”

HELENE supplied the phone number. Cardona managed to get Louise on the wire; but he couldn’t make much sense from what the blonde told him. He turned to Archie.

“Say!” exclaimed Cardona. “Is this sister of yours dizzy? She talks in circles! She got a letter, but she won’t say who sent it. She keeps saying that her lips are sealed; that all is known only to those who know all.”

“Tell her,” suggested Archie, “that Rahman Singh knows all. Say that it is his will that she should reveal whatever she knows.”

Observing that Archie was serious, Cardona tried that formula, with prompt results. Louise poured so much conversation into the receiver, that Cardona finally hung it up. He told detectives to take charge during his absence; then, using the telephone again, he called headquarters to arrange for a flying squad to meet him.

“Your sister handed me an earful,” Cardona told Archie, “once I got her started on Rahman Singh. He’s some crystal gazer, who claims he’s a Hindu and who’s told her everything from the name of her great-grandfather’s tomcat to her own hip measurements.”

“Did she show him Dwight’s letter?”

“She says she did,” returned Cardona, “and then she says she didn’t. Which means she did. I know the way those fakirs work, getting information out of people and handing it back to them. If there’s one person outside this house who knows what was going on inside, it’s Rahman Singh. I hope he does know all, like your sister says. Because whatever Rahman Singh knows, I’ll know by the time I’m through with him!”

Twenty seconds later, the slam of the front door denoted the departure of Inspector Joe Cardona, bound on his flying journey to the realm of Rahman Singh.

CHAPTER IV. THE GHOST GRABBERS

IN his quest for a murderer, it never occurred to Joe Cardona that Rahman Singh might already be under the surveillance of the law. Such, however, happened to be the case. Ever since half past eight, when the Hindu had begun his scheduled seance, certain persons in his audience had been giving him unusual notice.

One was a reporter named Clyde Burke, who handled assignments for a tabloid newspaper, the New York Classic. Clyde, it chanced, was also an agent of The Shadow, and was here under orders received from Burbank. For some reason, which Clyde had not asked Burbank to tell him, The Shadow had decided to put Rahman Singh out of business.

The simplest way to do it was to have Clyde sell the idea to the city editor of the Classic and let the newspaper take the credit for exposing the Hindu as a fraud. The city editor had liked the suggestion, and, as a result, Clyde had shown up at the precinct police station and lodged the proper complaint.

With two plain-clothes men and a policewoman, Clyde was at present in Rahman Singh’s seance room, the place with the platform and the chairs. All four had paid a fifty-cent admission fee, and were posing as ordinary members of a small audience until the chance for a raid looked ripe.

For an hour and a half, Rahman Singh had been lecturing the audience and answering questions, promising that ghosts would be forthcoming later. Clyde and the detectives were soon agreed that it would be best to

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wait until the Hindu produced the spooks.

Unwittingly, Rahman Singh was doing something else. He was building himself an alibi against a murder charge. Whatever might come later, there would be four witnesses—and reliable ones—who would testify that Rahman Singh had been in his own seance room between nine and quarter past.

Meanwhile, the detectives present were blissfully ignorant of the fact that their superior, Inspector Cardona, wanted Rahman Singh for questioning in the recent death of Adam Rendrew. Like Clyde, they were hoping that the Hindu would turn down the lights and let the ghosts gambol.

Rahman Singh was a good actor; that much, Clyde Burke would concede. But he wasn't convinced that the fellow was a Hindu. The beard, though it fitted well, could easily be a fake; and between it and the turban, there wasn't much of Rahman Singh's face to be seen. Given the same outfit, Clyde would have been willing to bet money that he could fool his own city editor with the disguise.

True, Rahman Singh's cheeks and forehead were dark; but ordinary grease paint would suffice for that. In fact, Clyde soon decided that when the others were snatching ghosts, he would make a grab for the Hindu's beard, as a more certain trophy.

THE spook act was due at last. Rahman Singh had stepped to a corner of the room, where a curtain stretched at an angle to form an improvised cabinet. He called upon persons from the audience to tie him in a chair. One of the detectives was about to join the committee, when Clyde motioned him back.

The easier the knots, the sooner the spirits would arrive—in Clyde's opinion. The reporter was pleased when he saw that the faithful believers had done a third-rate job. They didn't want to hurt their beloved mahatma, or afflict him with the fear that they had become skeptics.

When they stepped out from the corner and drew the curtain shut, Clyde set three minutes as about the time that Rahman Singh would require to get loose.

Light faded when Rahman Singh's servant pressed the switch. Only a red lamp remained, glowing from the floor beside the cabinet. Clyde knew that red bulbs were popular with spirit mediums; their glow was almost as satisfactory as darkness, when it came to hiding gadgets.

All was silent in the seance room. From somewhere distant came the faint tone of a siren, that the believers took for the sigh of a wandering spirit. Then muffled raps came from the street door. Those, in turn, might have been sound effects produced by Rahman Singh in his cabinet. Not even Clyde and the detectives realized that other raiders were arriving here.

The ghosts were coming from the cabinet; that fact made all others dwindle. Round, moonish faces glowed above the sitters, bringing amazed gasps from them. One woman was proclaiming that she recognized her departed grandmother, when Clyde voiced the signal:

“Grab!”

The detectives and the policewoman snatched for fat-faced spooks and found them. The moonish spirits squeaked when grabbed; their curious faces contorted in the gloom. Believers were scattering, overturning chairs in the confusion. Hysterical screams completed the bedlam.

Clyde had reached the cabinet first, but couldn't find Rahman Singh, let alone the fellow's beard. As the detectives arrived, he yelled for one of them to press the light switch. At that moment, the door came

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sweeping inward, bowling Rahman Singh's servant with it. The man who saw the light switch and used it, was Inspector Joe Cardona.

Rahman Singh's disciples were cluttered along the walls amid a pile of chairs. A few of the more ardent were near the cabinet, clawing at Clyde and the other raiders who, in turn, were retaining their trophies of the ghost hunt. Cardona leveled a revolver as he heard a sharp report. Then he grinned.

One of the ex-ghosts had exploded. The things were oval-shaped balloons, daubed with yellowish paint that glowed in darkness. The luminous paint accounted for the faces; the squeaks, had been the rubber twisting and the air escaping under the squeezes of the hands that had grabbed the spooks.

Cardona faced the cabinet with his gun. From inside, he could hear a faint whir that sounded like heavy breathing. He ordered Rahman Singh to come out; the curtain stirred, but no one appeared. Cardona yanked the drapery aside.

The cabinet was empty, except for an up-tilted electric fan whose spinning blades provided the whir. Rahman Singh had placed it there to waft the fake spirits out into the seance room. But whatever his limitations when it came to materializing spooks, he had certainly staged an effective vanish of his own.

YANKING a drapery from the wall, Cardona saw a door that opened into Rahman Singh's sanctum, where the vanished mahatma had plugged the electric fan cord into a wall socket. Packing in a hurry, the Hindu hadn't waited to disconnect the fan.

An open door showed the rear route that he had taken; and in saving his crystal ball and other props, Rahman Singh had lost all the time that he could spare. Cardona and the others could hear the slam of an outer door at the rear of the basement.

They took up the chase and reached a rear courtyard. There, Cardona shouted for everyone to spread and cover the entire area. Running to the next street, the inspector blew a whistle to bring in a hastily posted police cordon.

A police car suddenly wheeled the corner, flung its spotlight on a doorway across the street. The glare revealed a black-cloaked figure, which Clyde Burke recognized as The Shadow. A moment later, men were flocking in that direction, shouting for the fugitive to halt.

Helplessly, Clyde sought some way to end that misguided chase. He had expected The Shadow near at hand, to cut off the escape of Rahman Singh. Ill luck had intervened, putting The Shadow in a tight spot, instead of the wanted Hindu.

The searchlight was sweeping wide, but The Shadow had managed to escape its path; which meant that he could have chosen one path only: an opening through the block across the way.

Converging police had spied that route and were heading for it, firing revolvers. Clyde's yells were unheeded, drowned by the bark of guns. He was pointing elsewhere, trying to divert the trail; but no one noticed him.

Joe Cardona had glimpsed The Shadow, knowing the cloaked fighter's antagonism toward crime, the inspector formed the same conclusion as Clyde. Cardona used more drastic efforts to halt the wild chase. Leaping into the search-light's path, he waved his arms in an attempt to call the pursuers back.

Once recognized, Cardona managed to call off the police bloodhounds; but by the time that he was leading them back to hunt for Rahman Singh, the task was useless. The police had left a space as ample as a prairie

around the tiny alleys where the Hindu had last been traced.

The Shadow was safely away; but so was Rahman Singh. Whatever the bearded Hindu's part in present crime, only the future would reveal. Perhaps Rahman Singh would consult the crystal, to learn what his own fate would be.

If so, Clyde, hoped that the slippery Hindu would be confronted by a vision of The Shadow!

CHAPTER V. AFTER MIDNIGHT

SOON after midnight, Inspector Joe Cardona arrived at the exclusive Cobalt Club to confer with Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, who had just come back from Philadelphia, where he had delivered a lecture on crime prevention.

Weston was a man of military bearing, brisk even to the points of his short-clipped mustache. He liked the Cobalt Club because it was swanky and because the grillroom not only served good food, but made an excellent meeting place, where no one would be disturbed.

Cardona, however, was not surprised to find that Weston had a friend with him. The friend was one that the commissioner frequently called into conference when he happened to be around. He was Lamont Cranston, the millionaire who had introduced Ralph Weston to the Cobalt Club.

Seated across the table, Cranston gave Cardona a leisurely greeting that contrasted with Weston's brisk style. Nevertheless, Cranston's apparent indolence did not deceive Joe Cardona. The inspector knew that the brain behind Cranston's masklike face was keen; that the commissioner's friend could fling aside his idle manner and move to swift action, when occasion called.

Cardona spread his report sheets, gave a summary of the Rendrew murder. He had gone back to the mansion after the futile hunt for Rahman Singh. There, he had checked over various details and had asked some important questions. For once, Inspector Joe Cardona felt that he had his finger upon the very pulsebeat of crime.

One by one, Cardona checked the known persons who had either been connected with Adam Rendrew, or mingled in the dead man's affairs.

"We'll start with John Osman," announced Cardona. "He's Rendrew's stepson. Been managing the old man's business for years, and making a good job of it. Building up for the future, of course, because he's to get the bulk of the estate; but Osman had nothing to worry about, because he was the only person that Rendrew trusted.

"Anyway, Osman was at a class-reunion dinner at his club from six o'clock this evening. The first he heard of Rendrew's death was when they phoned him from the house. He called headquarters, then came to the house with his attorney, who had been at the dinner with him. That covers Osman."

Commissioner Weston nodded prompt agreement. Cardona covered two more cases in his next verbal stride.

"The Drellers," he declared—"Rendrew's nephew and niece. I don't like the looks of that boy Archie, but he's got an ironclad alibi. He was playing poker with four friends down in the cardroom. All four come from good families, and their testimony fits. We know that Archie couldn't have sneaked upstairs and taken a shot at old Rendrew, even if he'd wanted to.

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“As for Louise, the niece”—Cardona gave a hopeless shrug—“she’s as dizzy as they make them! Some friends brought her home while I was back at the house, and she talked the same as she had over the telephone.”

Cardona ran his finger down the list, came to two other names. He passed a typewritten sheet to Weston.

“That’s the testimony given by Helene Graymond,” said Joe. “She typed it off for me, in Osman’s office. She heard the killer enter and argue with Rendrew. She heard the shots, too. All the details fit with the evidence.

“As for Froy, the servant”—Cardona was referring to another sheet —“he’s a funny-looking duck, who could tell plenty of lies if he wanted to. But in this case, he’s told the truth. His statements fit right in with the others.”

Again, Weston nodded; then:

“Since the murderer was seen and pursued,” he declared, “it seems superfluous to discuss these other persons further. The question is: who is the murderer?”

“Not Rahman Singh,” returned Cardona, ruefully. “Why he was mixing in the Rendrew business, I don’t know; but he’s got a perfect alibi, since he was running a seance at the time of the crime. We don’t know where he’s gone, and questioning his servant hasn’t helped.

“The servant was just a stooge who saw people in and out of the place. The closest he’d ever been to India was Harlem. He doesn’t even know whether Rahman Singh is a Hindu or not. Says he was scared of ‘old whiskers’; thought maybe the spooks were real.”

WESTON’S face was showing disappointment. It was time for Joe Cardona to play his trump card. He produced the evidence that he had found in the death room. The commissioner brightened when he saw the calendar, with its torn page and notation. The eyeglass wiper also interested him.

“Dwight Kelden!” he exclaimed. “Who is he?”

“A nephew of old Rendrew,” returned Cardona. “He lives in California, and this morning his cousin, Louise Dreler, got a letter from him. Here it is”—Cardona produced the letter—“and it says that Dwight was going to Mexico.

“My hunch is that he hopped a plane East, instead. Rendrew expected a visit from him, according to the calendar notation, and if I find out that Kelden bought his glasses from that Wecker outfit when he was East a year ago, we’ll be getting places, commissioner.”

The opinion satisfied the commissioner. Viewing Dwight Kelden as a possible murderer, he finally asked:

“What would have been Kelden’s motive? Hatred of his uncle, Adam Rendrew?”

“Nobody liked Rendrew,” returned Cardona. “But there may be a money angle to the case. Louise let that out, and I questioned Osman afterward. He admitted that it might be the answer, but didn’t want to talk about it until he and his attorney had assembled Rendrew’s papers.”

“Quite right,” decided Weston. “It would be better to have actual facts, than hearsay.”

“I’ll be digging into that tomorrow,” declared Cardona, “and by then, I hope to have another witness: the cab

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driver who took the murderer away from the scene. Here's a photograph of Dwight Kelden, that Louise Dreller gave me. We'll identify him, all right, if we run across him.

“Meanwhile, I've put men to watch the Rendrew house, just in case Kelden is fool enough to come back there. I'm not holding any of the witnesses; they'll all be available when needed. The Graymond girl is going to stay at the house. I've detailed a man to go with her to her apartment while she packs some clothes to bring back with her.”

LEAVING the Cobalt Club, Lamont Cranston smiled. As The Shadow, Cranston could have told facts regarding the cab that the police wanted. He had already received a report from Burbank covering the matter.

Unfortunately, the cab had left a broken trail. Until The Shadow had welded more links, his information would be useless to the law.

One name had not been mentioned in connection with the Rendrew murder: the name of Silk Elredge. It had an important bearing on the case, and demanded prompt investigation. Therefore, when Lamont Cranston entered his waiting limousine, he ordered the chauffeur to take him to the Club Cadiz.

Arrived there, Cranston dismissed the car for the night. With folded garment across his arm, he ignored the attendant who wanted to check his hat and coat. Going up the stairway, he joined a young man who was seated at one of the first tables.

Soon, The Shadow was receiving a report from one of his secret agents, Harry Vincent.

Though The Shadow had not expected crime to strike tonight, he had stationed Harry at the Club Cadiz, to keep tabs on visitors who met with Silk Elredge. In view of the Rendrew murder, it was more important to learn just where Silk had been all evening; and Harry was able to give facts.

Ostensibly, Silk hadn't left the night club, but there had been intervals when he stayed in his office. Harry, fortunately, had clocked those periods. Silk's longest absence had been twenty minutes, from nine ten until nine thirty.

Harry was particularly positive on those times, because the floor show had begun at nine o'clock, and Silk had walked out on it. That had struck Harry as unusual because, normally, Silk would have watched the floor show, to see how it went over with the customers.

Of course, there were important matters that might drag Silk away at any time; nevertheless, Harry had made definite note of the time when the night-club owner went into the office, and had kept constant watch until his return.

At present, Silk was again in the office, and as The Shadow gazed in that direction, the fellow appeared. Silk was starting for the stairs that led up to the gambling room, and as luck had it, he gazed straight toward the table where The Shadow sat.

Recognizing Cranston, Silk's eyes showed a sudden flicker; then, approaching, he purred a polite greeting and went his way.

Silk hadn't noticed Harry, seated beyond Cranston. As soon as Silk went upstairs, The Shadow told his agent to keep watch. Plucking his black garments from a chair, Cranston began to stroll toward Silk's office; by the time he had passed the telephone booths, the cloak was sliding over his shoulders, the slouch hat on his head. Cranston had become The Shadow.

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The office was lighted. In a few minutes, The Shadow found what he expected; an exit to a little stairway that led both up and down. It was an ordinary door, fronted with a filing cabinet that had stacks of newspapers and magazines on top of it. The cabinet itself was attached to the door, and swung with it.

Searching the office for any evidence of Silk's business with Archie Dreler, The Shadow kept watching the usual door and the filing cabinet. While he looked about, he noticed a small electric-light bulb in a special socket under the ledge of Silk's flat-topped desk.

The light was glowing when The Shadow observed it; a few seconds later, it flickered off. Before The Shadow could investigate its purpose, he heard sounds beyond the filing cabinet. With a swift glide, he went out by the main door, just as Silk entered from the secret route.

Perhaps Silk suspected something, for he peered out into the passage a few seconds later. By that time The Shadow was in one of the telephone booths, ready to drop his cloak and hat, to become Cranston, making a phone call, should Silk arrive.

SILK did not leave the office. Apparently, it was not his policy to come out by the regular door when he had entered through the secret one. He could see the tables from where he stood, and probably noticed that Lamont Cranston was gone. Harry Vincent, meanwhile, had shifted to another table.

When the office door closed, with Silk still inside, The Shadow dropped a coin in the telephone pay box and made a call from the booth. The quiet tone that answered was that of Burbank, the contact agent. Burbank made a brief report:

“Dwight Kelden at Hotel Northley, registered in Room 416 under the name of David Armage.”

“Report received.”

The Shadow spoke his response in whispered tone. Hanging up, he noted that Silk's door was still closed. Easing from the phone booth, he glided toward the front stairs. Lights along the edge of the night club were dim; only Harry Vincent caught a glimpse of that passing form and noticed a signal from one gloved hand.

Two patrons had just gone down; the hat-check girl was looking for their hats and coats, while they leaned across the counter of the cloakroom. Passing unnoticed, The Shadow glided out to the street.

Reaching the nearest corner, he remained close to a darkened building wall until, about ten minutes later, a cab wheeled into a parking place and waited. That cab was The Shadow's, its driver an agent named Moe Shrevnitz, who had been dispatched here by Burbank.

Blackness crossed the sidewalk, changed from a sliding patch to a tall form in black. Only for a half second did the figure hold that semblance; then it merged with the dark interior of the cab. A gloved hand closed the door; from the driver's seat, Moe heard the whispered order of his mysterious passenger:

“Drive past the Rendrew house; then to the Hotel Northley. Full speed!”

The cab spurred away; Moe, his head cocked toward the half-opened partition, hoped for an added order. It came:

“Report!”

CHAPTER VI. CROSSED PATHS

Moe had a worth-while story to tell. He was responsible for gaining Dwight Kelden's trail. Whether or not Kelden had actually entered the mansion and slain Adam Rendrew, he had certainly been in that immediate vicinity, as a passenger in a taxicab, soon after the murder had occurred.

Anticipating future trouble at the Rendrew house, The Shadow, busy elsewhere this evening, had instructed certain agents to look over the terrain and report on the mansion. In accordance with such orders, Moe had been cruising near there in a cab. Driving along an avenue, he had seen another cab whip out from the street in back of Rendrew's.

"It took the corner hell-bent," described Moe, "like somebody had shoved a gat in back of the hackie's ear. So I tailed the cab over toward Times Square. A guy jumped out, and the hackie beat it like he was glad to get away.

"I tried to pick up the fare, because he was looking for another cab, but another hack beat me to it. I dodged a block ahead, so it wouldn't look like I was following him, and then came in back.

"I got a look at the fellow when he got out of the second cab, and from what Burbank told me later, it was Dwight Kelden. He ducked into a drug-store and out another door, so I lost him. But I knew he hadn't gone far. Hawkeye was with me, and he finally picked the Northley. Then Cliff showed up, and clinched it."

The Shadow could piece the remaining details. Burbank had received a description of Kelden from Clyde Burke, who had gone back to the Rendrew house with Cardona. After Hawkeye, another agent, had picked the Hotel Northley as the fugitive's final refuge, an agent named Cliff Marsland had appeared there.

Cliff was better qualified than Hawkeye to enter even a second-rate hotel; for Hawkeye was a shabby, furtive little chap, whose specialty was sharp-eyed observation while slouching along darkened streets. Entering the Northley, Cliff had noted the hotel register; the latest name in that guest book had been David Armage, Room 416.

Driving at best speed while he reported, Moe had excellent luck in catching green lights along the way. In exactly twelve minutes after leaving the Club Cadiz, he reached the final avenue before the Rendrew house. There, Moe cruised slowly past the mansion, while The Shadow looked for the posted plain-clothes men mentioned by Cardona.

Four were on duty—two in front, two in the rear street—and they were keeping special vigil on the passage that ran through beside the large house.

Changing his route, Moe made for the Hotel Northley, some twenty blocks distant. Several minutes had been lost because of the detour, but The Shadow regarded the time as worth while. He intended, later, to visit the old mansion; for the present, the Kelden matter seemed more important.

THE Northley was in a neighborhood off the main arteries of traffic, an ideal spot for The Shadow to conduct an unseen investigation. Moe parked on a deserted street and pointed to an alley leading into a courtyard in back of the hotel.

The Shadow saw a fire escape of the old-fashioned type leading up the rear wall of the brick hotel, near a corner of the structure.

Soon, he was in the courtyard. Lights were few in the rear windows, but there was a glow from the corner

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room on the fourth floor, only a short stretch from the fire-escape platform on that particular level. There was a good chance that the lighted room might be 416; if so, The Shadow would not have far to look for Dwight Kelden.

Off from that side of the hotel was a two-story garage with a flat roof. Beyond the intervening structure, The Shadow saw the windows of a fair-sized apartment house. Such details often proved important; hence The Shadow studied them carefully before he drew down the swinging ladder that formed the bottom of the fire escape.

Silently ascending, The Shadow reached the level of the second floor, noticed that the garage roof was flat, as he had supposed. Continuing to the fourth floor, he studied the window that he wanted. Its shade was drawn, but light shone through the yellow-colored blind. The window was latched; the ledge outside was very narrow.

Considering the rather precarious position that he would have to take, plus the need for absolute silence while jimmying the window, The Shadow calculated at least five minutes for the task.

With painstaking care, he dug his fingers into crevices among the brick and sought a toe hold, as he ventured his right foot from the fire escape.

During the trip in Moe's cab, The Shadow had not seen a car that left the Rendrew mansion, for the simple reason that it had started a few minutes before his arrival. That car was driven by a detective sergeant named Markham, who was taking Helene Graymond to her apartment, which bore the pretentious title of the Winslow Arms.

Helene's apartment was on the third floor. She and Markham entered a little living room, and the girl invited the detective sergeant to take a comfortable chair, while she packed.

"I ought to change my clothes," she added. "Could I take time for that?"

"Certainly, miss," rejoined Markham. "Whenever you're ready, we'll start back to the house."

Helene entered the bedroom. Markham was out of sight, so she left the door slightly ajar. After drawing down the shades, loudly enough for Markham to hear, she turned on a light. Changing her clothes was an excuse to gain more time than ordinary packing would require.

Hurriedly removing her dress while crossing the room, Helene opened a suitcase that lay beside the bureau. From a drawer she brought a package of letters, placed them in the suitcase and put some clothes on top of them.

A few seconds gained there, she went to the closet and made considerable clatter while placing her dress on a hanger. That was to create the impression that she had spent the entire time in taking off her dress.

There was a writing table close to the closet. Helene fished about it with one hand, to find a few more letters, using her other hand to tug at dresses, in the closet, which would indicate that she was having trouble choosing the one she intended to wear. The girl ended the clatter by picking a dress almost at random.

Carrying the fresh dress to the bed, Helene laid it there; then took off her shoes and let them drop, not too heavily, to the floor. She intended to put those same shoes on again, but felt that if Markham heard the thumps, he would suppose that she had started to change stockings as well as shoes and allow time accordingly.

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DETECTIVE SERGEANT MARKHAM would have been surprised, and probably intrigued, had he been impolite enough to peer into that room during the next minute. A shapely figure in silk scanties and stockings, Helene was tip-toeing to a corner near the window. There she opened the drawer of a dressing table and drew out a large photograph.

The portrait showed a young man with square-set face; expressive eyes were beneath straight brows. His features were handsome; they were enhanced by the slight curl of his tight hair. That photograph, too, would have interested Detective Sergeant Markham. It was a picture of Dwight Kelden.

Coming suddenly from a reverie induced by her study of the photo, Helene hurried softly to the bag that lay open on the bureau. There, she placed the picture in the bottom; there weren't enough garments in the bag to hide it completely, and rather than run any risk, the girl stealthily opened a bureau drawer and brought out a few more items for the suitcase.

She could spare a minute more, she thought; then she would have to get back and put on the other dress. After that, she could carry the bag out to the living room and complete her packing there, in Markham's presence.

But that coming minute was to produce consequences that Helene had not anticipated.

Directly outside the girl's bedroom window was the roof of a low-built garage. Beyond the roof of the garage was the side wall of the Hotel Northley. There, in a corner window that faced toward the Winslow Arms, stood the original of the photograph that Helene had just hidden.

Framed against the room light, Dwight Kelden's face was plainly recognizable. He was looking toward the windows of Helene's apartment, hoping that the girl might later raise a shade and see him. Dwight was so concentrated on that hope that he did not notice a stir in the room behind him.

A rear window had opened. A cloaked shape was swinging across the sill. With quick, gliding strides, The Shadow approached the man at the side window, placed a hand upon his shoulder and spoke an introduction in forceful, whispered tone.

Startled by that sibilance, Dwight wheeled about. His hand went to his pocket, as if seeking a gun. The Shadow's fist was quicker, girding Dwight's wrist. Expecting some frenzied resistance on Dwight's part, the cloaked visitor gained a grip with his other hand, intending to subdue the wanted man after a brief grapple.

Dwight Kelden might have accepted The Shadow's persuasion, if another interruption had not come with startling swiftness. As The Shadow twisted Dwight inward from the window, his own form came into the light. Sight of the black-cloaked figure brought a hoarse shout from the garage roof, one story below.

“The Shadow! Get him!”

With the utterance of his name, The Shadow flung Dwight Kelden to the floor. The move was one of the timeliest that The Shadow ever performed. The finish of the shout was punctuated by the bark of guns. Bullets whistled through the open window, above the rolling pair. Other shots smashed the glass in the raised sash.

Noting that the fire was high, The Shadow released Dwight and wheeled about close to the floor. Poking a drawn automatic past the lower corner of the window, he stabbed reply shots at targets revealed by gun spurts. One shout turned to a howl: then another.

Dwight was on hands and knees, grabbing at the room door. It gave, bowling him back into a corner. The

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Shadow spun about against the wall beside the window, jabbing shots into a deluge of incoming thugs.

They were upon him before he could damage them sufficiently, slugging with guns that they hadn't time to aim, thanks to The Shadow's skillful fade in the direction that they did not expect—toward the window.

Shoved half across the sill, The Shadow had only one course. Lifting his feet high and wide, he drove them into the massed enemies about him. The stroke bowled back the nearest fighters, but the pressure of the rest produced the opposite result.

Teetered upon the window sill, The Shadow was flung headlong outward.

The fall was short—a mere ten feet to the pitch-black garage roof just below. But The Shadow took it under the worst of circumstances. It was a back dive, that threatened to land him head foremost. Only a quick fling of his arms took the full force from his skull.

Conscious after he landed, the cloaked fighter was momentarily numbed. His hands seemed weighted as they reached for guns. Prone in the darkness, The Shadow was striving to pull himself back into the fray, knowing that he could succeed if granted a mere minute longer.

But crooks were claiming that minute as their own. Their shouts told it, from along the roof and at the window above. Men of crime were exultant, confident that the time had come to deliver a long-awaited stroke:

Death to The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. BROKEN BATTLE

THE first roar of battle had produced a sudden change of events in Helene's apartment. Startled by the bark of guns, Helene had stiffened exactly as she had at Rendrew's. This time, the thing that brought back her senses was the sudden pound of Markham, dashing toward the bedroom.

Helene was gripped by the alarming thought that when the detective sergeant found her, half clad and without shoes, on the wrong side of the room, he would guess that she had been sneaking about the place, hiding evidence unfavorable to Dwight Kelden.

But Markham hadn't been paying attention to any of the sounds from the bedroom. Nor was he interested in Helene's attire or lack of it. He was anxious for the girl's safety, and when he saw her starting from the corner, he swept her back with his arm.

“Stay there!” he ordered. “Lay low!” By the time Markham had turned off the bedroom lights, stumbled to a window and raised it, the gunfire had lulled.

Looking out, the detective sergeant saw three men at a lighted window on the other side of the garage roof, and one floor up.

They were the mobbies who had just lost their grip on The Shadow, who, in turn, was at that moment groggily trying to prop himself up from the garage roof. Markham heard shouts, saw guns flash from spots along the roof.

Deliberately, Markham fired at every gun that spurted. With Helene's bedroom as a fort, he held a definite advantage over the men in the open. Though his shots didn't have the accuracy of The Shadow's, they made

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gunmen scurry for cover.

His gun empty, Markham crouched to reload. By that time, matters had changed in the hotel window across the way. The gunners there had left The Shadow to the mobsters on the roof, in order to spot Markham's fire. But they hadn't started to shoot, because some of them were engaged in a scuffle with a young man who had suddenly flung himself among them, namely, Dwight Kelden.

On his feet, Dwight had met a blocking crook at the doorway and was using his fists in hope of escape. Shoved into the arms of other foemen, he wouldn't have lasted long, except for Markham. Again at Helene's window, Markham saw gun hands swinging over in the hotel room and opened fire at the brawlers.

His first bullet made men duck. Dwight staggered through the doorway, off to new flight, while his enemies dropped beneath their window ledge and jabbed shots back to Markham. His fire ceased suddenly, and they guessed why. Again Markham's gun was empty.

One sharpshooter popped above his window ledge, thrust a gun forward to take quick aim. He was speedier than Markham, that crook; he was leaning from his window, finger on trigger, before the detective sergeant realized that his own gun was empty.

Perhaps the intended shot would have found Markham, had the thug ever fired it; but he never managed to complete the opportunity.

A tongue of flame knifed straight upward beside the hotel wall. The crook jolted from the blast of the big automatic. Pitching forward, he sprawled headlong to the roof beside The Shadow.

The cloaked fighter was in the fray again!

MARKHAM and his empty gun were forgotten. More crooks were at the window, warily aiming for The Shadow, as were others on the fringes of the roof. They couldn't believe that their invincible foe had fully recuperated, and their guess was right. The timely shot in Markham's behalf had been a huge effort for The Shadow.

He was crawling toward the rear of the roof in a sideward, crablike fashion.

One arm was caving under him, his opposite leg was dragging. What lights he saw were blurred; but The Shadow could still pick out gun flashes. Every spurt, from the window or below, jarred him into a prompt response.

The Shadow was demonstrating the important margin of superiority that had so often enabled him to outmatch heavy odds. He had trained himself to gauge distance, as well as direction, when he aimed for gun spurts in the darkness. Mere guesswork, the sort that crooks were using, wouldn't do. These thugs were learning that lesson with bullets.

Out from the wall, The Shadow was closer than the gunmen along the roof supposed. They were firing for twenty yards, instead of only ten, and their bullets were carrying high. Those at the window of Dwight's room had the range, but they were visible targets and The Shadow clipped them before they could tug their triggers.

Then Markham was back into the fray, his one error being a shot that he fired at The Shadow, along with the other gunners. Fortunately that bullet, like most of Markham's, was wide of its hurried target.

By that time, the crooks had enough. They were thinking that The Shadow's fire was sufficient, when

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Markham joined in. Coupled to that, they heard the whine of approaching sirens.

Markham yanked out a police whistle and blew it, giving the impression that police reserves had already arrived. The lights went out in the hotel room; men began to drop from the edges of the garage roof.

During the lull, Helene approached the apartment window. She saw Markham squinting into the darkness. He pointed to a dragging shape partly outlined against a dull glow between two buildings.

“There's somebody.” Markham's tone seemed doubtful. “Who he is, I don't know. Only I'm thinking, maybe, it might be—”

Helene held her breath, spreading her hands against her chest. She hadn't seen Dwight over in the hotel room, for she hadn't been near her own window until this moment. But she was afraid that Markham might mention Dwight by name.

“It could be The Shadow!”

Markham added that with such emphasis, that Helene exclaimed:

“The Shadow? Who is he?”

“He's a fellow who gives crooks what they ought to get,” spoke Markham. “From the way that mob thinned out, I'll bet The Shadow was on deck. I couldn't have been picking them off that quick. I'd like to go out on the roof and look around—”

Pounding on the apartment door interrupted. Deciding that the police had arrived, Markham caught Helene's arm and started her out into the living room. He heard a gasped protest, but didn't understand it until they reached the light.

“I'm sorry, Miss Graymond!” Markham gulped the apology. “I didn't realize that you hadn't finished getting dressed.”

“I'll have a dress on in a jiffy,” smiled Helene. “You can open the door.”

She slid into the bedroom, slipped her dress over her shoulders and was smoothing it when Markham and the others came through. There were four officers in uniforms, and all had flashlights to begin the search along the roof. From the window, Markham said that Helene could turn on the light if she wanted; so she did.

Putting on her shoes, the girl started to complete her packing. Every item that she added to the bag buried the letters and the photograph deeper from sight, a fact that made Helene smile, despite the new ordeal that she had just undergone.

Oddly, Helene found herself wondering about someone other than Dwight, who, after all, might not have been anywhere around. She remembered Markham's mention of a fighter called The Shadow, and hoped that he had fared well in the battle.

Glancing from the window, Helene saw flashlights over in the direction that Markham had pointed out; but apparently no one was there.

The girl decided that The Shadow had gone; and in that assumption, she was right. But The Shadow had not traveled far.

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WITH battle won, The Shadow had reached the roof edge. There, he had attempted a drop to the ground. Two stories from a hanging drop was usually a simple matter for The Shadow, but on this occasion he trusted too much upon his injured arm.

He was lying by the wall of the garage, when officers flicked their flash-lights downward. Thanks to the overhanging roof and a short crawl by The Shadow, they did not see the figure in black.

Sheer instinct must have enabled The Shadow to perform that creep, after his drop had crumpled him. He remained quite motionless, long after the flashlight rays had passed him.

Men were creeping in from behind the Hotel Northley. Whether friends or foemen, The Shadow was in no condition to receive them. Fortunately, they were friends: Cliff Marsland and Hawkeye. Lifting their chief, the faithful agents carried him out to the next street.

The departure was fraught with danger of discovery. More police were in the neighborhood. Two officers, stumbling through an opening, were almost upon The Shadow's agents when they stopped. The cops had come upon a crippled thug. While they were dragging him away, Cliff and Hawkeye completed their own journey.

Moe's waiting cab whipped to life the moment that the agents and their burden were aboard. It shot right from the sight of a patrolman who was searching parked cars along the way.

A whistle gave the alarm; a police car whined in from a neighboring block. But Moe knew these streets, like all others in Manhattan.

He twisted the cab from that vicinity as if it had been a mechanical eel. Discarding darkness, Moe chose a lighted avenue and mixed the cab into traffic far from the scene of the brief pursuit.

When Cliff spoke through the partition, telling him to drive to Doctor Rupert Sayre's, Moe nodded. Sayre was a doctor who aided The Shadow when he received injuries in his eternal battle against crime.

The Shadow's plans were ended for the night. Later, perhaps, he would again seek the trail of Dwight Kelden—who had managed a new flight during The Shadow's costly triumph. Doubly costly, that victory, since it meant that The Shadow would have to postpone another mission: his visit to the Rendrew house.

In that old mansion lay certain clues that were the answer to strange murder; clues that might be gone when The Shadow finally arrived to seek them!

CHAPTER VIII. THE THIRD CLUE

BY noon the next day, Inspector Cardona had news that pleased him. Matters were going very well in the Rendrew case. Dwight Kelden had been tagged as Suspect No. 1, and his picture gazed from the front page of every newspaper in town.

That particular photo showed Kelden in a ten-gallon hat, which— though Cardona didn't realize it—hid the suspect's most conspicuous mark of identification, his somewhat curly hair. Louise Dreller had provided the photograph; it was one that her cousin had sent her, to kid her with the notion that the West was still very wild and woolly.

Wires to San Diego had proven that Dwight Kelden was absent from that city and that no one knew precisely where he had gone. The news supported Cardona's theory that Rendrew's missing nephew was probably in

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New York.

As for the gunfight held between the Hotel Northley and the Winslow Arms, the ace inspector held a hunch that Dwight had been concerned in it. He argued that it might have been an effort to kidnap Helene Graymond, the law's most important witness.

Captured mobbies claimed that they had been working with a leader who had not survived the battle; that he was the only one who could have told who hired them, or what their ultimate purpose was.

That was logical enough, and Cardona had an idea that the man in back of it all was a guest at the Northley, named David Armage. The fight had begun in Armage's room, 416, and from descriptions of the guest, the name sounded like an alias, used by Dwight Kelden.

Positive that Dwight must be the murderer, Cardona had forgotten about Rahman Singh. Besides, another man had come into the scene—a taxi driver named Tim Dogan. The fellow reported at a precinct station, admitted that he had picked up a passenger in back of the Rendrew house. He was brought to headquarters, where Cardona interviewed him.

Dogan looked honest, but somewhat wary. He kept fidgeting with the battered cap that constituted his sole item of uniform. He wanted to think before he spoke, and Cardona let him. Experience had shown the inspector that fake testimony was usually given glibly, rather than with forethought of the sort that Dogan used.

"IT was this way," said Dogan. "I was grabbin' chow at the Busy Bee, see? That's where I go regular—all the boys up there know me."

Cardona inquired where the Busy Bee was.

"It's a hashhouse on the street in back of Rendrew's," declared Dogan. "About a block away. I'm the only hackie that eats there, and every now an' then I gets a call."

"From that neighborhood?"

"Yeah, usually." Dogan paused, then blurted the admission: "I'd gotten 'em from the Rendrew house before."

"Who made the calls?"

"Generally a dame. The same one that wanted the cab, I guess. She's a blonde. Dizzy looking."

That fitted Louise. Cardona put a prompt question: "Did the girl call you last night?"

"No," replied Dogan. "It was a guy called. He talked kind of quick. Says to stop out in back of the old house at nine o'clock and wait there. I figures the guy is callin' for the blonde."

"At what time was the call made?"

"Along about six o'clock. I always hit the Busy Bee ahead of six, so I can scoff before the rush starts for the restaurants an' the night clubs."

Cardona calculated. If Dwight Kelden had come East by plane, he would have arrived long in advance of six o'clock. As for the quick voice that Dogan mentioned, it certainly didn't fit Archie's whiny tone or Froy's

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precise sort of speech.

They were the only persons who could have called from the house, except Adam Rendrew or John Osman. Neither of them would have arranged for a cab to meet Louise. Besides, Rendrew's voice had been cackly, according to Helene, and Osman's speech was deliberate, almost a drawl.

"It's been six months that I've hung around the Busy Bee," continued Dogan, "an' this is the first time a guy calls from the house; instead of the dame—"

"He said he was calling from the house?"

"No. He just says to be there at nine. So I shows up, an' it's the guy himself that pops out, after I've been waitin' about fifteen minutes. He's in a hurry, an' he hops aboard as soon as he sees me, sayin' to get to Times Square quick.

"By the time we're around the corner, he's flashin' ten bucks in one mitt an' a gat in the other, askin' me which I want. I figure a sawbuck is better than a slug, so I takes him where he wants to go."

Dogan ended his story abruptly. Cardona eyed him in poker-faced style. Finally, the cabby added:

"That's all, inspector. Until I takes a gander at the newspapers this mornin' an' find out you're lookin' for the guy."

Cardona pointed to Dwight's photograph on a front page, and asked:

"Was that the man?"

"It mighta been," admitted Dogan. "Only I didn't see him very close. I was busy drivin' fast, like he wanted. He wasn't wearin' that hat, though."

Cardona gave a grunt. Leaning back in his chair, he considered what other information Dogan might supply. Finally, he questioned:

"Where's your cab?"

"Outside here. They had me drive it down from the precinct station."

"We'll have a look inside it."

They went outside, and Cardona began to probe the cab's interior. When he lifted the rear seat, something slipped down from the side of it. Cardona saw the flutter of paper and reached for the trophy.

A moment later, he was holding a third clue that pointed to Dwight Kelden, an item quite as important as the torn calendar and the eyeglass wiper.

Joe Cardona had found an airplane timetable, scheduling the flights of skyliners between California and New York.

LATER that afternoon, Inspector Cardona arrived at the police commissioner's office and laid the new clue on the commissioner's desk, together with the old ones.

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“Kelden left a trail a mile wide!” asserted Cardona. “He overlooked the date slip that Rendrew wrote and, later, tore from the calendar. I've checked on the eyeglass wiper and found out that Kelden bought his reading glasses from Weeker & Sons, when he was in New York a year ago.

“This timetable is something else he dropped from his pocket, or decided to get rid of, while he was in the cab. Kelden knew we'd be after him, and he wasn't going to carry anything that might show he'd just come from California.”

Commissioner Weston showed a pleased smile. Cardona took it for commendation, which it was; but the smile meant more. Weston had a surprise of his own, for Cardona.

“Very good, inspector,” declared the commissioner. “You have built up an excellent case against Dwight Kelden! He is the man we want, as your evidence proves. What you now need, is to learn his motive.”

“Maybe John Osman can help us with that—”

“Osman has helped us,” interrupted Weston, widening his smile. “I summoned him here at noon. He arrived with his attorney, and I insisted upon knowing facts about Dwight Kelden.”

“Osman gave them?”

“Yes.” Weston brought some papers from the desk drawer. “He and the lawyer had been going through Rendrew's papers this morning. They brought to light certain matters which even Osman had not fully understood.”

Spreading the papers, Weston referred to them, tapping first one, then another. When he had roused Cardona's curiosity to a high pitch, he proceeded.

“Some years ago,” declared the commissioner, “Adam Rendrew had dealings with Kelden's father. Money was involved, and it wound up in Rendrew's hands, to the extent of one hundred thousand dollars.”

“You mean Rendrew pulled a swindle?”

“Exactly! Fortunately for him, Kelden's father died before he had a chance to begin a lawsuit. He could also have brought criminal charges against Rendrew.”

Weston pushed the papers across the desk.

“There's most of it,” he declared. “Documents which old Rendrew kept, even though they incriminated himself.”

“Why was he fool enough to keep them?”

“Rendrew was a rogue, not a fool. He was afraid that Dwight Kelden would learn enough to bring action against him. Rendrew probably wanted to show these documents to his lawyer, so the latter would know exactly what he was up against.”

Weston's analysis was a sound one. Among the papers were certain letters that Rendrew had written to the elder Kelden. How they had come into Rendrew's possession was a mystery, but they explained why Dwight could certainly not have known all the details of the swindle.

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“I have learned,” declared the commissioner, “that Dwight Kelden is quite wealthy. Still, he could have wanted more money, or revenge; perhaps both. He could easily have guessed that his case would be strengthened by evidence that only Rendrew held.”

“So he came East to get it!”

“Exactly!” nodded Weston. “And the only method was to threaten Rendrew into passing over the papers. That, in turn, meant the use of force, or a gun. Kelden chose the latter as the more effective measure. Meeting with resistance, he killed Rendrew.”

“Which means he took his revenge,” added Cardona. “He saw his chance, so he didn't wait. That explains everything, commissioner. All I've got to do”—Joe's tone was grim—“is find Dwight Kelden.”

WESTON gestured his hand toward the door. It was more than a token that the interview was ended. Weston was ordering Cardona to resume the hunt. Cardona turned toward the door, but before he reached there, Weston stopped him with the question:

“You heard about Cranston?”

Cardona shook his head.

“He cracked up that tiny plane of his,” informed the commissioner, “while he was trying a take-off from his front lawn, this morning. He was banged up a bit, but not seriously. He's dining with me this evening, but his physician has insisted that he start home at ten o'clock.”

Without knowing it, Commissioner Weston had announced a fact that was of prime importance. His statement told that The Shadow was ready to resume his investigation of the Rendrew murder, after learning, while dining with the police commissioner, just how much the law had covered during the interim.

Moreover, Weston had declared the exact time at which The Shadow's new campaign would start. That time would coincide with Cranston's departure from the Cobalt Club.

The Shadow's moves would begin at ten o'clock tonight.

CHAPTER IX. THE SHADOW'S CLUES

THE mansion clock was striking ten. Seated at the typewriter desk in Osman's office, Helene Graymond shuddered. Those chimes, the strokes that followed them, reminded her too much of death as delivered to Adam Rendrew.

Helene was sorry that she had agreed to remain in the mansion; but it was too late to change her decision. The more readily she accepted suggestions, the less would people question her. So far, Helene had given honest replies to every quiz; but there were certain questions that she would certainly dread, if ever they were put.

Thus Helene, by her pretended willingness to be helpful, was alone in the house, except for Froy. She was typing long lists of assets belonging to the Rendrew estate, a task which Osman had said was highly important and should be done as early as possible.

Osman had taken a huge batch of papers over to his attorney's apartment. Archie and Louise, not at all disturbed by their uncle's recent death, had gone their separate ways, seeking good times among friends.

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Detectives still guarded the house, watching from outside. There was nothing to fear, so long as they were around. But that did not lessen Helene's misery. She was nourishing worries that were fast becoming unbearable. From her desk, she could count the ticks of the big clock, until she realized that she could no longer stand the strain.

Hurrying upstairs to her room, Helene fought back the sobs that fairly pressed her tight-set lips. She locked the door and drew the window shades, letting her breath come in sharp, quick sighs.

She wanted to get into bed before she broke down and wept; but her eyes were already blurred with tears and her fingers were trembling increasingly, as she undressed. Silken garments were like lead, as they slipped from the girl's unsteady hands.

As she finished her struggling task, Helene's emotion gave away completely. She sank on the bed, buried her face in the pillows to drown the unrestrained sobs that quivered her slender body. Her weeping seemed beyond control, and she no longer cared. Perhaps that was why the convulsive sobs gradually lessened.

At last, Helene lifted her head from the tear-drenched pillows, dried her eyes with her fingertips, and gave a profound sigh.

The cry had helped her, bringing more relief than she had expected. Though she was undressed, Helene no longer wanted to go to bed; still, she wasn't equal to putting on all her clothes again and going back to work in the office.

Finally striking upon a compromise, Helene attired herself in a nightie, a silk kimono, and a pair of comfortable slippers. Unlocking the door, she looked about for Froy; seeing no sign of the drab-faced servant, Helene went down to the office.

She was gathering papers, intending to take them up to her room, where she could work in comfort and seclusion, when she noticed curious darkness slid across the desk. Against the woodwork, Helene saw the outline of a hawkish silhouette. Turning, with a gasp, she looked into the eyes of a weird visitor.

All that Helene saw were eyes—and blackness. The stranger was cloaked: a slouch hat hid his face, but the down-turned brim could not conceal the burn of those all-searching eyes. Recollections flashed to Helene's mind; despite her bewilderment, she exclaimed.

“You are The Shadow!”

A whispered laugh acknowledged the identity. Drawing a chair beside the desk, The Shadow sat down. Silently, he waited for Helene to calm down.

THE kimono-clad girl was very beautiful, yet quite unconscious of the fact. While preparing for bed, she had let down her hair, and it formed a billow of brown loveliness as it streamed across her shoulders. Raising a hand that no longer trembled, Helene brushed stray locks from in front of her eyes and smiled her wonderment.

The Shadow had demonstrated the ability that Markham had described. Somehow, the cloaked visitor had passed the outside detectives and had entered by the side door, which was locked to-night, with its key in the possession of Louise Dreller. Helene was further awed when The Shadow spoke:

“Tell me all you know regarding Dwight Kelden.”

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It was a command, not a question. Helene's lips tightened.

“I must ask a question first,” the girl asserted, firmly. “Tell me: do you believe that Dwight murdered Adam Rendrew?”

“No more than you believe it!”

The Shadow's prompt response won Helene's confidence completely. It seemed, amazingly enough, to summarize her fears along with her doubts.

Though she had tried to convince herself that Dwight was innocent of crime, Helene had been overwhelmed at times by the magnitude of the evidence against the man she loved. Torn by conflicting thoughts, Helene had longed to meet someone in whom she could safely confide; someone who would thoroughly understand.

By his cryptic words, The Shadow had shown absolute recognition of Helene's deepest qualms. He had expressed her own thoughts for her. Earnestly, the girl began to pour out her story.

Ever since Dwight's visit East, a year ago, she had corresponded with him. He had proposed marriage to Helene, and she had accepted. In his last letter, which she had received only a few days ago, Dwight had promised to come East very soon.

Those letters, of course, had been mailed to Helene's apartment. Dwight's letter to Louise had arrived here at the house, but it hadn't troubled Helene because she knew that Dwight occasionally corresponded with his cousin.

“Dwight didn't want Louise to know that he was coming East,” concluded Helene. “That's why he wrote her that he was going to Mexico. She might have learned, somehow, that he was no longer in San Diego.”

“You have the letters that Dwight wrote to you.”

“Yes,” nodded Helene, rising. “I can get them—”

The Shadow had also risen; he was moving toward the door.

“I shall be in the study,” he announced. “Bring the letters there. Do not worry about Froy. He is asleep.”

On the way upstairs, Helene realized that The Shadow must be familiar with the entire house, for Froy's room was on the third floor. She didn't realize that The Shadow had read all of Inspector Cardona's reports and had seen a floor plan of the mansion.

The girl brought the letters to the study, Dwight's photo with them. After viewing the picture, The Shadow asked for Dwight's latest letter, and Helene found it for him.

Taking the other letters back to her bedroom, Helene returned to find The Shadow viewing the exact spot where the dead body of Adam Rendrew had been found.

He turned toward the bookcase, noted that it was set against a thick wall, between the windows. As he turned again, his finger traced an imaginary line, and finally pointed toward the floor lamp near the door to the hall. He told Helene to turn the switch. She obeyed, and gasped when the light came on.

“That bulb was burned out last night!”

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“So I have been told,” returned The Shadow. “I am glad that you also noted the fact.”

“I can't imagine who replaced it with a new one—”

HELENE halted her earnest statement, very abruptly. Again in the center of the room, The Shadow was moving his hand upward, as if measuring a man's height.

He pointed to bookshelf, where volumes formed a tight-packed row. He pushed his finger forcibly between two books in the center, then pulled his hand away, letting the books press together.

Helene heard hidden lips utter a whispered laugh, a strange, uncanny tone that somehow added to her confidence, though it brought a slight chill that tingled her from head to foot.

She saw The Shadow remove some books from the shelf, watched him probe the space with a tiny flashlight, its beam no larger than a dime. Then the books were back in place again and The Shadow was running his finger along the titles.

He spoke in half sentences, that he let Helene complete.

“These books are arranged alphabetically,” said The Shadow, “therefore, I take it that they have been listed—”

“Several times,” supplied Helene. “I have a copy of the latest list in my desk.”

“Adam Rendrew was proud of this collection—”

“Very! Especially the bindings.”

“He occasionally bought better copies to replace poor ones—”

“Yes.”

“And the duplicates that he discarded—”

“Are in the attic, except for some that he sold.”

They went down to Osman's office, where Helene produced the book list. Duplicate volumes were noted on a separate sheet, and the girl supposed that The Shadow, whatever his interest in the books, would propose a trip to the attic.

Instead, he shifted to another subject. He asked about the desk calendar that Cardona had found in Rendrew's Study.

“Mr. Rendrew always kept one,” explained Helene. “He used those calendars somewhat like a diary.”

“And the old ones—”

Helene found them. They were buried deep in a corner closet beyond the office safe. The Shadow stood beside her, while she knelt and dug for the calendars.

When she found the one of the previous year, The Shadow took it from her grasp. Helene saw him flutter the

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pages with his thumb. Pausing after the second riff, he declared:

“Your first meeting with Dwight Kelden was on the twentieth of March, last year.”

“Why, yes!” exclaimed Helene. “How did you know?”

The answer struck her suddenly. The Shadow must have found some evidence of Dwight's brief visit to his uncle Adam the year before. That time, of course, had been the occasion of Helene's first meeting with the nephew from California.

Returning the calendar, The Shadow told Helene to replace it with the others. That done, he announced that he intended to visit the cellar, not the attic. As it was getting late, he suggested that the girl listen from the kitchen and inform him if anyone arrived home.

Helene heard scraping sounds from the cellar while The Shadow was down there. They were quite muffled and came from somewhere near the front, well beyond the cardroom. When he had come back, by way of Archie's so-called den, The Shadow seemed quite satisfied with his inspection of the cellar.

Then came his most surprising statement.

“One of your bedroom windows opens on the little courtyard,” he told Helene. “I want you to watch from there. Should you hear Froy move about, or should anyone return, tap the window and hurry into bed. Otherwise, wait until you see three blinks—red, green, and white—of my flashlight. After that, you need watch no longer.”

WITH Helene on her way upstairs, The Shadow went out by the side door. From her window, the girl saw the tiny flashlight cross the courtyard, throwing a steady beam, though occasionally the folds of a black cloak muffled it.

Knowing that Louise might return and look in to see if she happened to be awake, Helene discarded slippers and kimono, to be ready for a quick trip into bed. She had left the door slightly ajar, so that she would surely hear anyone who entered.

The Shadow's light was probing below the wall of the house next door. For several minutes Helene couldn't guess his purpose, until she realized that he was directly opposite the window that faced the door of Rendrew's study.

The Shadow was looking for the bullet that had broken the window as a result of the wild, superfluous shot that had been fired after Rendrew's death!

Such search did not explain why The Shadow wanted the bullet in question. At first, Helene felt that the hunt would prove a hopeless one; but as she watched, she decided otherwise. The bullet must have dropped after it struck the wall; the area where The Shadow was looking for it could not be very large.

Ten minutes had passed, when Helene heard a sound from the floor below; then footsteps on the side stairs. She reached to tap the window; at that instant, the flashlight licked up against the wall and delivered three short blinks—red, green, and white. The Shadow's search was ended, making Helene's signal unnecessary.

Quickly, the girl reached the door and closed it. Scampering to the bed, she was under the covers, except for her head and shoulders, when the door opened. Louise stood there and softly spoke Helene's name. Receiving no response, the blonde entered and approached the bed.

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By the light from the hallway, Louise observed that Helene was wearing only her nightie and therefore assumed that she was asleep. Eyes tight shut, Helene heard Louise tiptoe out into the hallway and close the door behind her.

Then Helene Graymond was staring at the darkened ceiling. Wide awake, she was wondering about Dwight Kelden and what this evening's events might mean to him. She felt more hopeful regarding Dwight's innocence; still, she wasn't sure.

As sleep finally came upon her, Helene was convinced that one person, alone, could solve the riddle of recent crime.

That person was her new friend, The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. CRIME'S NEW ANGLES

ALL the next morning, Helene Graymond tried to assure herself that she had helped The Shadow; but she didn't manage to convince herself. Just what value The Shadow could have found from his clues, was something very speculative, in Helene's opinion.

The law, she learned from John Osman, had welded a new link against Dwight. The chain now had three, Rendrew's torn calendar, the eyeglass wiper, and an airplane schedule from the cab that had carried the murderer along in his flight.

The Shadow's clues were a last-year's calendar, a pair of books that he had noted on the list, and a mashed bullet. He had taken neither the calendar nor the books, and Helene could not even be sure that he had found the bullet. So far as the girl knew, The Shadow's clues, if they had any value at all, might clinch the case against Dwight Kelden, instead of helping him.

Of all factors, the most encouraging was Helene's absolute confidence in The Shadow's ability to gain results. She was sure that he had waged that gun battle on the roof near her apartment. Moreover, The Shadow had learned one fact that no one else had even guessed at; namely, that Helene was in love with Dwight.

With all his questions, Joe Cardona had not found that out. Nor had John Osman, in whose office Helene worked every day. Archie Dreller, with all his shrewdness had not guessed the truth; nor had his sister Louise, who fancied herself so clever. As for Froy, Helene was sure that the soft-footed servant shared the same ignorance.

Yet The Shadow, in his first meeting with Helene, had struck upon the very point that the girl had so successfully concealed from everyone else!

There was a simple answer to that riddle. The Shadow knew that Dwight had tried to signal Helene from the hotel room. His interpretation of Dwight's presence was therefore at variance with the theory that the suspected murderer had wanted to kidnap the star witness.

Obviously, Dwight wanted to reach Helene, but hadn't risked a phone call; which meant that he was afraid the girl had been unable to cover some secret which they had in common.

From that, The Shadow had readily conjectured the existence of a romance, and had foreseen that Helene would be only too glad to aid anyone who might hold an impartial attitude toward Dwight.

Unfortunately, Helene had placed herself where it would be difficult for Dwight again to seek her. She

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couldn't leave the Rendrew mansion for the present, and Dwight would certainly think a long while before making a phone call there, let alone a visit.

Like the law, The Shadow would have to hunt blindly for Dwight, if he wanted him; but there, the similarity ended.

It happened that The Shadow was no longer anxious to find Dwight Kelden!

That news would have astonished Helene, had she heard it; but, again, it was a riddle with a simple answer. The Shadow intended to crack the case from another angle. If that succeeded, Dwight would appear upon the scene of his own volition.

Other persons had figured in the affairs of Adam Rendrew and the dead man's relatives. With all suspicion centered upon Dwight, and the fact proclaimed by the newspapers, those parties would soon behave less warily. The Shadow was depending upon their moves to start new progress.

THE soundness of The Shadow's policy was proven early in the afternoon, when The Shadow lunched with Commissioner Weston. Gladdened when he learned that his friend Cranston was suffering from his accident no more than he had the previous night when they dined together, Weston was chatting about airplanes, instead of crime, when Inspector Cardona dropped into the grillroom.

With him, Cardona brought the bullet that had been taken from Andrew's body and commented upon its importance.

"It's from a .38 revolver," stated Joe, "and if we ever find the gun that fired it, there won't be any trouble identifying it. The slug stayed in good condition, even if Rendrew didn't."

Weston examined the bullet, passed it to Cranston, whose lips showed a slight smile as he weighed the pellet in his hand. Then, before Weston could ask if progress had been made in the search for Dwight, Cardona popped some news that he hoped would divert the commissioner from the touchy subject.

"Remember that fellow Rahman Singh?" asked Cardona. "He's in again! I talked to a lot of his old customers and told them to keep me posted. Well, he's been calling them up, only they don't know from where."

"We are positive," declared Weston, "that Rahman Singh did not murder Adam Rendrew. Therefore, he is unimportant."

"He may be more important than we think," persisted Cardona. "That Hindu might have an idea where Kelden is hiding out. He won't get it from that crystal of his, but he may remember a lot of things, if we question him right. I'd like to find him."

As Cardona hoped, Weston became enthusiastic over the possibility that the Hindu might be a lead to Dwight. He nodded approvingly, then questioned:

"Has the Dreller girl heard from Rahman Singh?"

"Not yet," replied Cardona. "But I bet she will, before very long. I've been telling his other customers to say that we aren't going to bother him. He's called some of them a second time, so he certainly has my message."

"He's been using them as feelers"—Cardona, was emphatic—"and when he thinks he's safe, he'll call the Dreller dame. Maybe he just wants to start his fortune-telling racket again, but there's a chance that he's got

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something up the sleeve of his turban.”

“His turban,” corrected Weston, “is the object that he wears upon his head. You mean the sleeve of his tunic, inspector.”

Cardona gave a sheepish grin. He knew what a turban was, all right, but Weston always liked a chance to correct somebody, so Cardona had given him one. Such digressions carried the conversation further from the subject that Cardona was trying to avoid: the futile hunt for Dwight Kelden.

After lunch, while Cardona and Weston were still talking, The Shadow excused himself and telephoned the Rendrew house. Froy answered; using Cranston's tone, The Shadow asked for Louise Dreller.

He introduced himself across the wire, and Louise gushed enthusiastically when she learned that she was talking to the millionaire globe-trotter, Lamont Cranston, who had been to India, Tibet, and all other hotbeds of Oriental mysticism.

“I have received an astral call,” came Cranston's serious tone, “from the presiding yogi in the Temple of Allahabad. His message is for Rahman Singh.”

“I understand!” exclaimed Louise. “But I don't know where Rahman Singh is.”

“Your mind and his are in harmony. You will hear from him. When you do—”

“Yes? Yes?”

“Inform Rahman Singh that he must communicate with me at once, or the yogi's message will never reach him!”

LOUISE stayed in the house the rest of the afternoon, hoping to hear from Rahman Singh. At half past five, just as Archie came in the front door, the telephone bell rang. Louise pounced for it; stopping on the stairs, Archie heard her exclaim:

“Rahman Singh! It's you, at last!” Archie listened closely to Louise's end of the conversation. While she was hanging up the receiver, he hurried out the front door. He called Silk Elredge from the nearest pay station, but required several attempts, at brief intervals, before Silk finally answered.

“The Hindu called Louise,” said Archie. “She gave him some dizzy message... Who from? From Lamont Cranston... You've heard of him, haven't you?”

Smoothly, Silk asked for details. Archie gave them.

“It sounds goofy,” he admitted, “but it's the sort of bunk that Louise falls for... Maybe you're right; it might be Cranston's way of getting hold of Rahman Singh... Sure, Silk! I'll keep you posted, if Louise gets any other calls...”

In his office, Silk Elredge sat drumming the desk, his eyes registering a shrewd flicker, his straight lip set tight. Suddenly he nodded to himself, arose and strode over to the door. As he pulled the barrier inward, Silk stepped back.

The passage was blocked by a stranger who was stepping toward the door, his hand lifted, as if to rap against it. Before Silk could halt him, the man strode across the threshold and closed the door behind him. Silk heard

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an oily greeting, given with a peculiar accent:

“You are Mr. Elredge?”

Silk nodded. His narrowed eyes were staring at a darkish bearded face, that he could identify with one man only: Rahman Singh. He thought at that moment that the Hindu must have been outside the Rendrew house when Archie left it; then Silk realized that Rahman Singh could not have picked up the trail that soon.

By his own testimony, Archie had left while Louise was still talking to the Hindu. There had been an interval after that, but even if Rahman Singh had come along and spotted Archie calling from the drugstore, that wouldn't explain the Hindu's presence here. Silk had been talking to Archie only five minutes ago!

Silk was deciding that the stranger couldn't be the Hindu mentioned by Archie, when the bearded man announced:

“My name is Rahman Singh.”

For a moment, Silk Dredge was inclined to credit the wonder of the Orient whereby mystics could transport themselves from one location to another; but that mood did not grip him very long. Silk figured that there would be a more sensible explanation, and he knew the way to get it.

Gesturing Rahman Singh to a chair, Silk sat down behind his desk and reached for the telephone, while he purred:

“I was just about to make an important call. You'll pardon me, Mr. Singh—”

“One moment!”

The harshness of the Hindu's interruption caused the telephone to drop from Silk's hand. Looking across the desk, the proprietor of the Club Cadiz promptly wheeled his chair back and let his hands come to shoulder level.

Rahman Singh, the trickster, wasn't the sort who could be tricked. From beneath his overcoat he had produced an oversized revolver, that shone like the gold teeth which the Hindu's leering lips displayed.

“I would prefer it, Mr. Elredge,” chuckled Rahman Singh, “if we settled our business before you made the call!”

CHAPTER XI. CARDS ON THE TABLE

RAHMAN SINGH had looked into the future without the aid of a crystal ball. He had guessed why Silk Elredge was reaching for the telephone: to slip a signal to certain mobbies who served him. Silk made those calls craftily, when he wanted to be rid of troublesome visitors.

It seemed that Rahman Singh had either learned, or guessed, a great deal about Silk's methods. With his gun drawn, the Hindu seemed quite confident. In fact, he stretched his dark hand to the corner of the desk and laid the weapon there.

Silk's arms came down, then folded across his chest. The revolver was just close enough for Rahman Singh's use, should the visitor need it; just too far away, in case Silk made a grab for it. Letting his smile fade, Rahman Singh remarked soberly:

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“The gun is on the table. Why not lay our cards there, too?”

“It suits me,” decided Silk. “Let's have your showdown first. What's your right name, Hindu?”

“Rahman Singh,” replied the bearded man, coolly. “I am not the only bona fide Hindu in New York. As for these”—he gave a sweeping tug at his black whiskers—“look!”

The beard struck Silk as genuine, after that demonstration. As for his visitor's nationality, Silk was remembering that New York had plenty of Chinese and others of Oriental origin, who talked plain English and behaved according to American custom.

It wasn't odd that Rahman Singh should wear a turban and pose as a mystic, since many Orientals who ran curio shops garbed themselves in robes of their native land.

At present, Rahman Singh wasn't decked up for his act. He was wearing a well-cut business suit, topped by a stylish overcoat, and his headgear was a dark felt hat.

“Suppose that we discuss our affairs,” suggested Rahman Singh, “only so far as the law is apt to interfere with them.”

“That's Jake,” agreed Silk. “You're on the lam, and I'm not. So let's hear your troubles.”

“They are already known. Yours may be yet to come.”

“Yeah? What's the gag?”

Rahman Singh stroked his beard; finally he gave a slow-worded reply to Silk's question.

“According to a young lady named Louise Dreller,” he announced, “her brother Archie has lost heavily in your gambling establishment. So heavily that he was forced to make very special arrangements in order to square himself.”

“What sort of arrangements.”

“Miss Dreller did not know. But I suspect”—long brown fingers were plucking the black beard—“that they involved blackmail, with Adam Rendrew as the man who was supposed to pay.”

Silk shifted forward. Rahman Singh clutched the gun. With a shrug, Silk settled back and demanded:

“How would anyone have shaken down old Rendrew?”

“Very simply,” returned Rahman Singh, in a cold, steady tone—“by threatening to impart certain information to his nephew, Dwight Kelden; facts regarding a swindle that Rendrew once managed.”

THE statement had a powerful effect upon Silk. So far, the inside information had not reached the newspapers. It was obvious, therefore, that Rahman Singh had gleaned facts from Louise; and that led to other conclusions.

“Forget that heater,” suggested Silk, referring to the gun. “I might as well come out with it. That boob Dreller talked too much to his dizzy sister. I'm lucky that they've both kept their faces buttoned while the cops are around.

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“Anyway, Rendrew got croaked before the deal ever went through, so they can't hand me a rap on that. They've pinned the murder on Kelden, which makes me safe there, too. You've got it right, Singh. Archie owes me dough.”

The Hindu did not inquire as to the amount, so Silk decided to state it.

“Close to three grand,” said Silk. “I thought old Rendrew would be good for it, until Archie swore he'd never come through. To square himself with me, Archie gave me the lowdown on the Kelden matter. He said the old man would turn baby, if anybody threatened to give that out.

“I told Archie to take a cruise so that while he was away, I could walk in on the old gent. I told Archie I'd make his uncle settle for ten grand, and go fifty–fifty on the deal. But I was going after twenty. It looked worth it.”

Silk paused, gave a snap of his fingers to indicate the sudden vanish of fifteen thousand dollars.

“Kelden rubbed out Rendrew,” he said, “and that was that. But why should I worry? Archie is due for an income, and I'll get my dough—the three grand—in time payments. I've got Archie's markers right here, if you want to see them.”

Rahman Singh hefted the revolver as Silk was reaching toward a desk drawer. The gambler shrugged, and decided that the Hindu was taking his word for it that the I O U's were there.

“Your position,” spoke Rahman Singh, “is better than mine. Louise Dreller also has an income and will spend much of it with me, provided that I can again resume my business. However, that appears impossible.”

“How come?” asked Silk.

“Today, I called Miss Dreller,” declared the Hindu. “She said that a gentleman named Lamont Cranston wished to see me. I happen to know that Cranston is a very good friend of the police commissioner. Therefore, it may mean a trap!”

Silk was suddenly interested. He leaned his folded arms upon the desk.

“Knowing that you might sympathize with my predicament,” resumed Rahman Singh, “I came here feeling that our mutual knowledge of certain facts would make us lasting friends—”

“Cut the boloney,” interrupted Silk. “Archie told me about Cranston calling Louise. Listen, Singh, you're in a racket, the same as I am. I didn't croak Rendrew, but there's a guy I'm going to get. I'll let you in on it, because I can use you.”

Rahman Singh looked troubled at the suggestion of murder, but Silk merely smiled. He wasn't mystified any longer by the Hindu's visit here; the fellow had simply started his trip as soon as he had finished his call to Louise. A crook himself, Silk was confident that he could spot any of his own breed, and Rahman Singh had the proper earmarks.

“The guy I'm after,” announced Silk, “is Lamont Cranston. That ought to interest you, Rahman Singh.”

“It does. But not enough for murder—”

“No?” Silk spoke the word with a long drawl. “Suppose I told you that Lamont Cranston was The Shadow.”

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A SHARP gleam flashed to the Hindu's eye, seemingly flickered there between amazement and belief. Silk beckoned around the desk; Rahman Singh arose, bringing his gun. He saw Silk point to the light bulb under the desk edge.

“That hooks with the phone booths outside,” explained Silk. “They're tapped, and whenever anybody makes a call this light comes on. I rigged it, in case any big losers got sore upstairs and tried to call the cops while on the way out.

“This guy Cranston has been around here, but I wasn't very leery of him until night before last. I'd seen him out there at a table; when the light came on, I figured he was making a phone call. I listened in, but the guy I heard was The Shadow!”

Rahman Singh sucked in his breath with a long, deep hiss, then asked with a gasp:

“You're sure?”

“Sure as shooting!” chuckled Silk. “Because there was some shooting pretty soon after that. The Shadow was going up to the Hotel Northley. I chased a mob there ahead of him. He got out of that mess, though, because he was in the open.”

Leaning back in his chair, Silk reached to the desk drawer; this time, Rahman Singh did not deter him. Silk drew out some slips of paper, spread them on the desk. Each was an I O U signed by Archie Dreler.

“The Shadow probably saw these,” said Silk. “He knows too much, that guy. But he hasn't seen this”—the gambler produced a key—“because I only put it there a half hour ago.”

“What is it for?” inquired Rahman Singh.

“It's the key to an old hide-out,” explained Silk, “where I'm going to trap The Shadow. I know he's Cranston all right, because Cranston was gone after The Shadow made that call. But you're the only guy I've told.”

“I've got another mob. Like the old outfit, they went to get The Shadow. There's no use telling them he's Cranston, until they've grabbed him. Guns aren't the way to trap The Shadow. I've thought of a couple of guys who might be in that hide-out, ready to fox him; but you're the best bet yet!”

The eyes of Rahman Singh displayed a far-away gleam, as though the Hindu had caught a complete view of some future scene. The black beard wagged when Silk's visitor nodded.

“An excellent idea!” he approved. “Much better that I should be there, expecting a friendly visit from Mr. Cranston, than to have some person whose very name would rouse suspicion.”

“That's it,” agreed Silk. “I'd thought of steering The Shadow there to look for Kelden. Only, that wouldn't work. The Shadow probably thinks that Kelden ran that mob two nights ago. He'd be looking for another battle.”

“If I called Cranston—”

“He'd suspect nothing. He's asked you to call him. Invite him to the joint. He'll come there.”

“Yes, he will come alone”—Rahman Singh's eyes still had their distant gaze—“for the first visit. It will be”—again gold teeth gleamed from leering lips—“Cranston's only visit!”

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Silk Elredge placed the key in the Hindu's brownish palm. He scribbled an address on a slip of paper and added it to the key. Stepping from his desk, he opened the door that swung with the filing cabinet.

“Use this way going out,” suggested Silk. “Go over to the joint and rig it up any way you want. If you need dough—”

“I have money,” interrupted the Hindu. “Yes, the place must be presentable. Something like my former establishment.”

“There's two doors to the hide-out. The mob can move in whenever you say. I won't tell them it's The Shadow, or anybody else, until after they've pulled the snatch.”

Rahman Singh thrust out his hand, Silk gripped it. He could guess, from the Hindu's gleaming smile, that a cunning brain was already at work; one skilled in devising tricky stunts that could deceive the smartest minds. Silk already had some ideas of his own, but decided to withhold them.

“Frame it by tomorrow night,” said Silk, “and slip me the lowdown as soon as you're ready.”

With Rahman Singh gone through the secret exit, Silk Elredge returned to his desk and chuckled. Yes, he and his new crony had laid their cards on the table; and they both stood winners.

The only loser from that showdown would be The Shadow!

CHAPTER XII. SILK GETS THE DOPE

SEATED at his desk in headquarters, Inspector Joe Cardona wore an expression as gloomy as the sky outside his window. Considering that the day was overclouded and that dusk had already settled, Cardona's face was just about as glum as it possible could be.

Lights were already twinkling from Manhattan's hazy background. Noting them, Cardona wished that he could see a glimmer in the personal fog that surrounded him. About all that he was getting was sympathy from Detective Sergeant Markham, who reminded Joe of a patient St. Bernard bringing a bottle—empty!

Anyway, he could talk to Markham; that was a bit of comfort. Cardona wanted to talk on a subject that he could handle thoroughly, when occasion demanded. Cardona's theme concerned Police Commissioner Weston.

“He's gone bullheaded again,” gruffed the inspector, “like he always does when things don't go the way he wants. Tells you to go right ahead, your own way, then all of a sudden he yanks you on the carpet and yells like blazes because you haven't gotten what he calls results. What a guy!”

“Who?” asked Markham.

“The commissioner!” stormed Cardona. “Do you think I've been talking about the superintendent of the zoo? Sorry, Markham”—Joe was mixing sarcasm with his apology—“I couldn't blame you if you made that mistake. We might as well be monkeys and hyenas while Weston is in charge of us.”

From his desk, Cardona brought Louise's photograph of Dwight Kelden, made a move to chuck it in the waste-basket, then returned it to the drawer.

“The trouble with Kelden,” snapped Cardona, “is that hat of his. Ever since we sent out those 'wanted'

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notices, the whole force has been looking for a cowboy. Instead, the guy's got curly hair. That's something nobody thought to tell me, until today.”

“That ought to help,” put in Markham. “Maybe you'll find him quick.”

“Just what I said to the commissioner. His idea of 'quick' sounded like ten minutes. He finally made it ten hours, which gives me until midnight.”

Pacing the little office, Cardona finally reached for his hat. He grumbled as he studied the murky sky, then said philosophically:

“I might as well get used to bum weather. From the way the commissioner talked, I'll be pounding a beat tomorrow. It wasn't reasonable, the way he busted loose. I guess he's getting tired of lamb chops.

“Maybe he wouldn't have acted up, if Cranston hadn't gone out to make that phone call of his. I should have taken my cue and ducked out then. Then I wouldn't have been alone with Weston.”

A jangle interrupted further comments. Cardona told Markham to answer the telephone and started out the door. He hadn't gone ten yards down the corridor, before he heard Markham bawling after him. When Joe returned, the detective sergeant gulped:

“It's The Shadow!”

Cardona didn't believe it at first; but as he listened, he became convinced. Those whispered words were inimitable, and as usual, they were promising the unexpected. Though the voice did not mention the name of Dwight Kelden, it stated that the Rendrew case would be cracked before midnight, provided Cardona co-operated.

Since The Shadow's time limit coincided with Weston's ultimatum, Cardona gruffed that he would agree to anything.

“Remain in your office,” was The Shadow's final whisper, “until you receive later word.”

A trailing laugh followed, ending abruptly with the click of the receiver. Cardona stood holding a dead telephone, staring as if he still heard distant echoes of that eerie mirth.

ELSEWHERE, the laugh lasted longer. It reached completion in the black-walled sanctum—The Shadow's own headquarters. Beneath a bluish light, gloved hands were at work—a curious sight, below that glow. Usually, The Shadow's hands were ungloved while he attended to such details.

Two books were lying on the table; also an automatic. Stepping away from the light, The Shadow carried those objects with him. There was silence; then the sudden report of the gun.

The sound was a roar amid those curtained walls; its echoes still reverberated when The Shadow swung back to the table and began to wrap the books in a package. To them, he added a small box padded like an egg crate. It contained a darkish electric-light bulb.

Next came a coil of wire, tipped by a device that looked something like a vest-pocket camera. Just before he closed the package, The Shadow slipped a sealed envelope inside it. The bundle went beneath his cloak; then, reaching across the table, The Shadow picked up a tiny object, which he decided to retain separately.

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The object was a bullet, flattened at the head but unmashed at the base. It was distinguishable as a revolver bullet of .32 caliber. The Shadow was inserting the metal slug into a tiny pocket of his cloak, when he reached his other hand for the light switch.

The bluish glow extinguished, the sanctum throbbed with the quiver of a departing laugh; then silence joined pitch–darkness.

Night had actually settled, when a taxicab wheeled from an avenue and swung to a stop at a corner near the Rendrew house. Helene Graymond came from a drugstore, carrying some bundles. She stopped at a mail box to post a batch of letters: That brought her almost beside the cab.

The Shadow's shape had emerged from the half–opened cab door, but no one farther away than Helene could have seen the cloaked figure against the cab's darkened interior. In fact, Helene could not distinguish the outline of the form beside her.

But she felt the light clutch of expected fingers upon her arm; heard low–whispered instructions, to which she gave an understanding nod.

A moving hand added another bundle to those that Helene carried. The cloaked form merged with the gloom inside the cab. The vehicle was twinkling its taillight, a block distant, while Helene was still walking toward the house.

When Froy opened the front door in answer to her ring, Helene went upstairs to her room. She left some of the packages on a table near the stairs, but took the rest with her. Among those that she retained was the package that she had received from The Shadow.

There had been nothing suspicious about Helene's trip. By this time, it was deemed safe for her to leave the mansion, and detectives were no longer guarding the portals. It would have been a mistake, though, for her to have stayed away too long. Helene had simply gone to mail some letters for Osman and to make a few purchases at the drugstore.

In her bedroom, Helene opened the package. She read the note that came with it; it gave brief instructions regarding the items in the package. With them, Helene was to place another object, the old calendar, that was in the office closet.

All the exhibits were to remain in her room, until The Shadow came for them; unless, because of some emergency, it would be necessary for Helene to place them at spots about the house, where they were eventually to be found. In that case, Helene would be informed by a telephone call; otherwise, The Shadow would attend to the needed details.

In the message, Helene also noted a number that she could call in case of trouble. The note told her to remember it, and it was well that she did, for the writing soon began to fade from The Shadow's message.

All that was quite mysterious, much more so than the telephone call that Helene had received an hour ago, telling her when to be at the drugstore.

ABOUT the time when Helene was returning downstairs, Silk Elredge left his office at the Club Cadiz, bound on a visit to Rahman Singh, from whom he had heard occasionally during the day.

The Hindu was at the hide–out, and from his chortles across the telephone, he had evidently cooked up some cute scheme to waylay Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow.

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Silk was going to “look over the lay,” as he termed it, and realizing that he might be under observation from The Shadow, he adopted precautions to keep a derby hat down over his forehead and went out by the special route.

Sneaking through an alleyway behind the Club Cadiz, he entered a parked coupe. As he drove past the next corner, Silk blinked the lights, received a response from a parked sedan. The other car followed Silk while he took a roundabout course. Finally, when he pulled into a side street, the sedan rolled past and blinked another signal.

That car contained Silk's cover-up crew. They were telling him that he hadn't been followed, and they were now on their way to line up the rest of the mob. After that, they would post themselves at a given spot near the hide-out where Silk was to meet with Rahman Singh.

Reaching a shabby block, Silk parked the coupe and entered a dingy house. Up a flight of uncarpeted stairs, he followed a short hallway to a stout door, where he rapped. Rahman Singh admitted him, and Silk looked around with approval.

The Hindu had made over a poorly furnished room into a place that had somewhat of an Oriental glamour. Draperies hung from the walls, and though they were cheap, they gave tone. There was a table in a corner, covered with a fancy cloth; surmounting it was a pedestal topped by the crystal ball that Rahman Singh used in the forecasts that he gave the gullible.

From another table, Rahman Singh brought a bottle of whiskey and poured himself a drink. Corking the bottle, he handed it to Silk and reached for another glass. Silk supplied himself with a drink, while Rahman Singh waited. When the Hindu lifted his glass Silk did the same, while Rahman Singh chuckled:

“Here's to The Shadow!”

Down went the drinks. Wiping his beard, Rahman Singh put both glasses with the bottle, then lifted a turban from the side table. He was wearing a tuxedo and the Oriental headgear made an excellent contrast, reminding Silk of pictures that he had seen showing Hindu rajahs on tour of America.

Silk, however, had something more important to talk about.

“The mob's outside,” he told Rahman Singh, “ready to get posted when I give the high sign. What about Cranston?”

“He is waiting at his club,” mouthed Rahman Singh. “I have talked to him by telephone, but have not yet told him where he is to come to meet me.”

“And after he gets here?”

“All will be well!”

Rahman Singh spoke with such assurance that Silk could no longer restrain his impatience.

“Let's have it,” he insisted. “How are you going to snag the guy? Give me the whole dope.”

“You have already witnessed my method,” smiled Rahman Singh. “I have shown you how I intend to handle Cranston. I am sure that you will agree that my scheme is quite as effective as it is simple.”

With that, Rahman Singh brought back the bottle. From the neck, he drew the cork, tapped it and announced:

“This is it!”

CHAPTER XIII. MEN IN THE DARK

SILK ELREDGE saw nothing unusual about the bottle cork, and said so. Rahman Singh held the cork close to the gambler's eyes and pressed the top of it. A tiny orifice opened in the bottom of the cork.

Opening a little box, Rahman Singh brought out a medicine dropper; from it, he let a colorless fluid enter the hollow cork. His finger eased away, the hole at the cork bottom closed.

“You will remember,” remarked Rahman Singh, “that after I poured myself a drink I corked the bottle before handing it to you.”

Silk nodded.

“We were both drinking from the same bottle,” stated the Hindu. “The glasses were fresh ones, therefore you could have suspected nothing. Nor could anyone else—”

“Cranston, for instance!” inserted Silk, with enthusiasm. “I get it, Rahman Singh. You've loaded the cork, and when you handed him the bottle, like you gave it to me, you'll press the top. The stuff will get into the whiskey!”

Rahman Singh smiled his approval of Silk's insight. He corked the bottle very carefully and set it on the proper table. Silk gave a reflective chuckle.

“A smart stunt!” he approved. “I remember that first phone call you gave me this afternoon, when you asked me what kind of liquor Cranston usually ordered at my joint. I told you whiskey.

“So you're going to hand his nibs a Mickey Finn. Say, that will make a cinch of it! How soon will the stuff hit him, and how much of a wallop has it got? We don't want The Shadow to make trouble after the mob snatches him.”

Rahman Singh calculated for a few moments. He studied the medicine dropper as he replaced it in the box.

“The stuff can't be tasted,” he said, at length. “It's better than most knock-out drops. You don't feel it for a while, but when it hits” —he smacked one fist against his other palm—“it comes like that!

“It puts a man out for ten minutes, maybe fifteen. But that will be long enough. I have these”—he opened a drawer beneath the table, to show coiled rope and strips of rawhide—“to use as bonds. They are strong enough to hold The Shadow.”

Silk nodded, then added a suggestion. “You'll need to gag him, too.”

Rahman Singh produced a big handkerchief; then, as an afterthought, he brought out a bag that looked like a hood, for it was large enough to go over a man's head.

“I use this when I perform my blind-fold tests,” declared Rahman Singh. “It will hold the gag tightly in place. Sometimes gags can be worked loose.”

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All preparations satisfactory, Silk was ready to leave. Rahman Singh halted him, with a wise suggestion:

“Wait until I have called Cranston. We must make sure that he can come tonight. Otherwise, we shall have to postpone our plans.”

Silk sat down, while Rahman Singh picked up the telephone that had long ago been provided for the hide-out. Soon, the Hindu's voice was speaking its oily tone across the wire. He was connected with the Cobalt Club and asking for Lamont Cranston.

Gold teeth gleamed from the black beard, as Rahman Singh listened to the response from the telephone receiver.

OUTSIDE, Silk's mobbies formed separate clusters at distant spots along the street. Some were roving about carrying messages to others who were lurking near the rear of the hide-out. One thug suddenly hissed to the others:

“There's Silk!”

They recognized the derby-hatted figure with the muffled overcoat, saw a hand go up and make shoulder gestures. They understood the simple signals, mumbled the good news among themselves while Silk's car was wheeling away.

“He means the guy is due to show up,” grafted one. “All we gotta do is lay down until he does.”

“Then slide up after him,” added another, “so we can snatch him and take him out by the back. The outfit there has got the car.”

“Yeah. Only we gotta allow time for that Hindu to spring something first.”

“Sure! Silk gave us the lowdown on that. Didn't you see him spread his fingers when he stuck his mitt up? That meant five minutes.”

The five minutes, of course, applied to the time that was to follow Cranston's arrival. It was at least a quarter hour before the lurking thugs saw a big limousine pull up in front of the squalid house.

They saw a passenger alight; he was dressed in evening clothes and moved in leisurely style. Had they been close enough, they would have discerned the features of Lamont Cranston. With a wave, The Shadow dismissed the limousine, then strolled toward the house steps.

Restless mobbies were beginning to think that the victim suspected a trap, when he suddenly snapped from his idleness. Swinging a cane with one gray-gloved hand, Cranston opened the house door and entered. The crooks began to clock the minutes as soon as he was gone from sight.

Five minutes passed. Mobsters emerged from hiding spots, crossed the street and massed through the door of the marked house. They left one man as lookout, then started to creep up the bare stairs.

Near the door they wanted, the snatch crew could hear the sound of voices; one, oily, almost apologetic, that of Rahman Singh. Replies were coming in a level tone that represented Cranston. There was a gurgle of liquid pouring into glasses.

The talk continued; gradually, Rahman Singh's voice predominated, for Cranston's was growing weaker.

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There came a sound, like the thump of a body on the floor. Crooks reached the stout door, waited eagerly for it to open.

Meanwhile, the lookout below was watching passing traffic. He saw a car wheel into the street, twist toward the nearer curb and halt there with a jolt. The huddled crook's pasty face contorted, as he gave a squint.

“Cripes!” he uttered. “A squad car!”

From another block came the start of a siren's whine, hastily cut off. Someone had begun to shrill the device too soon. The lookout saw a stocky man leap from the squad car and turn toward the door of the house.

He knew that swarthy face by sight.

It belonged to Inspector Joe Cardona!

THE police official saw the thug wriggle back into the doorway. Cardona's hand, already at his hip, came out with a Police Positive. He shouted for the thug to halt; getting no response, he riddled the doorway with bullets.

Other officers were at his heels, more cars were rolling into the street, when Cardona sprang into the house.

Upstairs, crooks were pounding Rahman Singh's door, bellowing for the Hindu to open it. They had heard the gunfire, and the lookout had arrived hoarsely announcing that the bulls had begun a raid.

Thinking themselves trapped, the crooks wheeled, ready to mow down opposing cops; but at that moment they were given another outlet.

Rahman Singh yanked his door inward. The mob saw the Hindu pointing to a trussed prisoner, whose head was covered with a cloth hood. While they were grabbing the victim, Rahman Singh crossed ahead of them; babbling in some unknown tongue, the Hindu tugged the rear door wide and pointed them out through the back of the hide-out.

Mobsters were gone, with their burden, when Cardona arrived at the head of his squad and covered Rahman Singh with the revolver that had fired the opening shots. The Hindu cowered helplessly in the corner; counting him an important prisoner, Cardona remained, while the officers dashed through.

From the rear stairs Joe heard a shout, as the cops saw that escaping thugs were carrying a human burden. Catching the significance, Cardona poked his gun hard against Rahman Singh's ribs and demanded:

“Who did they snatch? The Shadow?”

It wasn't guesswork on Cardona's part. He was here on a tip-off: the phone call that he had waited to receive. The Shadow's voice had come over the wire again, urging the police ace to invade this hide-out with a squad.

Rahman Singh merely leered. His darkened hand took hold of Cranston's gun, shifted it aside as Joe tugged the trigger. The revolver was empty, because of the barrage that Cardona had loosed below. Rahman Singh had seen that its chambers contained no slugs.

There was a rapid grapple between the slippery Hindu and the stocky inspector. It ended when Rahman Singh proved himself master of other Oriental arts than those of the Hindu mystics. The specialty which he revealed was jujitsu; with the skill of a Japanese wrestler, he sent Cardona on a whirling flight that bowled over the

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table holding the crystal and sent the big glass ball rolling along the floor.

Coming to hands and knees, Cardona shook the cobwebs from his swimming head. He saw Rahman Singh opening a closet door, peeling away his turban with one hand, snatching at something with the other. Reserves were clattering upward on the front stairs; Cardona still thought he had a chance to detain the tricky Hindu.

Rahman Singh saw Cardona come to his feet. He flung a mass of Oriental garments toward the inspector; as they were brushed away, he grabbed the crystal from the corner where it had rolled. At threat of a throwing gesture, Cardona ducked; when he looked again, Rahman Singh was peeling away his beard!

It was false, that beard, but so well fitted that it took a twisting tug to remove it. His hand across his mouth, Rahman Singh plucked out gold shells that gave his real teeth the appearance of false ones. Chucking the crystal just above Cardona's head, Rahman Singh caused Joe to duck again.

Thus did the Hindu keep Cardona from sighting his real face. His back was turned, he was clamping a hat on his head and sweeping a cloak across his shoulders. But he wasn't a Hindu—nor was he a crook!

Rahman Singh was The Shadow!

Bounding to the window sill, he yanked the top sash downward, thrust his long arms up through. His hands must have caught the hanging rung of a rope ladder, and gone one over the other in a rapid, timely climb. The cloaked figure seemed to lash itself into darkness with more than whippet speed.

Rahman Singh was gone again, this time forever. The Shadow had openly cast off the Hindu disguise, that Joe Cardona might recognize the truth and forget the futile search for a man who did not exist. There were other matters, more important, that should concern the law.

Cardona recognized that by the time his reserves arrived. Ignoring the opened window, the ace inspector started for the rear door of the hide-out, beckoning his men along a trail that actual crooks had taken!

CHAPTER XIV. FACTS FOR THE LAW

THE whole reason for The Shadow's dual part was plain to Joe Cardona by the time he and his men had reached the ground. The inspector knew that The Shadow had probed deeply into the Rendrew murder. He realized, too, that The Shadow must have foreseen crime at the old mansion, even though he had not prevented it.

To acquaint himself with affairs in the Rendrew household, The Shadow had adopted the guise of Rahman Singh as an effective mode of getting information from Louise Dreller, who became talkative when anyone played upon her gullibility.

The Shadow had gained the facts he wanted just prior to the fatal evening when Adam Rendrew had met death. No longer needing the guise of Rahman Singh, he had instigated a police raid so that there would be an excuse for the Hindu's disappearance.

No wonder The Shadow had been seen in back of Rahman Singh's!

Vanished from the seance room, he had cloaked himself in black. He had traveled farther than Cardona and the others thought, when they reached the rear courtyard. They would never have found Rahman Singh, for he no longer existed.

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Oddly, the police who had spotted The Shadow had actually been on the trail of the fugitive Rahman Singh.

Not they, but Cardona, had been duped; but Joe found solace in the fact that Clyde Burke had also been fooled. He would have appreciated it more, had he known that the reporter was one of The Shadow's agents. But there was something else that added more solace. The Shadow, too, had been at loss that night.

He hadn't expected the hue and cry that arrived upon his trail, because the murder at Rendrew's apparently wasn't listed on The Shadow's schedule. After the excitement, The Shadow found that his part of Rahman Singh had produced serious consequences, since the Hindu was wanted for more than running a fake seance: namely, for complicity in the Rendrew murder.

At last The Shadow had cleared Rahman Singh off the books, in satisfactory style. There was more to this present episode, however, than Joe Cardona reckoned. Before Joe began to think about the other angles, he was in the midst of them.

Crooks had reached their sedan and were shoving a bound figure aboard it. They were wheeling away amid a spattering fire from police guns. They weren't going far, though, for police cars closed in at the next corner, to block their path. Leaping from their own vehicle, the thugs scattered like rats for whatever cover they could find.

Cardona reached the abandoned car. To the accompaniment of shots that announced a skirmish between police and hoodlums, Cardona cut the bonds of the prisoner who lay in the sedan. Yanking the hood from the man's head, Joe tugged away the gag. He helped the man into the light, found himself staring at a face he recognized.

The released man was Silk Elredge! Crooks had snatched their own leader!

ALL that was beyond Cardona's ken. Only Silk could have related the facts which even his own crew did not know. Yet Silk was hazy on certain details, though he had begun to guess them.

As Rahman Singh, The Shadow had literally "given the dope" to Silk. He had worked the cork trick on the crook, just before revealing the details of the scheme. Silk had slumped in his chair, while The Shadow, as Rahman Singh, had been faking a phone call to himself, as Lamont Cranston!

After that, The Shadow had bound Silk and rendered him unrecognizable by the hood. Donning the overcoat and derby, he had gone out the front door, passing himself as Silk, giving a signal to the lurking mob and taking the gambler's own car.

Elsewhere, he had made a phone call to Cardona, then returned to the hide-out as Cranston, to draw the mob inside. Keeping them waiting outside the door, The Shadow had conducted a conversation between his two selves—Rahman Singh and Cranston—while again garbing himself in Hindu costume.

Naturally, the thugs, when finally admitted, had grabbed the prisoner pointed out by Rahman Singh. Therewith, The Shadow had placed them in an unlovely situation. Despite their mistake, the fact remained that they had staged a kidnapping. To clear them of that charge, Silk Elredge would have to admit that he had hired them for such work.

All that would force other statements, and Silk knew it as he faced Cardona. He would have to tell about the deal with Archie Dreller. If he talked himself out of that mess, he would be in for another.

The police were looking for the big-shot who had caused the battle up near Helene's apartment, and it

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wouldn't take them long to connect the affair with Silk Elredge. If they couldn't find the proper proof, The Shadow would somehow manage to provide it.

Guns were talking spasmodically. Thugs and police were keeping under cover while they fired. The crooks knew they were bottled up and were hoping for some break. The police, in turn, were content to hold their present advantage until they received new orders.

They expected such orders from Joe Cardona, but he was waiting for Silk to declare himself. There was something very funny about the whole business, and Cardona wanted to know what it was. Silk knew he had to talk, but couldn't find his usually glib-voice.

The crook knew that The Shadow was Lamont Cranston, but the value of that knowledge was gone. What if he did tell Joe Cardona? Maybe the inspector already knew it. The Shadow might be working closer with the law than Silk supposed.

No, that was one thing that Silk would never reveal, and he realized that The Shadow knew it. Crimedom held to the tradition that it wasn't healthy to talk about The Shadow, if he knew where to find you. In his present predicament, Silk could see that his future address would no longer be the Club Cadiz, but a cell in a State penitentiary.

Such quarters would be uncomfortable enough, without the prospect of a visit from The Shadow.

For Silk Elredge, his brain warped by the traditions of mobdom, firmly believed that The Shadow met crooks with their own methods, even to the ultimate degree of rubbing out a squealer. Coupling that with his opinion that The Shadow could travel anywhere, even to the barred confines of a great prison, Silk decided that it would never do to blab.

TENSE moments held Silk Elredge on the brink of a really momentous decision. For once in his life he was about to come clean, to confess all he knew and rely on the mercy of the law and the fair play of The Shadow.

In fact, The Shadow had already given Silk the very chance that the crook had started to consider. It was a test that would have helped him much more than he supposed, had Silk possessed any love of sincerity.

Silk, however, was a full-fledged rat, by nature as well as deed. Preferring crime to honesty, he suddenly took advantage of a chance at dirty work. Cardona was giving him an opportunity to recuperate from a state that seemed bewilderment. Silk recovered in a vicious fashion.

From his hip he yanked a gun that The Shadow had left on him. Swinging the weapon toward Cardona, Silk pulled the trigger. The gun didn't bark, because The Shadow had removed the bullets while Silk lay helpless. It was another bit of foresight—allowing the crook to bare his fangs, only to find he couldn't use them.

By rights, that move should have led to Silk's prompt suppression; but Cardona, too, was handling an unloaded gun. He produced it as a gesture; by that time, Silk was springing away, howling for his mobbies to rally. Their leader's daring brought them out from cover.

Guns ripped, as the crooks charged for the end of the street. Police bullets met them, but didn't stop the drive. Even though their ranks were thinning, the hoodlums had the advantage in numbers; once it came to a hand-to-hand fight, they could win.

Silk was behind them, for he had stopped to grab a gun that a sprawling thug had dropped, but his shouts—no longer smooth, but raspy—kept spurring on the charge.

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Dropping to the shelter behind the sedan, Joe Cardona had decided that it was time to reload. He had just filled his gun with cartridges, when he saw that mobsters were beyond control. Almost to the corner, they were forcing the officers to leave their cover, or be cut off from each other. Carnage was due, and Cardona thought that nothing could stop it.

Cardona was wrong. From a low roof near the corner came the challenge of a mocking laugh, a tone that pealed loudly above the rattle of guns. A mighty taunt, that no crook could fail to recognize; mirth that brought a responding shout from the lips of Silk Elredge. Like their leader, crooks wheeled.

They saw The Shadow. From his position, he was about to cut off their charge, exactly as they hoped to trap the outspread police. There was a difference, though; the thugs were many, The Shadow was only one. Moreover, he had flung the gauntlet that no crook could ignore. With The Shadow as a target, all others had to be forgotten.

Guns stabbed upward. The shots were hasty, but accurate, for the distance could be gauged. Bullets ripped the roof edge, yet The Shadow's laugh persisted. With it, he dispatched answering bullets that found human marks.

The edge of that roof was sheeted with galvanized iron, which was the reason why The Shadow had chosen it. The metal deflected the bullets that ripped through; other shots, that zipped above the roof rim, were too high. No longer was The Shadow a standing figure outlined against the dingy wall of yellow brick.

He had dropped to the roof level as the barrage began. The muzzles of automatics were the only targets that he left in sight. They were thrust out just far enough to loose their belching flame straight for the blood-mad marksmen that he fought.

PERHAPS The Shadow could not have stood that conflict more than a few minutes, for the iron barricade was not stout enough to last through a prolonged hail of lead. But he was counting upon co-operation that his timely attack had rendered possible—and it came with swift response.

The Shadow had diverted the driving crooks by a thrust from one flank. While he was taking over the brunt of battle, the police rallied and used The Shadow's system of a flank attack. Theirs came from the opposite direction. It was a charge, in solid force.

Pouring their bullets into the massed foe, the officers matched The Shadow's action. Thugs, caught in a pincer trap, began to fling away their guns and throw up their hands. Those who managed that surrender were fortunate, for they stood knee-deep among the sagging figures of their pals.

One man alone refused to quit. Silk Elredge had turned, to dash in the opposite direction. He saw Joe Cardona swinging in to intercept him. Silk flung his gun hand forward, hoping to settle the ace inspector. Cardona's revolver beat him to the shot; but a single bullet could not have produced the contortions that Silk underwent.

A shot from the roof had nicked Silk first, in the shoulder of his gun arm. Jolted sideward. Silk took Cardona's bullet and went upward. While in the midst of what seemed a twisting leap, he was flayed forward by a literal barrage from the guns of Cardona's men. The wallop of three bullets flattened Silk squarely on his face.

Waving for his men to hold their fire, Cardona reached the fallen mob leader. Though any one of Silk's wounds might have proven mortal, the would-be murderer was still alive. Cardona turned Silk's face upward, stared at eyes that blinked through blood that streamed from a battered forehead. Full-force contact with the

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paving had bashed Silk's features into an almost unrecognizable condition.

Coolly, Joe Cardona was playing a hunch. This fray, he was positive, meant a link with the Rendrew case. Voicing the first thought that came to mind, Cardona gruffed:

“You croaked Rendrew and planted the job on Kelden. Better spill it, Silk. You're done!”

Silk shook his head weakly.

“I didn't... didn't croak Rendrew. It was a shakedown I was after... working with another guy.”

“Who was he?”

“Archie... Archie Dreller.”

“Then he killed Rendrew?”

“I... don't... know.”

Silk coughed each word separately. The completed sentence was his last. A spasm racked him; when it ended, dead shoulders settled from Cardona's grasp.

Staring toward the low roof, Cardona saw the fading shape of The Shadow. By the time the police inspector was beckoning to his men, there was no remaining sign of the black-cloaked figure. At that moment, however, Cardona was catching the gleam of a new light in his brain, exactly as The Shadow had designed.

With Rahman Singh out of the picture, and Silk Elredge definitely in it, Cardona had proof that the law had failed to delve into every angle of the Rendrew case. Since important facts had been missed entirely, it might be that the whole affair possessed a different twist.

Cardona was actually ready to concede that someone other than Dwight Kelden could have murdered Adam Rendrew. But he couldn't quite believe that anyone like Archie Dreller could be the party responsible. He decided that the real solution still depended upon finding Dwight Kelden.

It didn't occur to Joe Cardona that The Shadow was planning to reveal the true facts of murder without producing Dwight at all. With midnight only a few hours away, Cardona still clung to his hope of finding the missing man and making him talk.

Great though the odds were against that prospect, Joe Cardona was actually to find Dwight Kelden before midnight.

He was to find the trail he wanted without the aid or knowledge of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV. HELENE'S MEETING

WHILE The Shadow had been arranging the finish of two careers— those of the nonexistent Rahman Singh and the actual Silk Elredge— matters had been very quiet in the old Rendrew mansion. Only two persons were in the house: Helene Graymond and Froy.

John Osman was off to another session with the lawyers handling the estate. Archie Dreller had gone to play poker with the same friends that he had so often invited to his den. Louise had made a later exit, fluffily

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dressed and in a great hurry, to join a crowd that was going to the theater.

In the house office, Helene was typing more of the unending lists, when she heard the ringing of the telephone bell. There was an extension in the office, but the switch was off, because Osman didn't want to be bothered with other calls when occupied with the details of the estate.

So Helene started out into the hallway, only to find that Froy had reached the telephone ahead of her.

"Yes..." Froy was speaking in his drab manner. "No, she is not here at present, sir... I can have her call you... Yes, she may return at any moment... Very well, sir..."

Froy made a notation on a telephone pad. He was folding the paper, when he turned and saw Helene. Placing the slip in his vest pocket, the servant announced:

"A call for Miss Dreller. I shall give her the message when she returns."

"But Miss Louise won't be back soon," said Helene. "She went to the theater this evening."

Froy blinked. For the first time, Helene saw him show an expression that resembled surprise. Then, mumbling to himself, the servant walked away. Helene returned to the office, convinced that something must be wrong with Froy.

Her mild alarm was increased, when the servant appeared in the office about ten minutes later. Froy was carrying a square tin box that had a folding handle. The box had no lock, but it bore two heavy side clamps. Planking the box on Helene's desk, Froy asked solemnly:

"Miss Graymond, could I ask your help in a matter which is very important to me?"

"Certainly," replied Helene. "What is the trouble, Froy?"

The servant stroked his forehead.

"I have been ill," he declared, weakly. "Terribly upset, ever since Mr. Rendrew died. You knew how faithful I was to him."

Helene nodded. Despite his faithfulness, Froy had not been remembered in Rendrew's will. The servant was staying on only because Osman was kind enough to keep him.

Osman had added that it would be a lifetime job for the old servant, and Froy had been ardent in his thanks. Still, Helene could understand why he should feel bitter toward the situation, enough so to class his feelings as illness.

"It's my memory," confessed Froy. "It's left me. I forget things— such as Miss Dreller going to"—he blinked—"to where did you say she went?"

"To the theater."

Froy repeated the statement, in an effort to remember it. "But about this box, I'm afraid I'll mislay it somewhere, Miss—"

He paused apologetically, to indicate that he had actually forgotten Helene's name during the conversation.

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Helene reminded him who she was, asked him if he could remember what he wanted to tell her about the box. The question brought a coherent reply from Froy.

“It contains my savings,” he declared, “from all the years that I have been here. I wish you would keep it in the safe for me.”

“Certainly!” agreed Helene. Noting that Froy looked anxious because the box was merely clamped, not locked, she added: “You may be quite sure that I shall not open it.”

“You won't tell Mr. Osman, or the others, unless something should happen to me—”

“Of course not! Don't worry, Froy. I'll try to help you remember things, any time you want. Your memory will be all right again, very soon.”

FROY departed in his soft-footed style. Helene let the box stay on her desk, because she intended to open the safe when she had typed the lists.

It was a large safe, in one corner of the office, and Helene had the combination to it. Its contents were mostly real-estate documents, kept there so they would be preserved in case of fire. Nothing in the safe was of any great value, and there would surely be some space where Froy's box could be tucked out of sight.

Again the telephone bell was ringing, and this time Helene answered it. Froy had been gone about five minutes and she supposed that he had retired to his room.

Thoughts of Froy vanished completely when Helene heard the voice across the telephone. It wasn't a call from The Shadow, as she had expected. In a way, it was even more startling to Helene.

The man on the wire was Dwight Kelden!

“Helene!” Dwight's tone was breathless. “It's you, Helene; I know your voice!”

“Yes, Dwight!”

“I thought you'd be back by this time. I must see you, Helene, right away. I'm outside the hotel—”

“What hotel?”

“The Espon, where I left word for you to call. Of course, I didn't give my name, not even the one I'm registered under. I only told Froy the room number and asked him to have you call there.”

Poor Froy! Recollections of the servant again came to Helene. He had been so muddled that he had thought that last call was for Louise! With Froy in that state, it didn't matter that he had talked to Dwight; particularly since Dwight had been careful not to mention his own name, or his present alias.

Helene's voice was calm as she asked, “Where shall I meet you, Dwight?”

“There's a little restaurant one block east of the Espon. I'll be waiting outside it. We can go in there and have coffee while we talk.”

“I'll start right away, Dwight.”

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Helene hurried up to her room. While she was getting her hat and coat, she heard another ringing sound, this time the front doorbell. It stopped abruptly, so she supposed that Froy had heard the summons and gone to answer it.

Remembering the package that The Shadow had sent her, Helene brought it from the place where she had hidden it. She wanted a safer spot for it and knew a very good one, where the package could remain during her absence.

There was a heavy chest set in a niche in the second-floor hall; filled with family relics, the thing was too heavy to move. The chest was locked, but there was a space behind it, thanks to a slope in the wall.

Someone was calling her name from the floor below. Recognizing Osman's voice, Helene left her hat and coat on the chest and hurried downstairs. She met Osman at the door of the office.

"Where is Froy?" he questioned. "When I rang the doorbell, he did not answer. I had to use my key."

"I think Froy went to his room," replied Helene. Then, anxious to take the servant's part, she added: "I told him I could answer the doorbell. I thought I could hear it in my room."

Osman's stubby face looked mollified. He glanced at his watch and shrugged.

"I have only lost five minutes here," he declared. "I suppose I can spare that much time. Provided"—he looked hopeful—"that you have finished typing the new lists. We need them."

"I have them, Mr. Osman."

The lists were on Helene's desk, along with Froy's metal box. Helene shifted herself between Osman and the desk, to cut off any chance view of the box. Gathering the lists, she turned about; half seated on the edge of the desk, she let one hand slide behind her to make sure that she had gauged the proper angle that would keep the box completely out of sight.

With her other hand, the girl extended the lists to Osman. Smiling, she announced:

"Here they are."

Osman was more than pleased. He remarked that he and the lawyers had finished with all the work they had at hand, but were anxious to continue. The lists would keep them busy for a few hours longer. Thanking Helene profusely, he left the office and went out by the front door.

Immediately, the girl hurried to the second floor, put on her hat and coat and came down again. Hearing nothing from Froy, and realizing that Osman might have had trouble getting a cab outside, she decided to make an important phone call. The number that she dialed was the one that The Shadow's message had mentioned.

A MINUTE later, Helene was talking to Burbank. The contact man did not state his name, but the girl was impressed by the methodical tone in which he spoke. Instead of talking excitedly, Helene found herself equally calm.

The details that she gave were complete and accurate. Burbank checked them in prompt fashion: Dwight's first call, that Froy had answered; Froy's visit to the office, with the box; then the call from Dwight that Helene herself had received, with mention of the Espon Hotel.

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Helene told where she had left The Shadow's package, and spoke of Osman's return to the house. She described how she had kept Froy's box from Osman's sight; whereupon Burbank asked if she had put the box in the safe. Helene said she hadn't, but would do so before starting out to meet Dwight.

She ended the conversation by promising to call Burbank again, as soon as she returned. After that, she went into the office, turned the combination of the safe and stowed the metal box deep beneath a stack of papers.

Closing the safe, Helene hurried out through the front door.

There was a taxi near the drugstore at the next corner, and Helene gave an address near the Espon Hotel. Her trip ended, she found the restaurant that Dwight had mentioned. While she was approaching the door, a man stepped up and joined her.

It was Dwight Kelden. He didn't give a word of greeting, nor did Helene. They entered a booth and ordered coffee. As soon as it arrived, and they were really alone, Helene and Dwight locked hands across the table. Their eyes met in a long gaze, and both spoke in eager whispers.

"I knew you'd come!" exclaimed Dwight. "I tried to reach you the other night, Helene, when you were at the apartment, but too many things happened."

"You mean the gun fight?"

Dwight nodded. Helene noted that his face looked very haggard. His eyes showed that he was tired, and his hair was uncombed. Perhaps he had purposely left it so, to offset the latest police description.

His puffs at his cigarette were nervous; to almost anyone but Helene, he would have fitted the brand that had been placed upon him: that of a hunted murderer. Helene, however, saw only the Dwight Kelden whom she had met a year ago, and he was still the man she loved.

Those marks of strain, in the girl's opinion, were the logical result of the unjust persecution that had forced Dwight into hiding. Yet, in fairness to both Dwight and herself, she felt that she must ask him about those very circumstances. Anything that she learned might be helpful to the one person who could aid an innocent man to shed crime's burden. That one person was The Shadow.

"You know I didn't kill my uncle," whispered Dwight. "You're probably the only person who believes the truth. That's why I had to talk to you."

"It might be better to talk to the police," returned Helene. "Perhaps they would believe you, too."

"They might," admitted Dwight, "but there are certain things I can't understand. I've got to know the answers, Helene, before I can give myself up."

Helene's eyes denoted inquiry.

"I was at the house," admitted Dwight. "I had a gun, and I used it. I was the man that fled by the side door. But I didn't fire the shot that killed Uncle Adam. Worse, I don't know who did. Until I find that out, I'd be a fool to put myself in sight."

"You've been there at the house, all along. Maybe you know something that the police haven't let get into the newspapers. If you do, you've got to tell me. I need your help to prove my innocence. There must be some solution to all this, Helene."

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HELENE nodded agreement. She had every reason to believe that the riddle could be answered. Though she did not understand the purpose of The Shadow's present preparations, she had his assurance that they would bring an end to whatever mystery shrouded the death of Adam Rendrew.

She was confident, too, that The Shadow intended to crack the case to-night. But she didn't want to rouse Dwight's hope until she knew the details. She had promised to aid The Shadow, and intended to do so. It would be better to let him talk to Dwight.

"I'm going back to the house," declared Helene, suddenly. "I think, Dwight, that I may learn something there."

"You mean that you've found clues—"

"I mean that clues may come," interposed Helene. "When they do, you will hear from me, Dwight. I can add only this: someone other than the police has begun an investigation that may prove your innocence. Rely upon it, Dwight!"

They went out to the street. She gave a smile as she pressed Dwight's hand.

"You'd better turn in," said Helene. "You need a rest. Get some sleep, Dwight, and forget your troubles until tomorrow. That's what I'm going to do."

Then, Helene was in a taxicab, blowing a kiss from the window. A smile crept to Dwight's tired lips, as if he half believed that his worries were due to end. That smile made Helene give a happy sob, as she was riding back to the old mansion.

Had she known what the immediate future held for Dwight Kelden, her sob would have been one of anguish. New complications were due to harass the man she loved.

Complications which not even The Shadow had foreseen!

CHAPTER XVI. MURDER BRINGS MURDER

SOON after Helene's report to Burbank, the contact man heard from The Shadow. Having settled scores with Silk Elredge, the cloaked fighter was ready for the moves that would finally solve the Rendrew murder. He was calling Burbank to send orders to his agents, but the news that The Shadow received caused him to make immediate changes.

Analyzing matters more deeply than Helene had, The Shadow came to definite conclusions. He could foresee complications that needed swift attention. He gave Burbank prompt instructions; among them was the order that Helene should make no move whatever, after she returned to the house.

When she phoned, Burbank was to ask her for the combination of the office safe. That given, Helene was to retire, leaving the package exactly where it was. New factors had entered the case, making it preferable for The Shadow to handle future details, instead of Helene.

The Shadow's immediate destination was the Espon Hotel. He reached there in Moe's cab just in time to see Dwight Kelden entering the lobby, back from his meeting with Helene. The Shadow instructed Moe to go inside, and see at what floor the elevator clock stopped when Dwight ascended.

The Shadow took a different route to enter the Espon Hotel. The structure was an old one, fairly tall but very narrow. Moe had parked short of the lights that shone from beneath the dingy marquee. A quick glide took

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The Shadow past the side of the building, where a fire escape beckoned.

By the time The Shadow had ascended to the fourth floor, Moe was back at the cab. He seemed to be having trouble with the switch that controlled the head lamps. They blinked every time he put them on. Oddly, those blinks were always the same number: seven.

From the fire escape, The Shadow answered with a tiny flashlight that blinked red, green and white signals. He had caught Moe's signal.

Thus learning that Dwight's destination was the seventh floor, The Shadow anticipated little difficulty in finding the right room. There weren't many rooms on the individual floors at the Espon; and Dwight's would certainly be one room with a light showing through its transom.

The search, however, was to prove much easier than The Shadow expected. He had just reached the fifth-floor level, when he heard the muffled sound of a gunshot. Pausing, The Shadow calculated the direction from which the noise had come. It had been to the right of the fire escape, and evidently inside the hotel. Whether from below or above, was difficult to determine by the sound itself.

For that, The Shadow used a different mode of calculation. Looping from the fire escape, he saw a light in the corner room on the seventh floor. Chances were that the shot had come from there; that it was the room to which Dwight Kelden had just gone.

THE SHADOW covered the next two flights with long, swift leaps. He struck an obstacle when he reached the fire exit from the seventh floor. The door was latched, so as to prevent intruders from getting into the hotel.

Rather than waste time by going down and up again by another route, The Shadow devoted his energy to jimmying the door. Woodwork ripped under the prying sharp curved tool which The Shadow clamped to an automatic muzzle. He was using the gun as a lever; had the door proven obstinate, he would have blasted it open with bullets.

As it happened, the door gave rapidly, with comparatively little noise, except on The Shadow's side.

Once through the door, The Shadow followed a roundabout line of short passages. He went by an inner stairway, then passed the elevators. His route doubled back, and brought him to the door of the room he wanted. It was partly open; peering through the space, The Shadow swung it wide.

Two men were in that room. One was Dwight Kelden, half stooped to the floor holding a revolver in his hand. The other man was prone; his head wobbled crazily as Dwight lifted it. A dead face twisted into the light; as Dwight stepped back, The Shadow saw the features clearly, along with the splotch of blood against the victim's shirt front.

The dead man was Froy. The withery servant had been murdered by a bullet straight to the heart!

The Shadow swept forward. Dwight must have heard the swish of his flowing cloak, for the young man wheeled with a startled exclamation. Again, he was clamped by the same clutch that had caught him on that other night, when the cloaked visitor had arrived in a hotel room.

This time, Dwight didn't make a struggle. He was overwhelmed too swiftly to begin one. Moreover, no mob was around to intervene on this occasion. Flung to a chair, Dwight felt the gun go from his grasp and heard it clank the floor. He was looking into the muzzle of an automatic that had a yawn like a cannon.

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Recognizing The Shadow, Dwight tried to accept him as a friend. They had been allies, to a degree, during that fight of another night. Somehow, Dwight suspected that The Shadow might be the “other investigator” that Helene had mentioned.

Nevertheless, the cornered man let his hands come to shoulder level. From deep in his chair he made a short side gesture toward Froy's body, and gulped:

“I didn't kill him!”

There was sincerity in Dwight's plea—enough to make The Shadow willing to hear more, particularly because this scene fitted with his own analysis. Dwight heard The Shadow's whisper; it gave him encouragement. He began to stammer facts; how he had called Helene, had met her, and then returned here.

“I saw the body and the gun beside it,” he blurted. “I thought it was my revolver—that I'd left here. But it wasn't mine. It's a .38 caliber; mine is a .32 that I keep in my suitcase.”

The Shadow saw the suitcase, swung it open. Except for a few clothes, the bag was empty. The Shadow's gaze swung toward Dwight, who thought he saw accusation in the glow of the burning eyes.

“It was there, I tell you!” expressed Dwight. “My own gun—the one I brought from California—a special model—”

It wasn't The Shadow who suddenly interrupted. The sound that made Dwight halt was the distant clank of an elevator door. It brought the tone of low-buzzed voices that carried easily through these corridors.

The Shadow took a swift look into the hallway, hoping to find some outlet where he could take Dwight and prolong the interview. Dwight, unfortunately, didn't get the point.

To his frantic mind came the thought that The Shadow was against him. In his madness, he actually believed that the black-cloaked stranger was responsible for his present dilemma. With a sweeping grab toward the floor, Dwight scooped up the revolver that he had dropped and launched himself directly for the fighter in black!

The Shadow came around with a long twist that brought him inside the doorway before Dwight reached it. He could easily have beaten Dwight to the shot, for the frantic man hadn't gotten his finger to the gun trigger.

But The Shadow didn't use his own gun at all. He drove his free fist for Dwight's chin, met it as it arrived. The blow hooked Dwight clear from the floor, sprawled him halfway to Froy's body.

As Dwight fell, his hand gripped more tightly on the gun. There wasn't time for The Shadow to go after the incriminating revolver. Whisking out through the doorway, he blended with the darkened end of the hallway just as three men shouldered into sight. Sighting the leader of the trio, The Shadow had a real surprise.

The squad was headed by Inspector Joe Cardona!

Only a tip-off could have brought Cardona here; and The Shadow had not supplied it. In fact, Cardona couldn't have had time to go back to headquarters, after the battle with Silk Elredge and the mob. The Shadow had seen Joe talking to Silk, but he was positive that the dead gambler could not have known where Dwight was.

Then came the real answer; one that fitted perfectly with facts that The Shadow had learned tonight. Froy's

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death dropped right into its proper place, completing the entire sequence, explaining the arrival of Joe Cardona as a natural consequence. But that wasn't helping matters at present.

Cardona and his men were through the doorway, to find Dwight on his feet. Moving to a closer angle, The Shadow saw Dwight clutch the revolver, crazed enough to begin a blind fire. Fortunately, Cardona reached him and knocked the gun from his hand. Dwight was still half groggy from The Shadow's punch.

"We've got you, Kelden!" gruffed Cardona. "This time, you couldn't get away. Here, you guys"—Joe shoved Dwight into the grip of the two detectives—"hang onto him."

The Shadow saw Cardona stoop beside the body on the floor.

"So you killed Froy," growled Joe. "How come? Did you have it in for him, too? Along with your uncle?"

Dwight's lips clamped shut. He was pale, but his eyes were defiant. Cardona furnished a grim smile. When chaps went sullen, they usually held out for a long while. The thing to do was find a way to crack them.

Cardona picked up the telephone, made a call to headquarters. After summoning a police surgeon, he called Commissioner Weston.

FIRST, Cardona reported the matter of Silk Elredge and made mention of Archie Dreler. Weston must have retorted something, for Cardona grimaced. Then he grinned.

"You say Archie couldn't have done it?" queried Cardona. "All right... Yes, I agree.... Certainly, commissioner, I know I'm supposed to find Kelden... Yes, that's what I'm calling you about. I've got Kelden..."

"No, not Dreler... I've got Kelden... How? On a tip-off that came into Markham while I was out... Where? Up at the Espon Hotel... Well, no, he didn't make trouble for us, but he's done another murder..."

"Froy is the victim... No, Kelden hasn't told us why he killed him... Certainly, I'll make him talk, commissioner... Yes, I'll bring him down to the Rendrew house... How soon will I have him there? Inside an hour... Yes, there'll be some details here, first..."

The Shadow was gliding out through the hallway, heading for the fire escape. Once there, he phrased a whispered laugh. Matters had taken the very turn he wanted. Despite the new complications, they promised the results that The Shadow had planned. Weston's decision that Dwight should be grilled at the Rendrew mansion would put the next scene where it properly belonged.

The arrangement was saving The Shadow the necessity of another call to Cardona, to make that very suggestion. Valuable time had been placed at The Shadow's own disposal, giving him a full hour in which to set the stage for the real climax.

Murder had brought murder. Rendrew's death had led to Froy's. Dwight Kelden stood accused of double crime, and every shred of evidence known to the law pointed directly to his guilt.

What Dwight's case would be when new evidence finally appeared, only The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVII. CRIME'S LAST HOUR

AT the exact time of The Shadow's departure from the Espon Hotel, Helene Graymond arrived back at the Rendrew mansion. She used her passkey to enter, thinking that perhaps Froy was asleep.

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It was getting late, but no one else had arrived home. Helene hurried to the telephone and called the number that she had used before. She gave Burbank a brief report of her interview with Dwight, and received the instructions that had been awaiting her return.

Burbank, it happened, had not yet learned of Froy's death. He simply assured Helene that all was satisfactory at present, and that she was to leave The Shadow's package where she had hidden it. He asked for the combination of the office safe and Helene gave it.

When Helene inquired what she should do next, Burbank politely replied that she was to go to bed, and stay there. With that announcement he hung up, leaving Helene staring at the telephone.

Defiantly, she banged the telephone on its table and went into the office. She felt that she had been taking orders from too many sources. She was tired of obeying the police, John Osman, and The Shadow. She had followed such orders because they were reasonable; but when it reached the point where her bed-time was being scheduled for her, she was ready to rebel.

It was five minutes before Helene's anger cooled. By that time, she had reluctantly conceded that the final order was probably the most sensible of all. If The Shadow intended to reopen the Rendrew case, everyone would be questioned.

Matters might go badly, if the law learned that Helene was in love with Dwight Kelden. Obviously, The Shadow preferred to have Helene stay out of sight until the proper time.

The only place where she could go, was bed. That realized, Helene decided to obey. She turned out the office light and went upstairs to her room. There, thinking of Dwight, she brought his photograph out from its hiding place, gazed at it smilingly, while she let down her long hair.

"Don't worry, dear," she whispered to the picture. "All will be well by to-morrow. Then I won't have to tuck you out of sight any more. Right now, though"—she gave the photograph a kiss, and folded it—"I'm putting you safely away. Good night!"

Helene replaced the photograph in the bottom of a drawer and promptly began to undress. Her clothes felt light tonight, and she was smiling, instead of fighting against sobs. True, her eyes had tears, but they were glad ones. The bed seemed softer than ever, and after she had turned off the lamp beside it, the girl snuggled her head in the pillows, quite content to go to sleep.

Helene wanted to wake up and find it morning; to learn that crime was solved, with Dwight no longer implicated. She thrilled at the thought that she might be the first to call him and tell him that everything had turned out exactly as she had promised.

Helene was half asleep, when another picture came to mind; one so vivid, that she believed it must be real. She could see The Shadow, entering the side door of this very house, coming up the stairs, to find the package that she had left for him. Then he was going downstairs again, to the office. There, he was opening the safe, taking out Froy's metal box!

AWAKENING with a start, Helene turned on the bed lamp. Half an hour had passed; maybe her dream was real! Turning off the light, she stole out to the hallway and reached behind the big chest. Yes, the package was gone. Then Helene found herself at the head of the stairs, looking down.

She saw the blink of a flashlight, moving in the direction of the side door. Another token of departure, like the one that night when The Shadow had searched the courtyard. Fancying that she heard the side door close,

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Helene stole back to bed.

Helene was hardly in bed again, before another sound actually alarmed her. This time, she heard the side door slam; she was sure of it. Then there were footsteps, loud ones, that came up the side stairs and finally ended at Helene's very door!

Upright in bed. Helene saw the door swing open; then gave a long sigh of relief. It was only Louise Dreller.

The blonde heard the sigh, and gave one of her own.

“Gee, I'm glad you're around!” exclaimed Louise. “I've got the jitters something awful! Come in my room, won't you? So we can talk awhile.”

Helene found her slippers and kimono and followed Louise along the hallway. Louise turned on the light, then sagged into a chair. Her fluffy appearance was gone; she really had a worried look. She eyed Helene, gave another sigh.

“You certainly look comfortable,” declared Louise, kicking her shoes across the floor. “Fish my kimono out of the closet, will you? I'm going to get into it. Stick around awhile, too, so I can talk to you.”

“All right,” smiled Helene. “What's the trouble?”

“The show was lousy, to begin with,” declared Louise, “so we all walked out on it. We went to a lounge bar, and everybody began to drink hot Tom and Jerrys. Then they began to talk about me—or rather us. Of course, they were lit, but that didn't change what they said.”

“What did they say?”

“That anybody might have killed old Uncle Adam. You, myself, Archie, Johnny—even Froy. Anybody that ever lived around this lousy old house!”

“What made them think that?”

“Some foolish talk that came over the radio. About Silk Elredge. He was killed tonight, in a big battle with the police.”

Helene caught the link at once. She knew that Archie had often gambled at the Club Cadiz; that the place was run by Silk Elredge. For a moment Helene hesitated; then asked boldly:

“Did that start them talking about Archie?”

“It did,” returned Louise. “One fellow was just crooked enough to bet that the thing linked up with Uncle Adam.

“He said that the cops were crazy, looking for Dwight, while Archie was still around. He said Archie was all set to go on a cruise, too, which made the whole thing look real bad.”

Helene bit her lips. She had thought of Archie as the murderer, but didn't like to say so to Louise. After all, Archie was Louise's brother.

“Then somebody said that Archie was too dumb,” announced Louise. “They said he was too big a sap to even

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load a gun, let alone fire it. So some fat-head thought he'd get flip, and asked me if I'd done it!"

LOUISE paused to put on her pajamas. Helene gave her the kimono and found her slippers for her. By that time, Louise was pouring further details.

"I gave him a cold stare, of course," she said, indignantly, "and that started the rest of them. By the time I'd walked out, they were laying odds on who shot Uncle Adam! They had Archie running first, Dwight second, and—just imagine it!—I was third!"

Helene laughed, despite herself.

"What about the rest of us?" she asked. "You said we were all in it."

"You were just a bunch of also-rans," declared Louise, "with about one taker apiece. You, Froy, and Johnny. One fellow picked Silk Elredge, another bet on Rahman Singh. There were two, though—this is really funny—who thought that Uncle Adam committed suicide!"

Helene tried to laugh, but couldn't. The whole thing was too serious, its only ray of comfort being the fact that popular opinion did not entirely agree that Dwight was the murderer of Adam Rendrew. Then she began to wonder how much she could really allow for the flippant ideas that had been voiced by Louise's friends.

Perhaps the whole thing had been a practical joke, to see how the blonde would react. If so, the crowd had certainly had their fun, for Louise had finally walked out. Nevertheless, there must be a murderer somewhere, and if it wasn't Dwight, who could it be?

In the midst of her bewilderment, Helene heard a sound from downstairs; this time, it was the front door. Voices talked excitedly; Louise gave a nervous jump, almost dropped the cigarette that she was inserting in a long ivory holder. She gasped to Helene:

"See who it is!"

Helene hurried out to the front stairs. She saw John Osman and Archie Dreler. She called to them and Osman answered:

"I am glad you are here, Miss Graymond. Has Louise come home yet?"

Helene nodded, just as Louise arrived beside her.

"Hello, sis!" chuckled Archie. "You'll be in on the fun, too. Johnny here came around and dragged me away from my poker party, after the police called him."

"The police?" inquired Helene, anxiously.

"Yes." It was Osman who replied. "They want to talk to all of us again."

Louise drew a puff from her cigarette, lowered the holder languidly and asked:

"What about Froy? Shall I call him?"

Osman looked at Archie, then solemnly shook his head. All that Archie did was chuckle.

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“You'd have a long job of it,” he told Louise. “Froy is dead! He was murdered, like Uncle Adam!”

Louise gave a real shriek.

“Pull yourself together,” suggested Archie. “He wasn't killed here. They've got the murderer—”

Before Archie could say more, the doorbell rang. Osman answered it, admitted two persons. One was a man with a short-clipped, pointed mustache, who introduced himself as the police commissioner. The other was tall, immaculately attired in evening clothes; his face was masklike, with an immobile, hawkish expression.

Louise gripped Helene's arm.

“It's Lamont Cranston!” the blonde exclaimed. “He's been everywhere—to India and Tibet! He called me this afternoon—”

HELENE couldn't listen to Louise's chatter. She was concentrating upon the conversation below. Someone was mentioning Inspector Cardona and a prisoner. Horrified, Helene could only grasp Louise's arm, to steady herself. She was straining to hear the mention of a name, when the doorbell began to ring again.

Commissioner Weston strode over to admit the new arrivals. Two detectives entered, bringing a handcuffed man between them. Inspector Cardona followed, bearing himself proudly, but Helene did not even see him. She was stumbling down the stairs, clutching the banister rail.

One slipper tripped her, as it left her foot; when the other went, she pitched headlong. All that saved her from a horrid fall was the prompt action of Lamont Cranston.

He had leaped to the stairs to stop her tumble. Gripped by strong arms, Helene might have realized much had she looked into the eyes of her rescuer. They were brilliant eyes, that tried to flash the confidence that would end her alarm.

But Helene did not see them. Wrenching from Cranston's grasp, she flung herself upon the handcuffed prisoner, throwing her arms about his neck.

Dwight Kelden was receiving kisses from the girl he loved. No longer was Helene Graymond willing to hide the truth. She didn't care if Dwight had murdered Adam Rendrew, nor if he had been charged with the added crime of killing Froy.

Helene knew only that she loved Dwight Kelden; and she believed that in this crisis, she was the only person who could help him. She didn't realize that there was no aid she could give him.

One person alone could extract Dwight Kelden from the web of circumstantial evidence that enmeshed him.

That being was The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVIII. FIND THE MURDERER

THEY took Dwight Kelden to the room where Adam Rendrew had died. There, a varied group sat watching, while Inspector Cardona began his quiz. Commissioner Weston was leaning back, arms folded, with the air of a presiding judge. Beside him, Lamont Cranston calmly smoked a thin cigar.

Across the room were Osman and Archie. The short, pudgy man was as serious as ever, while Archie's sallow

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features wore their usual smirk. Near the door were the girls, both clad in colorful kimonos, yet forming a marked feminine contrast.

Louise was alert with interest, her blue eyes wide open, anxious not to miss a thing that happened, her blonde hair very fluffy. Helene was solemn, her brown hair streaming as a background for a face that showed real beauty, with its brimming eyes, tear-stained cheeks and downturned lips.

Cardona was reconstructing the death scene for Dwight's benefit. Standing in the center of the room, he pointed to the spot where Rendrew's body had been found, then reached over and shook Dwight's shoulders, until the prisoner stopped looking at his handcuffs and raised his haggard eyes.

"Your uncle was right here," declared Cardona, "trying to back away from you, when you gave it to him with the gun. You hopped out into the hall and took another shot at him. That time, you cracked the window. Then you ran downstairs and got into the cab that you'd arranged to have outside.

"But you forgot these," Cardona produced his clues. "First, the paper that your uncle tore off his calendar, that said you'd be here that night. Then this eyeglass wiper that fell out of your pocket. Last of all, this airplane time-table that you were foolish enough to leave in the cab."

Dwight's lips twitched, then tightened. He opened them to ask:

"Is that all?"

"No," retorted Cardona. "Here's the bullet that killed Rendrew. From a .38 caliber gun, to match the revolver we took from you tonight."

"I suppose," said Dwight, "that you're going to blame me for killing Froy, too."

"We'll get to that later," snapped Cardona, "after you have confessed murdering your uncle!"

Dwight sat back and looked around the group. His eyes met Helene's and he smiled. He let his gaze travel; it was magnetized by other eyes: those of Lamont Cranston. Dwight found himself wondering at the expression of the hawk-faced stranger.

Somehow the commissioner's friend seemed urging the prisoner to tell his story. Gripped by the impression, Dwight took a long breath. He had been troubled by the thought that any testimony would be useless, but he began to sense that he would have one interested listener, aside from Helene, who, by her admission of love for Dwight, had unfortunately jeopardized her own standing as a witness.

"Suppose I told you just what happened," said Dwight, to Cardona. "Would you listen?"

Cardona's expression remained noncommittal, but he nodded.

"Get the letter, then," suggested Dwight, shifting his handcuffed wrists to one side. "It's in my inside pocket."

THE letter offered a new angle. Cardona fished for it and found it. Opening it, he began to read it.

"From Adam Rendrew," he grunted, "asking you to come here at nine fifteen on the night of Tuesday the tenth, to talk over an important family matter. With a postscript that says the matter is very confidential."

"I received that letter in San Diego," stated Dwight. "It was one reason why I came East. The other

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was—well, I wanted to marry Helene.”

“How about the letter you wrote to Louise?” demanded Cardona. “That didn't say you were coming East.”

“I didn't want Louise to know it,” returned Dwight. “I thought she might be trying to find out something that she wasn't supposed to know about.”

Louise opened her lips, but couldn't find words to go with them. Archie reached over and pushed her back into her chair.

“Don't lose your kimono, sis,” he drawled. “If you haven't found out you're the world's champion snooper, it's time somebody told you!”

“Don't fool yourself,” snapped Louise, finding words for Archie. “When it comes to butting into other people's business, you're six lengths ahead of me!”

Cardona growled for silence. He accepted Dwight's statement regarding Louise. Handing the letter to Osman, Joe asked:

“Is that Rendrew's signature?”

Osman studied the letter. Solemnly, he arose and passed it to Helene. Then, facing Cardona, he said:

“I am not sure. I would prefer to have Miss Graymond answer.”

Helene stared at the letter. Amid the silence of the watchers, she felt a terrible dread. Everything was unreal, except the hopeless shudder that came over her. She wanted to shrink from every gaze. She knew the signature that Adam Rendrew used. This one was not his.

The girl gave a glance toward Osman. He was trying to look sympathetic. Obviously, he had recognized the signature as a palpable forgery, but did not care to say so. Helene was wrenched between an urge for honesty and her whole-hearted desire to help Dwight.

She looked farther. For the first time, her eyes met Cranston's. His searching gaze nearly made her exclaim aloud. Those eyes had a strange resemblance to The Shadow's!

Helene made her decision. To this moment, every statement of hers had been truthful. Her former testimony might prove important; therefore, she wanted it to be believed. By telling the truth this time, she would prove her sincerity. Looking away from Cranston, Helene faced Dwight's gaze, while she said:

“This signature is false!”

NO reproval expressed itself on Dwight's face. Instead, his eyes showed admiration. Dwight realized that Helene had wanted to be for him, but had depended on the truth instead. In her turn, the girl felt an overwhelming surge of absolute belief in Dwight's innocence.

Under Cardona's pressure, John Osman agreed that Helene was correct. The letter was a forgery. Turning to Dwight, Cardona queried:

“What's your answer to that?”

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“Only that I received the letter,” returned Dwight, steadily, “and thought that it was from my uncle. You probably think I faked it, but I didn’t.”

Cardona decided to let Dwight go on with his story. It had struck one snag already, and would probably meet others.

“So you got here at quarter past nine,” said Cardona, “and found your uncle waiting for you. Right away, you started an argument, and then shot him—”

“Wait!” interrupted Dwight. “I found him, all right. Maybe he didn’t expect me, because he began an argument. He threatened to shoot me, if I didn’t get out. The next thing I knew, he was backing into the room. Then came the shot—”

“From your gun!”

“No! Not from my gun. From here, in the room. I jumped back, thinking my uncle had fired. I wanted to scare him off, so I aimed my gun at the window. I pulled the trigger and started for the stairs. I couldn’t have killed Uncle Adam. He wasn’t anywhere near me when I fired!”

Cardona thrust his face close to Dwight’s.

“Then what about the clues I’ve shown you?” demanded the inspector. “The calendar, the eyeglass wiper, the airplane schedule—”

“They must have been planted,” insisted Dwight. “Faked, like that letter I received in California.”

Cardona stepped back. Smiling grimly, he folded his arms and turned to Weston.

“What about it, commissioner?” queried Joe. “Shall I keep on grilling him until he cracks?”

Weston was starting to nod, when he heard Cranston speak. They held a buzzed conversation; finally the commissioner nodded.

“All right, Cranston,” he said, indulgently. “If you have a suggestion, we shall be glad to hear it.”

Calmly, The Shadow strode to the center of the floor. In Cranston’s idle style, he looked at the spot where Rendrew had lain dead, then glanced about the room. He looked at Cardona’s clues, together with the forged letter that Dwight claimed was sent to him.

“My suggestion, commissioner,” he said, calmly, “is that we should consider Kelden’s story as if it actually happened; then look for any flaws in it.”

Weston beamed. He liked that sort of thing. He had always emphasized the value of deductive reasoning; this might be good instruction for Joe Cardona. If Cranston brought out some point that would clinch the case against Dwight Kelden, much valuable time would be saved.

“LET us assume”—Cranston’s tone was casual—“that Kelden did receive this letter. That brings another party into the case; the person who actually forged it. Let us determine what else that person could have done.”

He picked up the desk calendar and its torn page, then asked if he could take two other leaves from it. Weston

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agreed; detaching two sheets, Cranston held them close, together and gave a quick tear. He passed the torn leaves to the commissioner.

“You will notice,” observed The Shadow, in Cranston's tone, “that the torn portions of those sheets are interchangeable: Which proves that the torn piece from Rendrew's daily calendar might have come from some other sheet; let us say, for instance, from an old calendar of the same make.”

Helene's eyes were very wide. She understood, at last. A year ago, when Dwight Kelden had been East, Adam Rendrew had probably made a notation on his calendar. Some one had taken that old date sheet, placed it on the present year's calendar, and used the very system just demonstrated by Cranston!

Adam Rendrew had not expected his nephew, Dwight Kelden, to pay that visit at nine fifteen, on Tuesday, the tenth. Someone had faked it to appear as if he had!

“As for the eyeglass wiper,” she heard Cranston say, “it interested me considerably, commissioner. Today, I sent a taxi driver into Wecker & Sons to ask for one. Here it is”—he produced a wiper from his pocket—“along with an airplane schedule”—he was drawing out the object mentioned—“that I took from a timetable rack in a hotel.

“Anyone else could have obtained such items, to serve as evidence against Dwight Kelden. Whether or not someone did, we must judge later. So far, we have simply failed to detect anything wrong with Kelden's story.”

THERE was a long pause, during which two persons stared at Lamont Cranston with expressions of thanks as well as admiration. Those two were Dwight Kelden and Helene Graymond. Not that others were lacking in appreciation; both Weston and Cardona showed plenty. There was a question, though, that they couldn't fail to ask. It was the commissioner who put it:

“But who other than Kelden could have shot Rendrew?”

In Cranston's style, The Shadow looked around the room. He took Rendrew's position and faced the door.

“According to your statement”—the question was put to Dwight— “your uncle backed into the room?”

Dwight gave a positive nod.

“Yet he was shot in the back”—Cranston had turned toward the bookcase—“which means that the bullet must have come from here!”

With a single sweep, he pulled half a dozen volumes from a shelf. Reaching deep, The Shadow rapped his knuckles against metal. He leaned back, to look into the space; then eyed the thick wall against which the bookcase stood.

“An open hot-air register,” he announced. “Suppose a gun had been there, commissioner, pointed out through the loose grating on the front. A gun equipped with a photoelectric cell—a mechanical eye, issuing a line of black light straight across the room.

“Rendrew, backing into the path, would have interrupted the beam. A shot from the gun, so aimed that the victim could not escape it, would have found Rendrew's spine and killed him. It would account, too, for the shot that Kelden heard.”

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The theory left Joe Cardona staring, until ideas began to strike him. Therewith, he began to quiz Lamont Cranston.

“Why didn't anyone see the gun?”

“Let me have your own revolver, inspector.”

Receiving the weapon, The Shadow replaced the books, then pressed the gun barrel between the center ones. He showed that they formed a gap, though the gun muzzle was deep from sight.

“But what happened when the gun was fired?”

“The weapon recoiled,” returned The Shadow, drawing out Cardona's gun. “The books pressed together”—he pointed, by way of illustration —“and the revolver dropped down the register pipe.”

Cardona's gun thudded the floor as The Shadow's fingers released it.

“It sounds good,” admitted Cardona. “Only that beam of black light you talk about must have had a receiving device at the other end of it.”

Cardona paused; he was following Cranston's gaze, toward the floor lamp near the door. Stepping there, The Shadow removed the unlighted bulb and smashed it. In its interior was the very apparatus that Cardona had asked about!

This time, the silence was ended by a detective shouting from the stairway:

“Mr. Cranston's car is here, inspector!”

“I am very sorry”—The Shadow was Cranston to perfection, as he bowed to the persons present—“but I must be going home. My physician has ordered it, because of my recent accident. So good night”—he paused, stepped up to Dwight Kelden and gripped the young man's right hand, lifting it with the handcuffs—“and good luck to you, Kelden!”

They saw Cranston walk from the room, heard him go down the stairs. Then came the closing of the front door, audible through the echoing passage of the big mansion. To all, except one person, that was the final sound of Cranston's departure.

Helene Graymond fancied that she heard one token more: a strange, whispered tone of mirth, that must have wakened itself to life from deep within her memory.

The laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIX. FALSE BRINGS TRUE

OUT of a mental whirl, Helene Graymond began to realize the depth of The Shadow's methods. It was he, not Cranston—the girl was still too bewildered to link the two—who had first divined that the clues against Dwight were planted.

She remembered how The Shadow had paced this room and made his calculations. He had been trying, then, to visualize a way whereby Adam Rendrew could have been slain almost in Dwight's presence, without the action of a human hand.

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In effect, The Shadow had let his own brain work along the line that the murderer had followed. Step by step, he had built up a logical way to arrange the death of a person entering this room, and his final findings had checked!

Of course, the real murderer had been smart enough to remove the evidence of crime. He had reclaimed the death gun from the bottom of the hot-air pipe. He had disposed of the mechanical eye that was attached to it, also the wire that must have extended down the pipe to a light socket, probably behind the bottom of the pipe in the cellar.

He had taken the two books also, because they were scorched by the flame from the revolver muzzle; and he had replaced the special light bulb with an ordinary one. He had made two mistakes, however, slight though they seemed.

The bulb that the killer had put in the lamp socket was a new one, that lighted when the switch was pressed. The murderer had also left the last-year's calendar in the office closet, probably supposed that no one would ever look for its missing page.

Obviously, The Shadow could not have obtained the evidence that the killer had destroyed. So he had adopted the neat plan of providing similar items: the contents of the package that had been delivered at the house!

It was fair enough, under the circumstances. The murderer had framed Dwight Kelden by planting clues against him. The only way to nullify those tangible bits of evidence was to plant other clues against the murderer!

The Shadow had done exactly that. He had nullified false with false. But the objects that The Shadow had provided were legitimate substitutes for the ones that the murderer had removed. From the false, The Shadow had proven the true.

One thing puzzled Helene. She felt sure The Shadow had intended to plant more evidence than the light bulb. The books should have gone on their shelf; the wire, with its electric light attachment, at the bottom of the hot-air shaft.

Why hadn't The Shadow gone through with those arrangements?

Suddenly, Helene had the answer. The Shadow had made his plans before Froy's death. Somehow, the servant had meddled into matters, and thereby produced new complications.

Joe Cardona was reviewing that very fact. He was asking Dwight:

"If you didn't murder Rendrew, why did you kill Froy?"

"I didn't!" returned Dwight. "Froy answered my first phone call. I said I was at the Espon and gave the room number, even though I didn't mention my name. He must have guessed who I was. Knowing the law was after me, he figured I would pay for silence. But I wasn't there when he came. Somebody else killed him."

From somewhere, Helene seemed to hear a whisper. It might have been her imagination, yet it had a tone that she remembered. The voice of The Shadow:

"Remember the box!"

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Helene nodded. Before Cardona could quiz Dwight further, she interrupted, to announce:

“Froy left a metal box with me before he left. He said its contents were important. I put it in the office safe.”

CARDONA told the girl to come along with him and open the safe, so he could get the box. Soon, they returned; Cardona was carrying the box, and Helene was sure that it was heavier than when she had placed it in the safe. Cardona unclamped the box in front of Weston, then raised the lid.

Inside were the other objects that Cranston had pictured: a wire with a photoelectric attachment; two books, matching a pair on the shelf, except that they were scorched by streaks of gun flame!

The last-year's calendar was also in the box. Thumbing it, Cardona looked for the date of Dwight's previous visit East. The page was missing; the fact fitted with Cranston's theory that an old sheet and a new had been torn as one. Then Cardona found a bullet, its nose mashed from an impact.

“It looks like a .32 caliber,” admitted the inspector. “I guess this was the bullet you fired through the window, Kelden. Froy was pretty smart to go out and hunt it up.”

Helene was understanding more. With Froy dead, The Shadow had decided to stow the assembled evidence in the servant's strong box, to make it look as if Froy had gathered the various clues. That ruse added an authentic touch; the clues seemed more valid than if they had come from an unknown source.

But what had Froy left in the box?

One thing only—a note that Cardona had just found. Reading it, Cardona announced the high spots. The note said, in effect, that Froy was going to the Espon Hotel to hunt for Dwight Kelden, hoping to gain a trail for the law. He was leaving the note as a protection. He intended to tell Dwight that he had made provision to insure a safe return.

Obviously, Froy had gone to demand money; though he didn't say so in the note. He must have supposed that Dwight was actually a murderer, and hence had regarded his trip as dangerous. But Cardona, influenced by the evidence that The Shadow had later added to the box, was ready with a theory of his own:

“Froy wanted to sell you this stuff,” he said to Dwight. “He knew that someone else had planted it to kill Rendrew. I guess it clears you, Kelden—provided, of course, that it works.”

Deciding that he ought to test the apparatus, the inspector promptly set to work. He removed the front of the register, clamped the electric eye on the death gun. Holding the muzzle through the grille, Cardona put the register front back in place.

If he had released the revolver, it would have dropped. From that, Cardona guessed the real purpose of the books. With Helene helping him, he put them into place, and the pressure of the two central volumes held the gun right where it was.

Cardona was using the two new books, to learn if they would scorch as expected. Rather than go down to the cellar, he fished for the cord attached to the electric eye, brought it over the books and plugged it into the lamp on Rendrew's desk.

Picking up the dummy light bulb that Cranston had broken, Cardona studied the reception apparatus and gave a satisfied nod.

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“This will work, anyway,” he declared. “The glass part of the bulb was only there to hide it.”

He screwed the broken bulb into the socket, tilted the gun muzzle slightly, until its aim was correct. Motioning everyone to the side of the room near the door, Cardona reached out and turned the lamp switch.

With the click, a thin black beam appeared, forming a pencil line straight from the book-clamped revolver to the broken bulb in the floor lamp!

“Cranston was right!” announced Weston. “Black light, that couldn't have been seen in darkness! Very well, inspector, you may cut the beam and complete the test. Use any suitable object—a table, for instance; since all the chairs are occupied.”

WITNESSES to that dramatic scene were tense, while Cardona was picking up a light table that stood in the corner. Then, when he had almost reached the center of the room, Cardona added a new element to the situation.

Holding the table by one leg, he lowered its top to the floor and looked at the faces that were watching him.

Finally, Cardona met Weston's gaze, and questioned:

“Tell me, commissioner: who do you think killed Adam Rendrew?”

“Why, Froy, of course!” voiced Weston, suddenly. “He left all the equipment in the box. We should have thought of that before, inspector.”

“It couldn't have been Froy,” asserted Cardona. “He wouldn't have left the equipment with the note. If he'd been the murderer, he wouldn't have been scared of Kelden. Besides, somebody killed Froy, too. That person, commissioner, must be here in this room!”

The logic was solid. So absolute, that Helene realized that The Shadow did not have to be here to assert it. He had known, of course, that the fact would sooner or later strike home to Joe Cardona. The inspector's gaze rested on Helene, as though he momentarily considered her as a possible suspect; then his eyes fixed elsewhere.

Louise Dreler gave a shriek. Cardona was looking right at her. The blonde began to wave her arms excitedly, the sleeves of her silk kimono flapping like a butterfly's wings.

“I didn't kill them—either of them!”

“We'll forget you for a while,” growled Cardona. “You wouldn't know what a photoelectric cell was! But your brother here—”

His gaze was on Archie, who gave a pitiful wince.

“You and Silk Elredge were up to blackmail, weren't you?”

Archie nodded at Cardona's question; then found his voice, which was more whiny than ever.

“That was all,” insisted Archie. “We didn't want to murder Uncle Adam. Silk said a shakedown was the system.”

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“You got money from your uncle's death.”

“Only a little income. Silk wanted more, and so did I. We'd have been crazy if we'd gone through with a murder. It ruined our plans when Uncle Adam died. Besides—”

Archie paused; an idea had struck him, and he expressed it with great eagerness.

“Besides, I couldn't have killed Froy tonight. I've got an alibi! I was at the poker game, with the fellows you talked to the other night. They'll all tell you that I didn't leave the place until Johnny came to get me—”

“Quite true!”

It was John Osman who provided the interruption. Cardona swung about, and faces turned with him. All eyes were looking at a gun that Osman had drawn.

Only Dwight Kelden found his voice, to exclaim: “That's my gun! The one that was in my suitcase!”

“Of course,” sneered Osman. “I found Froy's box tonight, while Helene was upstairs. Only the note was in it, at the time. After I left the house, I phoned the police and told them where you were. I went to the Hotel Espon myself, intending to take some credit for your capture.

“Froy was there ahead of me. He had your gun, so I shot him with the one I carried—the same revolver that killed Rendrew. I left the .38 where you would pick it up, and took the .32 with me. I was starting down the stairs when you stepped out of the elevator. You walked right into the new trap I'd laid for you.”

Once started, Osman did not mind talking more. He swung toward Archie:

“I knew that you and Silk were staging something. So I got rid of Rendrew. It was the one way I could be sure of getting the chunk of the estate that was due me. As for you”—he swung to Dwight again—“I sent you that forged letter, to bring you here.

“I fixed the clues, including the airplane schedule that I stuffed in Dogan's cab while he was at the Busy Bee. I called him, told him to be around after nine. I'd counted on you finding your uncle dead, when you arrived. I thought you'd sneak out and grab the first cab you saw.”

A bitter smile framed Osman's lips. It showed regret for plans gone wrong, yet a satisfaction also, at the way in which schemes had stood the strain.

“Helene happened to be here,” remarked Osman, “and Rendrew was still alive. But the whole thing worked as well as I expected. The next day, I cleared out the evidence. If it had been found in the meantime”—Osman chuckled gleefully—“it would have been blamed on Archie, never upon myself!”

Gradually, Osman's chortle diminished. His eyes took on a vicious glare. Sweeping the group with his ugly gaze, he asserted:

“I've got six bullets in this gun! One for each of you! I may not kill all of you”—he was flourishing the revolver—“but you won't stop my getaway! It's my turn to use that side door, and afterward”—he gritted the next threat—“I'm going to get the man who figured out my game and planted fake evidence to match the clues that I destroyed. Yes! I'm going to get—”

Osman did not add the name: “The Shadow.” A strange laugh interrupted, quivering from the hallway. The

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Shadow was present to announce himself. He was swinging through the doorway, an automatic in his fist.

But it seemed that The Shadow, at last, had laughed once too soon.

THE SHADOW stumbled, half across the threshold. Helene, nearest to him, leaped from her chair to aid his stumbling form. She didn't realize that The Shadow had tripped purposely. His stumble was a bait to bring Osman's gun away from the others, toward The Shadow's own direction.

Cardona grabbed the table by the leg and wheeled to batter Osman with the improvised weapon. The killer was stepping back, aiming coolly for The Shadow, not realizing that a snap of a black-sleeved wrist was bringing a gloved hand to an aim more rapid than his. At that instant, there was a sharp report.

It didn't come from The Shadow's gun. Nor did Osman fire it, for the murderer was crumpling. A curl of smoke issued from between two books in the center of a shelf. It vanished, as the flame-seared volumes pressed together. The cord leading to the table lamp went taut, then jerked clear. It whipped snakily over the tops of the books and disappeared.

From below came a faint clang, as the death gun struck the partly-padded bottom of the hot-air shaft. The gun had been sent there by its own recoil.

John Osman had backed across the path of the black beam!

The murderer had taken the identical death that he had delivered to Adam Rendrew. Sprawled on the floor, a bullet through his spine, Osman had added the last touch that vindicated Dwight Kelden of past crime!

While eyes were staring toward the dead killer, The Shadow's laugh trailed. Helene reached the doorway, saw that the hall was empty. Then, while she still hoped for a last glimpse of The Shadow, Dwight arrived beside her.

Cardona had relieved the prisoner of his handcuffs. Dwight's arms infolding her, Helene felt herself drawn into the hallway, where she learned the thrill of an embrace that she had awaited during many months of longing.

From somewhere deep in the old house, trailing an eerie note of triumph that stirred weird, lingering echoes from every nook and alcove, came the parting laugh of The Shadow!

THE END