

DEATH STALKS THE U.N.

Maxwell Grant

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DEATH STALKS THE U.N.

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I

"THE PURPOSE for which this august body was originally formed is being flouted by a handful of willful men. It is time, and past time, that my country, Ruravia, which has been used as a sort of football in international affairs, be granted some kind of surcease!"

Dom Brassle, representative from Ruravia, paused and drank some water. His throat was dry. He looked around the room. It was a familiar sight. Movies, papers, magazines, all had presented every corner of the meeting place to the world. The United Nations, the only hope for peace that seemed to have the slightest chance of surviving postwar squabbles, was in session.

"I had hoped that what I am to say would not have been necessary. But events have forced me to..."

The sound when it came, was about like that of two polite palms meeting in a gesture of applause. A spat. No one even noticed it or would ever have commented on it, but for the fact that just before the slight sound, Dom Brassle stiffened.

His knuckles tightened their hold on the desk in front of him. He said and his voice was low, "I will speak, my voice will be heard, for it must!"

He swallowed and it was painful to watch the process. He forced the saliva down his dry throat. Once again he opened his mouth to speak. But it was futile. Not even his magnificent will could hold his body and mind together.

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He fell to the floor. His fine straight back, the shock of white hair, so easy to caricature that it had made his features familiar to every newspaper reader, all, back, head, broad shoulders, shook. He tried to force himself up on all fours.

It was only then that his assistant, body guard and best friend Yerkes Sarri, ran to his side. He bent over his fallen superior. Dom Brassle, fighting as he had fought every other battle of his life, with an almost superhuman resistance, moved his lips.

It was too shocking. It just could not be happening. It was as though a gang war had broken out in the Senate of the United States. The men gathered in the room could not believe their eyes. A sort of paralysis gripped them. They watched as the dying man, holding onto a tiny thread of life spoke a few words to his assistant.

The representatives of every nation in the world desiring peace watched as a brave and great man died. By some freak of chance the microphone on Dom Brassle's desk picked up his last word. It was 'Cap'...

A man seated at a desk to the left of the dead man leaped to his feet and walked rapidly towards the door behind him. Yerkes Sarri, finally convinced against his will that his idol was dead, looked up and saw the retreating back. He didn't speak aloud but his lips formed the words, Captain Derry.

Somehow, the movement of one man, the action of Captain Derry, representative of Molvannia, in quitting the room brought the rest of the occupants of the room to life.

There was a bustle, that indescribable sound of many people moving at once that is a compound of the rustle of clothes, the creaks of chairs, the inspiration of breath: the sound that is a crowd.

Before they began to speak, a curious object rolled across the floor. There was a slight slant to the floor down towards where the body of Brassle lay. This incline had helped the strange brown thing to roll into sight.

Drawn like a piece of metal to a magnet, a potato came to rest next to the fallen man. Sarri forced his eyes away from the doorway through which Captain Derry had just exited and looked down at the potato. His thin, almost fanatical face tightened. His narrow shoulders hunched. The pursuit of his job had led him into many strange situations. He recognized the potato for what it was. Near him, a woman drew a shocked breath as she finally forced her mind to accept the fact that the bizarre object was a potato and not... She racked her mind; what had she thought it was? A grenade. So shocking had been the death of Brassle, she thought wryly, that she was all mentally prepared for an accoutrement of war!

Her training came to her aid. She was making mental notes about the scene almost before she had regained the color in her face. Famous correspondent she might now be; but her first training had been that of a reporter, alert for spot news.

She scribbled in shorthand till Yerkes, pulling himself together, spoke. He said, "Miss Barret, would you step over here?"

She nodded and stepped to the side of the corpse, completely at ease, for after all, the war had shown her every one of the varying faces of death. Her syndicated column had absorbed her emotion till there was very little left in her.

"Will you stand here till I go out for a moment?" Yerkes Sarri asked and it was a command.

She nodded her magnificent head. Almost masculine in its strength of character, there was enough of the woman in it to make her striking if not beautiful.

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He said, and his voice was low, "If I should not return, I think Dom said, just as he died, 'The world is fair...'" His face was so tightly drawn with emotion that she thought his bones were likely to come through the skin. He said, "Somehow, that is typical of the man... knowing he was dying, to say..."

She waited quietly till he got a grip on himself. "Then he said, and I can't be too sure of this for his throat was full of blood, 'Time...' Perhaps he just meant that time was short, for after that he had to gulp his life blood down before he could say... 'Cap'... and that was all."

"Very well." Her voice was calm. She watched as he turned and went out the door, the same door that Captain Derry had used. She thought, I wouldn't like to be in Derry's shoes. Yerkes loved Dom like a father, and I'm sure Yerkes thinks the captain killed his friend.

Another man followed the thin form of Sarri from the door. There was some semblance of order coming over the room now. The gavel was pounding a tattoo and the men in that room were conditioned to responding to the sound of a gavel.

A question formed in Irene's mind. What was going on? Why had S. T. Tarr followed Sarri? She had never quite made up her mind about Tarr's role. He was always around. He was invariably at the biggest and most important cocktail parties. He looked naked without a woman on each arm, so used was she to seeing him that way. Tall, good looking, he had something of the quality of Cary Grant, she thought.

Her thoughts spiraled back in time. Her lips had a wry twist as she remembered the past... It had been in Europe and she had been young, so young. She had been politically undeveloped, she thought, as well as immature in other ways... Tarr had been her youthful beau ideal... She sighed remembering the way she had carried the torch for him... It had been really pathetic... he had treated her quite badly. She thought of those months they had spent in the Tyrol... the world had been young and so had she. Then they had left the mountains and gone to Biarritz... They did all the things that young lovers are supposed to... She couldn't know, didn't know at the time, that to Tarr it was all a monotonous repetition, a thrice told tale.

It was only gradually that Tarr allowed her to see more and more of what went on in his mind. It was only when she began to add up tiny clues as to his behavior, his political activities, that the bloom fell off the rose.

She had felt at the time and still did a sensation of being cheated, of having lost at some kind of thimble-rigged con game.

It had come to an end when she began to grow up a bit. As her love for him waned, as she began to see through him and the shabby politics which he espoused, as she had escaped from the toils of love, somehow their position had become reversed.

The more cold she had become to him, the more ardently he pursued her. Now things had come to where she ducked him at every opportunity, while he went out of his way to be near her.

She wrenched her mind back to the present and thought, watching the men leave the room, that it was like a child's game of follow the leader, first Captain Derry, Molvannian representative, then Yerkes Sarri who had devoted his life to the problems of his country along with the Ruravian national hero, Dom Brassle. And then, finally, S. T. Tarr who, for all Irene knew, was a man without a country.

She allowed herself a glance down at Brassle. Why did the good ones, the inspired ones, always die too soon? Another week and he might well have finally welded his country into a whole that would be able to stand up under the stresses and strains of Middle Europe's problems. It was as though she were in some isolated cone of silence. She was so involved in her own thoughts that she wasn't even aware of the fact that the security

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council of the United Nations had finally brought itself together. The armed guards who had stood at the door to no useful purpose were now drawn around her in a human wall. The police, called instantly, were coming down the aisle towards the body.

Still she stood there as though alone and looked down at the potato next to Brassle's body. She thought that somehow, the potato was a correct symbol. For all of Brassle's fights had been for food for his underprivileged little country. But the hole that had been cut through the potato... that was the symbol of the fury and destruction that had always been waiting for Brassle. The symbol of violent death. For the elements that Brassle had battled had never hesitated to use force.

While that august assemblage was adjusting to the murder that had occurred in front of their startled eyes, in another room not far away in the same building, another man was dying...

CHAPTER II

IT WAS a small room. Generally, it was the site of closed room committee meetings. The door was closed now. But the committee had not been called to order. On the floor lay two men.

Tangled in curly hair, a bloody gavel lay next to S. T. Tarr's prostrate form. His breathing was shallow.

Near him, dying, Yerkes Sarri, a Don Quixote figure of fun to most people, for his fanaticism had repelled, not attracted people, stretched his thin lips in an agonized shape. His claw-like hand moved, slowly, like a nightmare towards the bare floor that was at the edge of the carpet. His fingers were red. Red from when, a few moments ago he had placed his hand to his chest.

The red came off his fingers on the bare wooden floor. It made a pattern. His teeth almost met through his thin bottom lip as he forced his hand to his will.

He never finished the design. His head fell forward as he tried to make a triangle on the floor... Don Quixote had tilted at his last windmill.

At the side of the desk that was near the dead man's feet a revolver glinted in the fading sun. The shallow quick breathing of the living man was the only sound in the room of death.

At the door that led to the street, a cop stood. His face was tight with determination. A man faced him, a man whose face was white and haggard. He said, "How much?"

"You ask that once more, and I don't care who you are or what tin-pot country you represent, I'm going to mark my initials on your head with my billy. Now get back inside where you belong!"

Captain Derry replaced his fat wallet in his pocket. Occasionally these American barbarians baffled him. Everyone in Europe knew that all any American cared for was money. It was a well known fact that they'd sell their mothers if the price was right.

They had no culture, all they were interested in was money grubbing. He sighed. Perhaps his approach hadn't been the correct one. He turned to go back into the building. Of all times for a bribe to fail!

The radio screamed the news. This was spot news with a vengeance. They had their broadcasting apparatus always on tap at the conference room. Never, when the installation was made, did anyone guess that one day an excited announcer would say, in a voice that shook with emotion, "Dom Brassle, Ruravian representative to the United Nations, has just been shot! Murder most foul! As yet there is no clue as to where the bullet

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could have come from! Adding a touch of the bizarre to the circumstances is the fact that a potato rolled across the floor towards the fallen body of Dom Brassle! Stay tuned to this station for more developments!"

It was only minutes later that Lamont Cranston, apprised of the news by his aide, Burbank, took a plane from Skillton. He was flying to New York, scene of the crime.

He had no facts as he sat in his seat high above the clouds. His brief case was on his lap. His hawklike profile was stern as he sat in the hired plane looking down at the fleecy soft whiteness below him.

All he knew was that there had been murder committed. Where there was crime there was The Shadow. In his brief case, safely hidden under a zipper, was the cape, that protecting, concealing cape that was blacker than black, and his hat, the black slouch hat that cut off any light from his face, which had so often covered his features from the eyes of men who would have given their last breath to fathom his identity. Many and many had given their last breath... but without penetrating the stygian darkness that masked The Shadow from any gaze.

Even The Shadow could not at this moment have more than a vague idea of the vast evil forces that were at work in this latest case to occupy the attention of the master man hunter of all time.

There would be time and enough for The Shadow to make his appearance. Now it was more practical for Lamont Cranston to do the primary investigating. For the United Nations meets in New York and in New York, police commissioner Weston has more than one reason to be grateful to Lamont Cranston. Cranston knew that Weston would be more than glad to give him every aid.

The steep slant of the plane was the only warning that Cranston had reached La Guardia field. The wheels had barely stopped turning when Cranston dropped from the plane. He walked at a pace so fast that most men would have had to run to keep up with him.

He hurried past the busses that wait to carry air passengers from the field in to the center of New York. There were some cabs up ahead. His eyes flickered over them. There...

He was in the cab and sitting down. From the driver there came, "Blast it! Can'ch'a ever be surprised? Not ever?"

He grinned at the reflection of Shrevvie's angry face in the rearview mirror. "Come now, Shrevvie, did you really think I wouldn't expect you to be waiting for me?"

"Ah..." Shrevvie's voice faded off into mumbles for really, he was glad to see Cranston back. It had been a while since Cranston had been there. Shrevvie thought, "Chee... it ain't been since 'Chi' that me and him was on a case. I missed out on N'Orleans and Skillton."

He drove on.

"Shrevvie, have you any idea where you're driving?"

"Now that wounds me. To the quick it wounds me, see?"

Cranston glanced out the window. Shrevvie had known. Up ahead was the temporary headquarters of the U.N.

"Didja think I'd drive yah anywhere but dere? Dat's the only t'ing anybody's squawkin' about! It's bigger

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dan..." Shrevvie paused, his mind was unable to find any comparable phenomenon.

"It's the biggest story ever, dat's all," he said, finally.

Ahead was the building where some of the most baffling events of the master manhunter's career, waited for explication. Only he could see through the tangled morass; the web of incongruity and mystery, the bizarre motivations, the mystery that surrounded the death of two men and the assault on still a third!

The cab shrieked to a halt. Shrevvie had leaned on the hand brake, for ahead a policeman, white gloved hand aloft, had flagged them down.

"And where do ye think yer goin'?"

"What's it to you, bub?"

The policeman stomped forward, red face angry. "Sure, and if you can't understand the language, I'll be after helpin' ye with the butt o' me night stick!"

"You and how many other cops?" Shrevvie reached down on the floor where, like most New York cabbies, he left a tire iron in wait.

Cranston reached forward and tapped him on the shoulder. "Take it easy, Shrevvie."

The irate cop was close now. The door opened and Lamont Cranston, brief case under arm, hopped out. "Officer, is the commissioner here yet?"

This took the wind out of the cop's sails for a moment, but he recovered fast. "Oh, another one of the commissioner's friends, huh? Why do you guys all pull that line? Didn't you see the cops at the corner keeping cars away from this street?"

"Sure, I seen it, but what's that to me? This is Lamont Cranston and if you don't think the commissioner knows him you're nuttier than a fruit cake."

The cop was taken aback at this direct assault. Cranston's quick eyes had seen a car driving into the street that faced the temporary U.N. headquarters. He said, "Just a second, officer, does that license number mean anything to you?" His long finger pointed to the car.

"Uh... ulp... yeah... it's himself... the commissioner!" Weston came out of his car, his face alight in a grin of welcome. "Lamont. What luck. It's been so long since I've seen you. Come..."

Cranston joined his friend. Behind him, the smile on Shrevvie's face was diabolical. He said, "What now, smart guy? Still wanta talk with the end of yer night stick?"

The cop turned on his heel and walked off with Shrevvie's laugh echoing vindictively in his ears. "Cops... bah!"

Up long stairs that led to the main conference room walked the man who was responsible for the police force of the world's largest city and his friend a man who was interested in criminology for all Weston knew was that Cranston was a wealthy man who dabbled in crime and its prevention as other rich men collect stamps... or blondes...

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Through the big open door Cranston could see down to the spot where Dom Brassle lay in his own blood. They were about to step into the room when a man, dressed in blue denims, a cleaning man of some kind, spoke. "You better come along with me..."

Both Weston and Cranston turned in confusion. This was unexpected. "What's that, my man?" Weston's tone was a trifle pompous.

"I said, if you guys want the whole score you better follow old Wallaby Willy!"

"This is absurd." Weston looked around for one of his men. "Let's see what this is all about!" Cranston turned and followed Wallaby Willy. His bent form and greying hair made him look older than his years.

The way led down a hall and to a door. Across from the door two bored-looking guards lounged, looking as if they'd appreciate a smoke.

Wallaby Willy pushed the small door open. He said, "Take a gander."

Cranston looked in.

"I do the cleaning around here. I cleaned up this morning. Just before, I remembered that I hadn't done the windows, so I came back. I found that."

In the center of the room near two bodies, some window cleaning equipment lent veracity to the man's story.

They walked closer. It was obvious at first glance that nothing could be done for the man with the bullet in him. The other man, Tarr, moved. His eyelids flickered. An involuntary grin of pain distorted his lips. The gavel moved away from his head where it had been lying.

"Don't... please don't..." The grimace came again. "Why are you doing this? Don't... oh... my God!"

CHAPTER III

THE skin on his face drawn tight by the intensity of his concentration, Cranston bent over so as to hear better the scene which the man was evidently re-living.

But his eyes opened and closed quickly. He was coming to, more now. He stopped his mumbling. Cranston wasted no time. "Who did it? Who were you telling not to do what?"

Tarr put his hands to his aching head and shuddered involuntarily as he felt the lump the gavel had left.

"I don't quite know who it was... he had a handkerchief drawn across his face... He had his hand in his pocket... when it came out, he had a gun in it. He shot Yerkes down... then he threw the gun at him. I couldn't stand it any longer, I leaped for him... but he picked up something and hit me on the head with it... Oh... my head! It feels like the great grandfather of all hangovers..."

"I wouldn't move too fast, chum," Wallaby Willy said, and it sounded as if he spoke from long experience.

"I won't. I don't think I can." After a moment's re-consideration, Commissioner Weston had changed his mind. He came into the room at this point. "What in the world... Why... that's Yerkes... and he's dead... Dom Brassle killed and then his assistant; what's going on here? What kind of madness is stalking the U.N.?"

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"That's your job, bub." Saying this, Wallaby Willy picked up his pail and his squeegee and stepped to the window.

"What are you doing, my good man?" Weston asked.

"Doin' what I came in here for... washing the windows."

"Get away from that window. There may be fingerprints on it!"

"Yes," Cranston agreed, "I wouldn't touch anything in here." An idea seemed to occur to him. He walked to the door and opening it, spoke to the two guards across the way. "Who came out of here in the last ten or fifteen minutes?" His practiced eye had told him that Yerkes hadn't been dead much longer than that.

"Two guys went in, but nobody came... wait three guys..."

"Who was the third?"

"The guy that's in there now. The cleaning guy. He went in about five minutes ago and came right back out, hell bent for election."

"You didn't see anyone else go in here then?"

"Not a soul and we would have if anyone had."

"I see. Thank you." Cranston went back into the death room. "Commissioner, get some fingerprint men up here in a hurry." He explained what he had just learned.

Weston thought a moment and went over to the window. He looked at it in silence. Cranston joined him. There was undisturbed dust on the windowsill.

The two men who devoted their lives to law enforcement looked up and their glances locked. Then with the same motion they looked down at the prostrate S. T. Tarr. The same thought was in both their minds. But it was Wallaby Willy standing nearby who had seen and interpreted their thoughts, who spoke. "Nobody's went in or out the door... and nobody coulda gone in or out of the window without mussing up that there dust, huh?"

Then he too looked down at Tarr, who looked up at them with pain in his eyes. "What is it? Why are you all looking at me that way? What is it?"

"It's pretty simple, bub. You just fitted yerself for a quickie in the hot squat, as sure as my name's Wallaby Willy."

At that, Weston went to the door and called across to the guard to send the scientific men up with their paraphernalia as soon as they came. That done, he went back into the room and looked down at Yerkes' dead body with pity in his eyes.

"Shot down without a chance... and then... this rat wipes the gun off, heaves it there, and then hits himself on the head. This is one case where if there are no prints on the gavel, I'll accept it as proof that he wiped it off before we came in!"

Cranston leaned over and looked at the handle of the gavel. Clearly as an etching, a bloody print stood out.

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"Don't worry about that, there's a print here." Cranston turned on his heel and looked out the dusty window. Down below, a bored cop was doing calisthenics with his night stick. Lamont Cranston without a word of explanation left the room as the fingerprint men came in with their outfit.

Walking through the halls, making his way past reporters and men and women who stood still with stunned expressions on their faces, Cranston walked thoughtfully.

This building, these people, dedicated to the task of saving the world from ever again being faced with the terror and madness of war, must be protected, saved from the consequences of the killer who had struck so ruthlessly. How terrible those consequences could be, Cranston knew only too well.

He passed endless doors. Each of them at one time or another had been closed on a committee. Committees which had been and were doing their best to help in trying to consolidate the gains of peace.

He sighed as he walked down the long staircase that led from the building that housed the hope of the world down to the street proper. He paused there to adjust his bearings. It was a trifle difficult.

He wanted to find the window that looked from the murder room down onto the street. There, ahead, and around the corner of the building. He walked slowly while he pondered. He was sure of what he was going to find out when he interrogated the policeman who had been on guard.

But sure or not, it was up to him to be ever on guard against error. Better take the little time necessary to get verification than to make a mistake.

The policeman was bored and was still making his night stick do tricks. He didn't even look up as Cranston approached. Lamont paused just a second and looked up at the window. Yes, it was the correct one. He was a mere five feet from the policeman before the cop deigned to look at him.

Right below the window, Cranston said, "Hello, how long have you been here?"

"Not that it's any of your business," the cop squinted his eyes, "but I been here for four hours, ever since I came on duty."

"Good, then you would have seen anyone who came out of that window?" Cranston pointed to it.

"Anybody comin' out of there? What's with you? You got rocks in your head? Nobody came outa there. This is the U.N., buddy, nobody plays cat burglar around here."

"Thanks." Cranston went back upstairs.

In the room, the men were finishing. They had blown aluminum powder on the handle of the gavel. The print was clear. It was big. One of them said, "Even without comparing it, I'll take a Brody that it's a thumb print."

Weston grunted agreement. He was waiting. Tarr was on his feet. He swayed groggily. One of the fingerprint men grasped his wrist and rolled his hand over the ink pad.

"Still sticking to the ink pad, eh?" asked Cranston.

"Just till we finish this batch up. Then I'm going to get some of that inkless stuff that Dondero worked up. That's a beautiful system. You have a white paper, somebody puts their finger print on it and you can develop it without ink. Very suave indeed."

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While he was talking about the advances in his profession he was rolling each finger of Tarr's hand on the paper. He was particularly careful with the thumb print.

Tarr's face was white with pain and strain. He was eyeing the other men in the room. While the fingerprinting was going on, the other technicians had set up the flash camera equipment. The cameras were focused down on the dead body of Yerkes.

They shot from high overhead, from the side, from every angle that any lawyer might demand as evidence in court. While they worked, the medical examiner wandered in. He was bored. He seemed to have been born bored. He cocked a lackadaisical eye at the corpse. He leaned over the body, looked at the bullet hole in the dead man and then looked up at the still groggy S. T. Tarr. He jerked his hand at Tarr. "He the one that did it?"

Weston nodded. "As far as we can tell, yes." He waited for the M.E. to go on. It was quite a wait. Finally Weston asked, "Well?"

"Well what?"

"Have you any report to make? How long ago was he shot?"

The M.E. sighed. "What do you expect me to do? Look in a crystal ball? Sure, at a guess it wasn't over a half hour ago. But I'd never swear to it. Too many factors enter into these things. The weather can control the speed with which rigor mortis sets in."

"I know all that," Weston spoke a little stuffily. "But do you have anything to add to the obvious fact that he was shot?"

"Yeah. He's dead. That's all. Wait till after I post mortem the corpse, then I'll be able to talk intelligently." The medical examiner smiled. Evidently he had only been concerned with annoying Weston. That accomplished, he fussily got his bag together and stood up. "Send it down when you can."

He left on that.

"I don't quite understand what's going on here." Tarr was recovering a bit from the blow on his head. "I don't like the assumption you all seem to be making that I am the person who shot Yerkes! Why should I have? What would be my motivation? After all, Captain Derry didn't particularly like either Dom Brassle or Yerkes. Why take it for granted that I did this?"

Weston with a pained air pointed out the impossible circumstances that surrounded the murder. In the circumstances, he asked Tarr, how else could Yerkes have been killed?

While Weston was speaking, Cranston was standing looking down at the poor crumpled body of the thin man. He had been looking at the thin red line that Yerkes had tried to scribble with his blood. His life had been ebbing. All he had managed to do was make a scrawl that was difficult of interpretation.

Weston noticed Cranston's preoccupation. He came next to his friend and looked at the scribbling. "Curious, isn't it?"

"Umm."

"Say! Lamont... look... isn't that the form of a triangle and of a square?"

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"It's so indecipherable that it may as well be a circle as a square. The triangle is plain enough..." Cranston's forehead was creased in thought as he looked at the puzzling diagram the dying man had made.

"You," Weston's voice was sharp as he spoke to one of the policemen at the door, "go get me something with the Molvannian insignia on it!"

He looked proud of himself. A moment later, he looked even prouder, for the cop came back with a letterhead of the Molvannian embassy. Weston grabbed it from the policeman and waved it under his friend's nose. "Lamont! Look!"

Cranston looked at the letterhead. Across the top of it was the Molvannian symbol. It was a triangle in a square. "Yes, I realized that."

"But don't you see? Yerkes wouldn't have tried to draw it with his last breath of life if it wasn't important!"

"Obviously!"

"Well, then... Yerkes, knowing that his killer was this rat here," Weston glared at Tarr, "went ahead and tried to leave some evidence that would point to the motivation! It's obviously got something to do with the Molvannian situation!"

"Say, what do we do now?" It was one of the fingerprint men interrupting. Weston didn't seem to like the interruption either.

"What do you mean what do you do?" he barked. "Now that you have the evidence that Tarr is the killer, take him away!"

"Well, that's what I meant. You see... this fingerprint on the gavel..."

"Yes, what about it?"

"It don't match with this guy's fingerprints."

CHAPTER IV

"Of course not. I can't imagine what's gotten into the lot of you," said Tarr. "I can't say I like this calm assumption that I'd shoot down an unarmed and defenseless man. If you hadn't been so prejudiced against me, you'd have seen immediately what Yerkes was trying to tell you in that message on the floor. For my money that points directly to the Molvannian representative, namely and to wit, the same man whom I think Dom Brassle was trying to indicate when he gasped... 'Cap!' If you'll all just stop and think a moment, I'm sure you'll have to agree with me!"

Tarr turned away from them and putting his hands to his aching head, finished up by saying, "I'll bet that Captain Derry is well on his way for parts unknown right at this very moment!"

He looked down at his feet. A scowl of irritation ran across his face. With his head aching this way, his shoe lace had to be loose. He bent over wondering if his head would fall off while he re-tied his lace tightly.

It was too much of an effort for the condition he was in. He swayed and would have fallen had not an arm reached around him and caught him.

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Cranston brought him over to a chair and helped him to sit down. "Take it easy. That was a nasty wallop."

"I can't believe a little crack like that would do all this damage." Tarr shook his head in bewilderment. "I better take it easy whether I want to or not."

Outside the closed door, excited voices were raised high. They could hear questions being volleyed back and forth. Since no one knew any of the answers, it was a singularly pointless pastime. But reporters are so built that they must ask questions.

Pressing his hands over his ears, Tarr said, "The boys are all in a fuss, aren't they?"

Cranston nodded absent-mindedly. His thoughts were far away. His unfocussed eyes were looking at Wallaby Willy, who was edging towards the door.

"Anybody mind if I go wet my whistle?" he asked ingratiatingly. No one answered, so he resumed his crab-like progress towards the door.

Weston was pre-occupied, too. He looked off into space. Tarr looked from one face to the other and said, "A penny for your thoughts."

There was no answer to that either.

Weston had arrived at a decision of sorts. He wanted action and he didn't care too much whether it was purposeful or not. He glared at a cop. His thoughts were chaotic. Cranston started to speak and then evidently thought better of it, for he kept his lips shut and just stood still.

Police Commissioner Weston turned to one of the uniformed policemen at his side and said, "Go see if anyone has left the hall since the murders."

Lamont Cranston, unnoticed, stood at the window and looked off into space. It was a curious case. He had already spotted some incongruities that were gnawing away at the back of his mind.

Reporters were so thick outside the room that the policeman had to push his way bodily through them. Wallaby Willy, a broad gratified smile on his face, was coming out of the room. He said, "Hi, fellers, I'm the boy as can give you the lowdown. Speak up... what do you want to know?"

Weston reached a long arm out of the room and yanked Willy back. Words were cut off short. Willy spluttered, "Wallaby Willy, that's me. Ask me any..."

"Keep still!" Weston's voice brooked no arguments. "Come in here and keep your mouth shut!"

"But..."

"Be still. It's too soon for anyone to do any talking. I can't allow any loose talk that any of these countries may take for defamation of character, with heaven only knows what international complications resulting. Now please hold your tongue!"

"Well," Wallaby Willy said reluctantly, "as long as you say 'please.'"

"You're being awfully quiet, Lamont." Weston had turned to Cranston. "Have you anything on your mind?"

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"A few things, but I think I'll heed your advice to Wallaby and not say anything till I'm quite sure of my ground!"

Weston turned on Willy and barked, "Now, you! Since you want to talk so much, let's hear something out of you!"

"If that ain't just like a copper! It don't matter whether they wear a uniform or not, they still take a poke outa the guy that's handiest!" Willy shook his head in philosophical abstraction.

"That's enough of that! What's this absurd nickname of yours mean? Wallaby! That's some kind of a kangaroo, isn't it?"

Switching his pellet of tobacco from one cheek to the other, Willy said, "Yep. So 'tis!"

"Speak up, man, don't make me lose my temper!" Weston had long since lost this precious attribute.

"Never thought the day'd come when the commissioner of a big city'd wanna hear that there story... But..." Willy slouched back, and looked all set for a long drawn out romance. He was marshaling his facts. He said, "'Twas like this, long time ago I used to ship out down under, down there near Australia, see?"

"What in the world has all this got to do..." Weston said.

"Fine thing, ask a feller fer some pertinent stuff and then don't let him talk! Fine thing. Ain't they no such thing as free speech in this here now country? Like I been tryin' to say, the fellers on ship took one look at a wallaby in a zoo in Sydney, then they did a double-take at me, and I bin Wallaby Willy ever since!" Willy said this last proudly. Despite interruptions he had managed to say his piece.

Cranston smiled. The man had taken some of the edge off Weston's bad temper. Weston was smiling a bit as he shrugged and gave Willy up as a bad job.

"You're leaving, Lamont?"

Cranston nodded. He walked to the door and waved a good-bye. Cranston left the room, forced his way past the reporters, paying no attention to their requests for information.

In the main meeting hall of the United Nations, the body of the fallen patriot, Dom Brassle, had been removed. No evidence was left but a chalked outline in the center of the floor. The members were all quiet.

Cranston walked past them down to the spot where the chalked lines were the only reminder of the murdered man. He looked at the outline, then his piercing eyes flicked up to a woman who stood to one side.

She said, "Irene Barret's my name. You're Lamont Cranston, aren't you?" She didn't wait for his nod, but went on, "I think you should know something that Yerkes told me. I just heard that he's dead too..."

She went on and relayed the message that Yerkes had told her Dom Brassle had gasped out. She said, "I think you should know this, for, with Yerkes dead, I'm the only one that knows of it. I'll feel safer with the knowledge shared." Her grey eyes took in the room full of delegates. "We can't tell whether or not the killer or another agent isn't in this room thinking about another murder right at this moment."

"Thank you for your trust in me. I think it may help. In as confusing a case as this promises to be I shall need all the help I can get."

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"You've helped the police on more than one occasion, I know, for I've covered some of your cases."

He looked surprised and she amplified, "That was quite a while ago when I was still a reporter instead of whatever I am now."

He smiled at her modesty. Her opinions were valid ones. They carried weight in more than one capitol building. For to the intelligence that was her natural birthright, she had added experience, insight and intuition that was quite remarkable. She had been one of the few to decry the menace of Hitler and what he threatened long before most of the world considered him aught but a Charlie Chaplin figure of fun.

She pulled her stone marten stole more closely about her shoulders as she asked, "How much longer are we going to be kept here incommunicado while that ass blithers on?"

The ass she referred to was the radio announcer who was clutching his microphone to his chest as he rambled on building up a case out of nothing but a few guesses and some wild sensationalism.

"It's lucky," she said, "for those radio commentators that no one can keep a record of their utterances. He, for instance, is wrong about ten times out of eleven... but oh brother... that eleventh time... you hear about it every night for a week!"

"I know... they've irritated me on occasion." While Cranston spoke to her, his eyes were busy. He had spotted a man with a military carriage coming into the room. He nodded in the man's direction. "He looks familiar... who is he?"

"Captain Derry." The tone held vast contempt. "He was Dom Brassle's most persistent opponent. They represented opposing countries and I don't think there's a dirty trick in the book that Derry hasn't pulled. If I'd been Brassle I'd have waited for Derry in a dark alley!"

"Curious that whoever killed Dom Brassle didn't do exactly that!"

"Yes. I must confess that thought has flickered through my decaying grey cells too. The only thing I can think is that Brassle may have found out something just before the meeting that they wanted to keep him from revealing.

"But what?" she asked and her eyes were vivid as they looked into his.

"We will know. We must. In the meantime, can you provide me with any data about the people here?"

"Most of them I imagine you know at least by reputation. That gentleman over there" she nodded to a tall distinguished man "is of the same breed as Dom Brassle. A patriot if there ever was one... But I see you know him."

Cranston had recognized the man. As a matter of fact in a strange case, a long time ago, Cranston had been able to do the gentleman a favor. It was obvious that the man had not forgotten either, for his smile when he saw Cranston was a thing of beauty.

Irene noticed and said, "You ask me to tell you about these people and you probably know them better than I do! You are a fraud, sir!" She smiled at him.

"Not so. That was just happenstance... Now take that man over there... who is he?"

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She told him little bits of knowledge that she had picked up about most of the people in the room. She was sharp, incisive and her estimates were good ones, for in the cases where Cranston's knowledge overlapped hers, he was able to compare mental notes.

She had taken in most of the room by now. Cranston was bent over her, ear to her face, for she was almost whispering. Not all the things she had to say were flattering to the people in question.

He said. "Still this gets us no nearer the problem of what Dom Brassle knew."

"We know but one thing... it must have been a slam at someone or some country here!" she said.

"I am inclined to agree with you. For, with the eyes and ears of the world focused on this room, anything detrimental that Dom Brassle might have said would have had repercussions of world wide significance. It may well be that they had to stop him in mid-sentence."

Captain Derry slumped down in his seat and looked at the famous female news analyst and the man who was with her. He wondered idly who the man was. He could well have been some member of a delegation, for there was about Cranston an imperturbable quality, a way of carrying himself that was impressive.

Although Derry could not hear them, Cranston had asked, "Have you any idea what Brassle might have dug up?"

"Unfortunately no. I don't know whether you are up on the Balkan situation, but the crux of the Molvannia-Ruravia set-to is some oil fields that are right on the border between the two countries. For some ten centuries the area belonged to Ruravia, then there was the first war and Molvannia took over. It was all the result of Versailles. Then, after this second war, the whole thing came up again. Ruravia, who fought with us, wants the oil fields back. Molvannia naturally doesn't cotton to the idea.

"They held a referendum and the people in the disputed area voted overwhelmingly in favor of going back to Ruravia. Molvannia has been mighty busy trying to louse up the works and keep her conquered mandate over the oil fields.

"That was about where the matter stood when Dom Brassle got up this afternoon to speak."

"I see." Cranston looked thoughtful again. "I've forgotten. Which side did Molvannia fight on in this war?"

"She didn't. She was very busily neutral."

"Your tone implies more than the words."

"It was the kind of neutrality that aided our enemies. That's about all I'd like to say without some paper proof, if you know what I mean..."

Cranston nodded. His eyes went back down to the floor. He was looking at the chalk outlines. Irene Barret had told him of the potato that the police had taken away.

He said, "I suppose you know the meaning of the potato?"

"Of course, it isn't the first time I've seen one used."

"One of the most primitive but most effective silencing arrangements there are," Cranston said. And it was. "I

suppose, too, the murderer took out about half the powder charge in the shell."

"I should think so. For a shot through a potato will cut the sound about in half and a small charge of powder will halve that again. As a matter of fact the sound of the shot wasn't much louder than..." She clapped her palms together the way you would at rather boring concert. "It was no louder than that."

"In a room like this that makes it hard to determine where the sound came from."

She nodded, but at the same time her eyes flicked to the seat where Captain Derry sat as relaxed as though he were listening to a debate that didn't concern him.

Cranston followed the direction her gaze had taken. "Who sat near Derry?"

"The delegate from one of the South American countries was on his right and Tarr on the other."

"You have no idea at all, then, from what direction the shot came from?"

She considered the question for a moment. "No, I'm afraid not. You see, it was rather like a magic trick. You know how a magician can make you studiously watch his left hand, while in reality his right hand is doing all the dirty work? It was like that. All our attention was on Dom Brassle.

"The sound, as I said, might well have been a slight gesture of applause from someone. In a group like this, you don't look around at every slight sound of palms being patted together."

"No, of course not. I was just hoping" Cranston looked about him. "I can see that it might have come from anywhere. The position of the body is no help, for he probably turned, or moved as he fell."

"He did," she agreed. "You couldn't trace back from the bullet hole to where the bullet came from. Even I don't remember precisely the way things were and I have a pretty good memory."

"Yerkes, who was closest to Dom Brassle, might have been able to help if he hadn't... I wonder, perhaps Tarr might be able to if he weren't..."

She hadn't been listening. "I thought for a moment that the shot might have been from there... but, oh, you see, no matter what I said, it would just be a guess... and probably a bad one at that."

"Tarr, perhaps, but then on the other hand..." Cranston's voice trailed off.

She paused. "Where is Tarr by the way? I saw him follow Captain Derry out. I haven't seen him since."

"He's... shall we say hors-de-combat?"

"Wh... what do you mean? Was he killed too?"

"No. He got a slight concussion from a gavel."

They were both silent. The man in question was entering now. His head held to one side to ease the pain, he made his way along the back of the room to his chair. Weston had not been at all happy about letting him go.

"Thank you again for your help. I have an idea I shall have to appeal to you for some more of your voluminous knowledge on the subject. I doubt if there are more than two or three other people in the world

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with the grasp that you have of Balkan affairs."

"Thanks. I can't even pretend any false modesty. It's quite true that I have made that field my very own." She smiled as he turned to leave and the smile made her rather cold face radiant.

He paced slowly out of the room. A lot of possibilities were running around the back of his head. Only time would show which of two directions that he had spotted was the proper path to the truth of this bizarre double murder.

His brief case tucked under his arm, head bent forward in thought, he didn't see a man in front of him till he had practically stepped on his feet.

"You sure that there ain't no other way outa that room but through the door or the window?" It was Wallaby Willy and the side of his mouth was pushed out somewhat like his namesake, the wallaby. He had a cud of chewing tobacco there.

"What?" Cranston, taken by surprise, was a trifle startled.

Shifting the chewing tobacco to the other side of his mouth, Wallaby Willy repeated his question.

"There are certainly no trap doors, if that's what you're intimating." Cranston wondered where the cleaning man fitted in the puzzle.

"Didn't think there was. If there wasn't no other way out but the door, and them two dopey flatfeet say nobody went out, and since the killer couldn't a gone out that window, why it 'pears to me like as if you got what them fiction writers call a impossible situation."

Cranston smiled. It certainly did appear like an impossible situation. "How about the gavel? Could a print have been planted on it ahead of time?"

"Thought of that myself. Nope. Couldn't be that. See, I cleaned up good. That there gavel was sparkling when I left that room."

"How about switching the gavel?"

"Wondered if you'd think of that. Nope, I'd swear a big oath that didn't happen neither. Why? Because there's a little scratch on the bottom of the handle, wouldn't never have noticed it myself if I hadn't a broken a finger nail on it. See?"

He held up a grimy nail for Cranston's inspection. His finger tips were still jet black from the fingerprinting he had undergone. "That Weston feller, he don't seem too smart to me. Kept looking at me when I was havin' my prints made, like he was hopin' my print'd match up on the gavel."

"No luck, eh?"

"None for him. Plenty for me. Didn't even shape up like mine."

As an undertone to their conversation, making a counterpoint to their voices, Cranston became aware of sounds coming in from the outside. From the street he could hear newsboys hawking their wares.

High pitched and shrill, the shouts came clear. "Read yer news now! Killin' at the U.N.O.! Read yer news!"

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Does this mean war? Read about it now! War coming?"

War... the very word sent a cold chill over Cranston's body. With the world situation as tangled as it was... This kind of "fear journalism" would have to be stopped quickly! For it had been the death of one man at Sarajevo in the same Balkan background that had started the wheels of war in 1914... that war that had never come to an end, but had simply burst out anew such a short while ago. With the ink on the peace documents barely dry, this was no time for that kind of talk.

There was but one way to get this sensation out of the headlines and that was by solving the matter, and, turning the culprits over to justice.

Wallaby Willy could not know it, but standing beside him was the one man who could ferret out the malefactors and turn them over to the bench!

The Shadow. For it would take a creature of the night to combat the kind of evil forces at work, to catch the person who had killed the two patriots. For only The Shadow knows...

CHAPTER V

THE rattle and roar of the old fashioned and nearly obsolete third avenue El made the street a Babel of sound. A lacy pattern cast by the interstices of the iron framework of the elevated structure made the cluttered street less cluttered looking. The kindly darkness blended the garbage, the torn and dirty papers, the remnants of meals thrown out, the cans stacked helter-skelter, into an arrangement in light and dark.

Blue neon lights poured out of a bar room. The too-loud juke box echoed the discord. High stools lined the bar. Seedy, shiny-at-the-elbows men sat or slumped at the bar. A huge man stood behind it, his vest covering a once-white apron that encircled his Falstaffian stomach. He was looking at a man who had poured part of a glass of beer out of its container onto the bar. He was idly making patterns in the fluid.

The man was of middle height. His face was in no way remarkable. He was as bored looking as a human being can be and still move. His features were blank.

The neon lights spared the rear of the bar. Merciful darkness was cast over the few booths in the back of the room. In front of the booths like some monster of old guarding a dungeon was the hideous, garishly decorated juke box that lived on nickels.

It was a perfect set up, the one man who sat in the only occupied booth thought. His glance went down the bar, flicked over the huge bartender, paused for a moment at the sight of the man who was doodling on the bar and then went on to the front of the bar. A taxi was halted there. The cab driver was counting change into the palm of a man who had just left the car.

At the bar the bored man continued with his doodling. He glanced in the mirror, or what had been a mirror before a mixture of stale beer and soap had been wiped onto it the better to hide the inevitable fly specks. There was just enough reflecting power left in the desecrated mirror for him to see that the bartender was still eyeing him. "Let's have another."

"Don'cha think ya had enough?"

The bored man glanced up to see who the bartender was speaking to. It took a second for him to realize that the man was speaking to him. "Who me? You think I've got a potsy on?"

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"Most sober stiff's don't go around sloppin' up a guy's bar."

The bored man looked down at the pool of spilled beer. In it he saw a lunatic distorted picture of the man who had just quitted the cab. The distortion had twisted the face into that of a gargoyle.

Involuntarily he looked up and took a look at the man. The man had walked on and he could see only his back. Wrenching his gaze back to the irate bartender's he said, "Sorry."

Sullenly, his big under lip pouting out, the bartender flipped the handle of the beer pump over. He filled the glass to the top and with a practiced swish of the beer rake he took the head off even with the top of the glass.

"That's thirty cents all told." He glared at the bored man.

"Keep the change." He flipped a half dollar onto the bar.

"I own the joint, see. I don't need no tips from you." The bartender threw the dimes down on the bar. They spun angrily.

The bored man thought, "This is the brush, if I ever got it. But I have to stick it out until I get a mickey if necessary. Why doesn't he get here?"

He looked through the door out onto the tumble down street that hid under the el. Back of him in the darkened booth, the man who had been waiting said, "Wait till I put another twenty-five cents in that invention of the devil."

He loaded the juke box and didn't even bother to make any selection. The box droned out some plaintive song of the old West as sung by a quartet who would have dropped dead if they'd gone west of Hoboken. The record played over again. Then it played again.

The bored man at the bar looked up and down the bar. Perhaps this would give him his chance. The others at the bar, as incurious and as hard to arouse as they were, were becoming annoyed by the repetition of the song.

"That blasted machine broke?" one of them asked the surly bartender.

"Nah, the gent wanted to hear the record. Whatsa matter, don'cha like good music?"

He got two and one-half cents out of every nickel that dropped into the maw of the record player.

Outside the bar, passersby glanced incuriously in and went on about their business. All but one. A man who looked out of place in those surroundings. A man dressed for a business date, let's say. A man who carried a brief case under his arm as so many business men do. He might have been a lawyer. He wasn't. He was Lamont Cranston and he was getting impatient.

He had seen Harry Vincent at the bar doing his act. He knew that Harry would do everything in his power. But he could see that there was no chance for Harry to get within earshot of that curious conference that was going on in the darkened booth.

He snapped his fingers impatiently and took a look at the address of the bar. Memorizing it, he stepped across the street into a barroom that might well have been poured out of an identical mold, so similar was it to the first.

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He passed by men who were imitations of the others at the bar across the street. There was a blue bell on an enameled sign at the rear of this bar. He went to it. He glanced at the phone book that, tattered and torn by endless impatient hands, hung from a rusted chain.

A second later he had the telephone number of "The Rosebud Taverne."

At the bar across the street, Harry Vincent sighed and looked at the clock in the back of the bar. It carried a huge advertisement for a brand of beer. The sign was so much bigger than the clock that it was hard to see the time.

He dawdled over his beer. The Shadow had said he would be there a half an hour ago. The phone bell rang.

The huge bartender, balancing his stomach in front of him as though it were some difficult task requiring great judgment, made his way to the booth. It was a tight squeeze. He couldn't get all the way in. Instead he poked his head in and barked into the phone.

"Who?" A pause, then he yelled, and it drowned out the record. "Hairy Vinnie?"

He turned to look at the bar. "Any of you creeps named Vinnie?"

At the bar, Harry Vincent grinned. If no one else answered, it would be for him. He waited a second. No one moved. He said, "That's me, thanks."

As he walked to the booth he did his best to tune his ears to hear under the blare of the so-called music. It was exasperating. All he could hear from the two men in the booth was a low toned "... but where can it be?"

The other grunted, "I know where, the problem is getting it!"

Vincent couldn't stall any longer. He picked up the phone. It was the voice of The Shadow which answered.

"Harry... you'll have to make some kind of diversion in there. Have you been able to pick up any information?"

"Not a blasted thing. For all the good I've done, I might just as well have not gone out when Burbank told me to."

"I see, then it is trebly important that you make a diversion. There's no back way into the bar. I've looked. I must come in through the front."

There were times, of which this was one, when the protection of the black cape was not enough to cover the movement of the man who was known as The Shadow.

"Right, Chief. Will do." Leaving the booth, Harry found his opportunity. One of the men from the back booth, the dark, thin, lithe one, was putting another quarter in the juke box.

Bumping into the man, Harry said, "You play that same record again, bub, and you and me is going to tangle."

Before answering, the man looked up to the bar where the bartender, seeing what was happening, reached a big hand under the bar. When the hand reappeared it was made heavier by a length of baseball bat.

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The inside of the bat had been hollowed out and lead had been poured into it. He rolled his swaying weight out from behind the bar. He hefted the bat in his hand.

Harry had looked around before bumping into the little man. Just above his head was a fuse box. At no matter what cost he had to get at it. This looked like the chance.

The small man jammed the push bar that started the record playing and moved back to make way for the bartender.

"Ya heard what I said, didn't ya?" Harry asked. His face was twisted and he looked actively malevolent.

"Yeah, we all heard." The bartender was closer now. He had the bat raised overhead. "You... out!"

"Let's see you do it, butter ball. I could take you with one hand behind my back." Harry grinned and his lips were drawn taut over his teeth.

The bartender began to bring the bat down. The flabby fat under his triceps quivered like jelly, Harry noticed in a preoccupied way. He noticed it just as the tip of his toe connected with the barrel of fat that projected in front of the huge man.

That did it. The sound that escaped from his blue lips was like that of a demented bagpipe. His muscles, what there were of them, tightened involuntarily. It was just enough to sway the descending bat in the wrong direction.

There was an involuntary gasp from everyone in the bar when the bat crashed into the fuse box. There was a flicker of blue light, then darkness.

Gasping for breath, the bartender swung all around him with the bat. But there was no answering response in flesh. Instead the tip of the bat crashed through the glass in the phone booth door.

In that darkness one man left the bar, a satisfied grin on his lips. Almost brushing against him in the dark was a figure darker than darkness itself.

It wasn't long, a minute or two, before the bartender made his fumbling way to the bar and returned with some fuses. The blue light crashed on again with eyeball-searing intensity.

The bartender looked around. All was well. The drunk, he thought, had been smart. He had beat it. Behind him a buzzer sounded.

He answered the summons by picking up a battered tin tray and going to the dark booth. "Same thing, gents?"

"The same. Does that sort of thing go on all the time in this country?" The man who asked was built strangely. His head was as pear shaped as his body. He wasn't particularly fat, but his narrow shoulders and wide hips tapering up to a pipe stem neck and the globular shape of his face, made him look fatter even than the gross man who was waiting on him.

"All the time? Nope... just about every other hour or so. I must be slowin' down. Time was I woulda had him outa here in a second."

He walked away grumbling about the ravages of time.

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Alone again, the pear-shaped man said, "Curious country this."

The little lithe man nodded. "Enough of that. You will get used to it in time. We are alone again. Go ahead."

But they weren't, for in the booth behind them was a man, dark hat shading his hawklike face. A smile still lingered there. Leave it to Vincent, thought The Shadow. His way might be the abrupt one, but he always came through. His thoughts sharpened into focus as the lithe man said, "Go ahead. Can you deliver?"

"You realize, sir, that this is a strange country to me. As yet I do not have the set up, the resources that I am used to having at my command abroad."

"Have I gone to all this trouble, come into this benighted place, swilled liquor that I wouldn't feed to a hog, to have nothing but excuses from you? Can you do it, or can't you?"

The pear-shaped man nodded his bizarre head so violently that his jowls shook. "Yes, sir. Of course. You are sure of the location?"

"Am I ever unsure of my information? Here... take this map. You will need it. It is out in a swampy section near La Guardia field."

"Yes, I know. I remember back in 1939, I was anxious to come, but there was a little matter in the Wilhelmstrasse."

"I do not ask for your reminiscences. The money I will give you."

"Here?"

"We are safer in these banal surroundings than on a desert island. It is for that reason that I chose it. Here, count it."

"But sir... this is..."

"Of course, that is but half. Did you think because I am in this naive country that I would give you the whole amount and then have you leave for God knows where?"

"Very right. Of course, sir. You will have it tomorrow."

"Remember, use as many men as you think you'll need. Don't skimp, thinking to save. I will reimburse you for any expenses out of your pocket."

"Ten men should be enough."

"Fine. Don't fail... there are certain things that I would hate to have to reveal to the authorities... like how you got into this country... don't force me to be unpleasant!"

"You wrong me!" The pear-shaped face was ludicrous. "How could you think such a thing. My... ahem... peculiar abilities are for sale, sir, but once I have made a contract, I never sell out. Never, sir, never."

"Yes, yes. I know." The small lithe man was impatient. "I know all about your 'loyalty'... remember, I was in Spain when you were... the time you sold out the Loyalist brigade to the Falange."

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"But sir, that was patriotism. You know where my sympathies lie."

"Enough. I will expect you tomorrow."

The Shadow watched the narrow back of the small man as he left. He could only belong to one set. He was in the pay of Molvannia. The Shadow remembered his face from his visit to the U.N. that afternoon.

Waiting till his employer left, the pear-shaped man jauntily tilted his green fedora and followed.

Alone in the bar, The Shadow's thoughts were busy. A trifle here, a trifle there. He added up the red triangle that Yerkes had scribbled with his life blood. The square, or whatever the shape was that the faltering finger had made. To that he added La Guardia field and the swamps. A tight smile drew the corners of his mouth up. He laughed. It was a bitter and mocking sound.

So bizarre was it that the bartender, the bar flies, were paralyzed as a black clad figure flitted by them.

The door swung to behind the strange form. One of the bar flies whimpered. He said, "First I hear them things... then I see them. What next?"

What next was a question that was uppermost in many minds. The public, anxious, nerves on edge for fear that another war might be in the making, wondered what was next.

Harry Vincent, following the curiously shaped man with the narrow shoulders and the wide hips who looked like a Disney drawing of a wicked pear, wondered what next?

Captain Derry, alone in his hotel room, smiled, as he put the phone down. Things were coming along. The only thing was, what next?

S. T. Tarr, at the ringside table of the only club in town which substituted a plush rope for any kind of entertainment, smiled at the girl who was with him. He looked romantic, dashing, with the bandage that swathed his face, cutting a pattern across his features. The girl said, "Don't you think it's foolish coming out tonight? You need some rest."

He smiled her objection away. Outwardly he was calm. Inwardly he was in a turmoil. He forced himself to act in his normal fashion. He even managed to throw a flirtatious glance at an attractive girl at a table nearby.

She turned her head away angrily. He smiled, though, when he saw that she had taken out a compact and under the pretense of fixing her make-up she was taking a surreptitious return glance.

But that was hardly important. He wondered... what next?

Only The Shadow, deep in the blackness in the back of Shrevvie's cab, knew what was next on the agenda. It had been a problem in mathematics. He had added the whispered words of a dying man to the words themselves, 'The world is fair'... 'time'... and the syllable 'cap,' into a total that might add up. What's more, like all good mathematicians he was going to prove his problem.

His harsh features got harsher as a strange smile split his face. The Shadow Knew! Shrevvie, hunched over the wheel, wondered what it was in the quality of that laugh that even now, with The Shadow right behind him, was able to make fright come alive. He had an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of his stomach.

The Shadow was about to prove the truth of his adage that "the weed of crime bears bitter fruit..."

CHAPTER VI

RATTLING across the bridge at a good rate, Shrevvie was silent. He, as well as the rest of the citizens, was worried. He brooded. Finally, as the city proper fell behind them, he asked, "What's the score?"

"The score?" The Shadow sighed. "It's a tough one, Shrevvie. I don't like any part of it. Greed is one of the more horrid of man's drives. Can't say I like it. What we find out here in Flushing will have a great deal to do with the future of the world. It behooves us to get there first..."

The car shuddered as Shrevvie pushed his foot to the floor. The cab might look decrepit on the outside but under the hood was a finely tuned motor that responded with a surge of speed.

The night was dark, fitting cover for the deeds that were being enacted. Silence fell in the cab once more. Would they get there in time? Was The Shadow's reconstruction the correct one? Only the events of the night would tell.

On the back of a speeding car, Harry Vincent hung onto the trunk rack with clenched hands. The pear-shaped man had jumped into this car after making some phone calls. It was an inopportune time. For on all the street there was no cab. There had been no two ways about it. Vincent had been forced to grab a hitch as the car drove off. It was that or lose the figure he had been following.

The car rocketed along following, although Vincent could not know it, the path that The Shadow's cab had made moments before. Harry Vincent, holding on for dear life, looked around and hoped that no passing policeman would see him hanging onto his precarious perch.

From the lower south side of the Bronx, one of New York's sprawling boroughs, three cars were speeding across the Whitestone bridge. In the cars were men who had answered a whispered summons on the phone. The pear-shaped man might not have been in the country long, but in that space of time he had managed to contact enough men of his stripe so that his summons had not been in vain.

The men were quiet. Theirs not to reason why. They had been hired for a specific job. They hoped that there would be some killing in connection with it, for that would increase their price. But, if not, they would be satisfied with the amount they had been promised.

Guns for hire. Men for hire. Mercenaries have been used in all times and in all climes. Used for war. This was in effect a small scale war. It was up to The Shadow alone to keep that miniature war from turning into a full scale one.

One of the men, easing his gun in its shoulder holster, said at random, "Never thought I'd be trucking out this way again."

"Yare," this was from one in the back of the car. "I had lots of fun out here. Never thought I'd go out on business though."

Their faces were blank. They were thinking in retrospect. The fact that murder might stain their hands that night was but one of the factors in their existence, like buying a new hat.

"Ya trust that guy, the fat one?" asked the man whose gun was now comfortable.

"Trust him? What's with you? We got half down, didn't we? Leave it to me to get the rest. I tailed him one night... he didn't know it. We'll get the rest, don't worry..."

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In The Shadow's cab Shrevvie was peering out into the darkness. He said, "This is the site... but where do we go now?"

"I had Hawkeye go to the public library... I have a good idea where it was buried. Turn right here. Then we walk."

The cab stopped. Its lights were out. The car's form was but a blob of darkness in the all-pervading, velvety night.

As Shrevvie got out of the parked car to follow the shrouded form that walked with determined steps across the ground, he asked, "What do I do now?"

"Sit tight. Get back in the cab. We may be leaving in a hurry!" The laugh that followed these words was haunting, mocking. It trailed off as The Shadow's figure became indiscernible.

Shrevvie grunted and got back in the cab. He tried to look out of the cab but it was much too dark. He wondered why The Shadow had encumbered himself with a shovel. They had picked it up in a hardware store much against the wishes of the owner of the store who had been trying to close up for the night.

The last tiny sound of The Shadow's progress was gone now. Shrevvie sat and waited, nerves on edge. Then, long after The Shadow had gone, he heard the muffled sound of motors. Somewhere near him there were other cars. They were as unseen as he was. He tensed. Any minute now there might be fireworks.

Away off to the side, The Shadow paused and set his shovel down. He grinned at a sudden idea. Why do all the work himself and take a chance at being caught unawares? No. He hid the shovel under a hummock of dirt and proceeded to make himself as inconspicuous as possible, and for The Shadow that meant invisible.

He settled down for a wait. It shouldn't be long. His sensitive ears heard the sound of the other cars that had attracted Shrevvie. There... any minute now.

The three cars disgorged ten men. They stood and waited. Another car drove up and the pear-shaped man exited. He looked around and said, "Good, you are very prompt. You have brought the shovels?"

One of the men nodded. He was surly. The idea of manual labor was distasteful... but the pay was so good.

On the back of the cab, Harry Vincent, strained fingers cramped, dropped off the car and rolled under it. He was unseen. The shovels, the location, all puzzled him. He saw enough of the men's faces to tell him that here were some very bad boys indeed. He couldn't help but wonder if his mentor, The Shadow, were anywhere about. A moment's consideration made him decide that was out of the question. For how would The Shadow have been able to deduce the place where they were?

No, he thought, this is all up to me. For, if I hadn't trailed the fat man, how could I have known where he was going? His thoughts were interrupted by a gesture of the fat man's. The men, shovels over shoulders, walked off in single file following the bizarre outline of the man who had hired them.

Seconds later, pausing only long enough to give them a head start, Harry Vincent rose and followed them. He was as careful as though he were stalking man-eating tigers.

At that, it might have been safer to trail four-legged beasts. These who marauded on two feet were infinitely more cunning and more dangerous.

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Through the night walked the singular procession. The pear-shaped man was at the head of the line. The others straggled after. And twenty paces behind the last gun man walked Harry Vincent. The whole affair was baffling in the extreme. Why were they here... what did they intend to dig for? The very idea of buried treasure in the Flushing Meadows was too absurd to give any credence to. No. It certainly couldn't be treasure... but what then?

The narrow shoulders and wide hips of the man in the lead were stationary now. He took a paper out of his pocket and looked at it. Then, looking up, he gazed around him. He looked back at the piece of paper and said, "Right about here should be correct. Get to work, men."

He stepped back out of the way as the men began to dig at the spot he had indicated. As they began to work he pulled a gun from his pocket. It was a Parabellum and wicked looking in the occasional flickering light that came from the men's flashlights.

There was a lot of preliminary cursing as the men shoved the shovels deep into the dirt. But that died down as they got deeper and deeper. It was tiring to muscles more accustomed to lifting a glass or pulling a trigger.

Soon there was no sound but grunts as they put their weight behind the shovels. The Parabellum, muzzle glinting fanned around in a circle.

One of the men who was waist deep in dirt looked up and said, "Watcha on guard for? There ain't been a flat foot out here since 1939!"

"One can never tell. It is better to be safe than sorry," said the pear-shaped man sententiously.

"How far down is the blasted thing?" asked another man who was sweating his starched collar into a pulp.

"Not much further... about ten feet!"

They groaned in unison but continued. The night wore on.

Shrevvie, alone in the dark was shredding a cigarette into confetti. How much longer? This dead silence was a little maddening. He'd have preferred gun shots to this.

Harry Vincent, not daring to make a sound, lay on the ground with a puzzled frown on his face. What in the name of the seven tails of Beelzebub could they be digging for? At this rate, they'd be coming out in China. Suddenly, shocking after the sounds that they had all become accustomed to, there was the clashing sound of metal on metal.

"Hold it!" The pear-shaped man pointed his flash down into the excavation that they had made. The flickering feeble light showed a strange sight. Buried, still more than three quarters covered with dirt was a dull copperish looking torpedo shaped object that seemed about ten feet long.

"That's it. Drag it up."

The men wrestled the object, which was slippery, up the incline they had made. They rolled it in front of them. There was a grin of satisfaction on the leader's face. His jowls danced as he spoke. "Now open it up and we can beat it."

One of the men said. "Huh... and they thought it wouldn't be opened for a thousand years!"

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In the bushes to one side, Harry Vincent stopped a gasp in midstream. A thousand years... The strange object could be but one thing. Harry looked around him. Of course... no wonder the area had been naggingly familiar. This was the site of the 1939 World's Fair!

The gilt and the gingerbread had long since disappeared, practically forgotten in the frightening events that had come on the heels of the Fair. This was what was left of the revelry, the gaiety, the exhibits. This, a deserted area not far from the far-famed La Guardia field. And come to think of it the air field had been built here just to take advantage of the surveying and filling in that had been necessitated by the construction of the Fair.

Looking up in the air, Vincent could see in his mind's eye the huge model of a cash register that had dominated the scene. On its giant board it had shown the number of people who came to the Fair. As part of the ceremonies at that World's Fair which had been designed to celebrate peace and the world of tomorrow, there had been... he looked down and saw the copper cylinder which had just been resurrected. There had been a time when that cylinder had been headline news.

The time capsule.

It had contained all the things which the man of 1939 had wanted the men who came after, a thousand years after, to see... movies, perfumes, men's and women's clothes, books, microscopic reductions of newspapers, microfilm recordings of scientific data... all that which men had wanted to leave for the men of 2939.

But what could there possibly be in the capsule that warranted the events of the evening? On the heels of this thought, like a period to them, came that frightening, low chuckle that was a compound of malice and amusement...

The low eerie laugh of The Shadow! It petrified the men who stood around the copper cylinder. They stood stock still... only their narrowed vicious eyes moved.

It was one of the qualities of The Shadow's laugh that it filled the air; it seemed to come from nowhere; from everywhere. It was all around them menacing them with its knowing, rolling laughter.

CHAPTER VII

LIKE children playing the game of statues, where the first one to move a muscle becomes "it," the men froze at their positions. Not one of them moved till the last mocking echo had become one with the night.

Then, and not till then, did the leader speak. He asked, "What was that?" His voice shook. Creature of violence though he was, there was something in that laugh that was so implicit with power, that it turned his few muscles to jelly.

"On'y one guy in the would laughs like dat... Ain'ch'a never hoid of The Shadow?"

The Shadow... El Sombre... La Sombra... In France, in Spain, where evil men had gathered to plot vile machinations, that noun had been a word that struck fear into breasts that had never before known the meaning of the word. The pear-shaped man shook his head. Yes, he knew who The Shadow was.

His jowls quivering, he said, "Nonsense. The Shadow is but a man. And we are men. To work!

"All of you, guns out. Form a circle around the cylinder. I will open it. At the first sound, shoot and shoot to kill!"

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The men obeyed. They didn't like it, but they did as they were told. They made a wall of flesh around the pudgy man as he worked over the intricate locking arrangement that held the secrets of 1939.

In all the surrounding space there was nothing to give the slightest clue as to where that laugh might have come from. All was still.

There was a click. They shifted their eyes for a moment and were able to see the side of the cylinder had flapped open. The pear-shaped man was rapidly, ruthlessly tossing out the contents of the copper capsule.

The objects made a mound next to him in the soft dirt they had dug up. He swore in a variety of languages. Some place in all this mess was something which he had to find. Would he have enough time or would The Shadow come after him? If only that laugh hadn't occurred when it did. This was a job that demanded care and skill. He mustn't take the chance of discarding anything which might be the object he sought.

Harry Vincent, gun out of his pocket, eyed the proceedings. He didn't care at the moment how The Shadow had found his way out to this spot; he was just grateful for the knowledge that he was not alone.

There had been two motives for The Shadow's laugh. One had been to frighten the men out of their complacency. For with fear, came haste and miscalculation. The other motive had been to apprise Vincent of his presence. His eyes, narrowed to take advantage of the slightest bit of light had spotted the form of his assistant on the pile of dirt.

Frantically, like a rat in a laboratory maze, the pear-shaped man ruffled through the objects that he had thrown out of the cylinder. He had not found it. Therefore it must be amongst the things that he had discarded.

Could it be? He opened a magazine, a picture magazine. He sighed with relief. Between the pages where he had not noticed it the first time was the stapled set of papers for which he had been searching.

Clutching it to his pudgy breast as though it were his passport to paradise, he scrambled clumsily up the incline. There he stood, stock still, watching, waiting.

There was something of an anticlimax about the whole thing. He had thought that the moment he came out of the pit flashing gun fire would herald an attack.

The silence continued. All he could hear was the breathing of the men he had hired. They stood shoulder to shoulder around him, bristling with guns. It became laughable when nothing happened, when no threat came.

But he could not dare to become careless. He must be even more careful now that he had it. He shuddered at the thought of what would happen to him if it should become known that he had lost that sheaf of papers.

He cleared his throat huskily. "Start to walk back to the cars. Keep me surrounded, the way you are now. Walk slowly and carefully. The attack may come at any moment."

In a way they looked like some primitive kind of dreadnaught. Their guns projecting from the circle, they moved across the ground.

It was then, when the tension was as tight as the wires on a guitar, that a thought struck the fat man. He swore to himself. Aloud he said, "What's wrong with me? That laugh has thrown me off my stride!"

"We can't walk off and leave things this way! Publicity about the events of this evening is something that I

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can do without! We must remove all evidences of what we have done!"

He stood stock still thinking of what the possible consequences of his stupidity might have been. The first passerby would be sure to call in the police. That laugh! It had served its purpose if its purpose had been to muddle him.

He split the men. "Half of you will have to continue to act as guards. The other half... down into the hole and start replacing everything in the cylinder."

The tension became more taut. The men down in the hole put the things which were to be relics of the year 1939 back into the copper container.

The others, fingers curved around their triggers, stood at attention. Each of them tried to peer through the blackness that hung over them. They had reason to fear The Shadow.

Somehow the inactivity, the lack of any menacing move from the man they feared, redoubled their anxiety. They worried about what he might be doing.

The dirt was piling back into the excavation now. The fat man's head moving constantly so that he looked like a snake about to strike. He wished he had eyes to see behind him. The Shadow, watching the frenzied activity as the men with the shovels hurried to pile the dirt back in and tamp it down as best they could, thought, "They're just about due to crack any minute now!"

The fat man spoke. "Pack it down tight. What can't go back there, you'll have to scatter around. We can't have a mountain bulging up where there has never been one before!"

The men sweated at the unaccustomed work. The gunmen, whose task was really more onerous for they were the armor for the workers, sweated too.

Finally it was done. The pear-shaped man wiped his forehead and said, keeping his voice low, "All right. Now back in position."

They surrounded him as he began to walk across the ground. The guns projecting out around them, looked, Harry Vincent thought, like the quills on a porcupine. But these quills were a little more deadly.

They walked towards him. There was no doubt about it now. They were about thirty feet away. They were going slowly, flashing their lights around them as they oozed forward.

Twenty feet away now. It was too late for him to try and get out of the way. With their ears sharpened by fear, the slightest sound might well be his last. Would nothing turn their feet away from the path they were taking?

They stopped for a second while the fat man looked all around him carefully. What he expected to see baffled Harry. But it was nerves, a reflex action, not the result of any thinking activity that made him act as he did.

Ten feet away now... He could hear their breathing. It was an unpleasant sound which he could well have done without. Five feet... Harry Vincent held his breath. What evil fate had possessed them to walk in his direction? The first man was practically on top of him now... There would be no point in trying to roll out of the way. In the state of tension that they were in, the slightest sound would have precipitated a hail of gun fire.

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Then it came. One of the men putting a cautious foot forward found his toe buried in something that was too resilient to be dirt or mud. His gun flashed down.

Just before he could fire, just at the second that he was roaring, "Hey... here he is!" a gun shot tore through the quiet of the night. The bullet snapped from the barrel of The Shadow's .45. His aim was, as ever, unerring. The bullet crashing into the man's gun, tore it from his grasp along with one of his fingers. The finger and the gun landed a few feet away.

Instantly the night was full of red orange flashes. Disconcerted by the shot coming from the opposite direction from where the man's cry had seemed to indicate it should come from, they fired at hazard.

On the ground, ten feet away from where he had been when the man's toe revealed his hiding place, Harry Vincent's gun added its chatter to the ear numbing uproar. He and The Shadow had all the advantage.

Their whereabouts were unknown whereas the men's flashes, just before they had doused them had made them perfect targets. Harry, wise in this kind of warfare, aimed low. He raked his gun back and forth at knee level.

Far better to fire there where a bullet was sure to disable than to risk trying to shoot at that most difficult of targets, the human head.

Men who have been in battle comment on the fact that suddenly in the middle of the worst engagement there will come a cessation of all sound. It is like the pause, the silence that people have noticed so often that superstitions have grown up about the whiskers on the clock. If there is a united period of quiet, children will look at the clock and if the hands are at quarter of three the children will all wish; for they know that the wish must come true.

Harry, thinking of this, smiled as he made his wish. The clock did not have any whiskers, but the silence was maintaining. It was as though both sides had stopped simultaneously in order to take a breath and look around.

Then a trigger happy gunman let go at random and the shooting began again as though it had never stopped. Harry's gun was hot to his hand.

He had used the period of silence, the unspoken armistice, to reload his gun. He went back to shooting about two feet off the ground. His shots racketed away drowning out for a little while his knowledge of what was going on around him. He knew that the flashes of flame from his gun were revealing his position, but he was holding the gun out almost at arm's length and swiveling it in a large circle, always keeping his shots down low.

From the muffled curses and an occasional groan, it became obvious that his strategy was bearing bloody fruit. Suddenly he became conscious of that fact that no shots came from the other side where The Shadow had been.

The Shadow, every sense alert, despite the action and the danger of the fight had seen the narrow-shouldered form of a man sneaking away from his hired mercenaries.

Still holding the papers against his flabby breast, he was bent over double, ducking behind any hummock that might give him the slightest bit of cover. The sound of the shots behind him as he beat his retreat reassured him. No one would notice the absence of one man from eleven. Not in the all pervading darkness, of that he was sure.

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But like many criminals he had underestimated the acumen of his enemy. Unseen, like a shifting black piece of fluff, The Shadow made his way after the pudgy form of the man who thought he was escaping.

Once realizing that The Shadow was gone, Harry Vincent had no trouble in the confusion that surrounded him, in making his way toward the cars. Behind him, men stunned, undecided, fired sporadic shots at each other. They had become separated and no man knew his brother. All thought that the other was the enemy and shot accordingly.

In his cab Shrevvie sat hunched over the wheel, every sense keyed up. The sound of the shots had been welcome at first, but he had expected the hurtling figure of The Shadow to come catapulting out of the darkness with, perhaps, a flock of men in pursuit. But, now there was another wait.

In the pall of blackness, the man with the papers grinned. He was getting away with it. What was more, he thought with a grin, he owed The Shadow a debt of gratitude. Now he would not have to pay the men the other half of the money that he had promised them. With luck, The Shadow might kill off the whole greedy pack of them!

Shrevvie, hearing a slight sound off to one side, tensed. He saw a globular shape making its way towards a parked car. He watched, peering through the night and he was rewarded. Another shape, as bizarre in its way as the fat man's, was trailing him!

The trailing silhouette was almost shapeless. Black on black made it impossible to be sure that it was a man that drifted along in pursuit of the fat man.

The Shadow stepping in the steps that the man ahead of him made moved with jungle caution. Every sense was keyed. He was determined to get up behind the other man without his knowing it. It was intuitive the way he matched pace for pace with the man.

If anyone could have seen them clearly they would have looked like marionettes controlled by the same set of strings, for as the pear-shaped man's left knee would rise, The Shadow's knee, mimicking, it would follow suit.

The fat man, almost all caution gone, was drawing deep gulps of air, everything was working out for the best in this best of all possible worlds. A good night's work.

He grinned an unpleasant grin. It was just as well it was dark, for the smile was something that belonged on a creature that lived under slimy rocks.

The bulking silhouette of his car loomed large ahead of him; it was reassuring. He felt better and better. It was a slick job. One that not everyone would have been able to bring to a successful conclusion.

His price was high, but he guaranteed satisfaction. He moved more rapidly now for safety was in sight. He even straightened up his back.

Ahead was his car. Once in it and away... He smiled at the thought. He had a lot of money coming to him for this job. He had some peculiar pleasures that were as expensive as they were rare. With the proceeds of this job he could really have some fun.

It was this pleasant thought that occupied him. He was still smiling when a black arm, hand heavy with a .45 came crashing down on his head. The Shadow knew better than to reverse a gun and hit with the handle. That way there was a chance that the other man might grab it from him. His method was best. He used the muzzle,

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and it was plenty with the force of his arm behind it.

The man sighed. It was like the sound of air escaping from a flat tire. He doubled into an untidy heap on the ground. Black gloved hands reached down and took the papers from his grasp. Even unconscious, his fingers were tight on them.

The Shadow risked a light to glance at the papers. He thought he knew what it was that had caused all this havoc but he didn't, couldn't know the precise terms that the paper held.

His eyes flicked back and forth. There were but two pages. The contents were important, but by far more important even than the writing were the signatures. The Shadow's hatchet face grew grim. His mouth was a tight bitter line that made a gash across his countenance. No wonder they had been willing to kill, to spend any amount. His face relaxed a little when he thought of the cleverness that had hidden this dynamite for so many years out here in the Flushing Meadows.

When Harry Vincent had made his cautious way out of the night and stood near The Shadow, he saw him take some papers out of his own pocket and place them in the pudgy fingers of the man who lay on the ground with the curious smile still on his lips.

At the wheel of the cab, Shrevvie was practically dancing on his seat with nerves. He called, "Hey, can cha come in here now? Let's get outa here, but fast. I don't like this here neck of the woods!"

Still angry The Shadow got into the cab. Harry Vincent was at his side. "What did you give that rat?"

"Some information that the government puts out on what a wonderful country America is..."

"Oh, you think that he may not notice the substitution?"

"It doesn't matter when he does, for he will sooner or later. It just amuses me to think of what he'll say when he does discover it. Come, we have plenty to do."

The cab drew away as the man on the ground opened agonized eyes. His head felt as though it were split in two parts. A racking headache made him grimace with pain. Almost as his eyes opened, he tightened his fingers. The rustle of paper reassured him.

He wondered fuzzily if a stray shot had creased him. The chance that he had been assaulted by The Shadow never occurred to him for he still had the papers in his hand and he had been so sure that he was alone and unobserved.

He staggered to his feet, crumpling the papers in his hand, as a wave of pain made his stomach turn over. He shook his head and almost fainted with pain. His car... a car, anything to get him out of here. There he could see something a little distance away.

Weaving his way to the car, he fell into the seat. He ground his foot down on the gas and was off in a cloud of mud and dust. But one thought occupied his dazed mind. He must get to the man who had hired him before anything else untoward occurred. If it had been a more traveled road he would have been arrested long before he got back to Manhattan, for the car swerved crazily as he drove along.

But the drive, the night air refreshed him. Passing an all night stand, he stopped the car and ran into the phone booth in the back of the place. He called a number, whispered that success had crowned his efforts and was told to hurry back to the Rosebud Taverne on Third Avenue.

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Gulping down a Bromo he left the stand and got back into the car and drove back to town. Still befuddled, he had stuffed the papers into his pocket so that no one in the roadside stand would see them.

Back in the bar room looking as if he had never left the booth in the rear, sat the thin lithe man. He tapped impatient fingers on the table in front of him. The huge bartender made his way to the table.

"What'll it be?"

"The same as before." The man went on twiddling his fingers in a mad tarantella.

The men at the bar sat with heads a little closer to the bar, otherwise nothing seemed to have happened. The juke box was silent, but that didn't last. For as the pear-shaped man wove his way in through the door, the thin man dropped a quarter into the box and the agonized wails again emanated from the record player.

The pear-shaped man slumped into the seat in the dark booth. He pressed his hands to his aching head. "Must we have that infernal thing pounding away?"

"You know we must. Come, where is it?"

A pudgy hand, so fat that the knuckles were dimples instead of protuberances, shook as he took the paper from his pocket and handed it to the lithe dark man.

He took it and caressed it with his hands. He petted it as one would a dog, or a cat. "Good... good. Excellent. I never expected such fast service. Believe me, I have died a thousand deaths while you were out there."

"I almost died one death, but a real one! Some one, something was out there... It laughed... ugh." The fat man contorted his face.

"Some one that laughed?" The dark, thin, lithe man put the papers down on the table in front of him. But his hands did not let go their hold. "What are you talking about? Are you on the needle?"

"No, of course not. There was somebody out there. I left the boys to take care of things. That's what they're paid for!"

"There was a fight?"

"A beauty!"

"I see... who could it have been? Who would know?"

"I don't know and now that it's all over I don't care. I just want the rest of my money and then I'm going to take some time off. I need a rest. My nerves..." He held out a shaking hand.

"Pah! You haven't got a nerve hidden away in that gross body of yours."

It was absurd, the fat man tried to draw himself up with dignity. The other laughed at him and downed a drink which had been on the table. "You wouldn't," he asked, "be trying to get a bonus out of me, would you?"

The other looked upset at the implication or tried to, but his features did not lend themselves to it very well.

"Laughs, fights... bah... you are up to your old tricks!" The man laughed.

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"If you say so." The fat man said in a wounded manner.

"Have you looked at this?" The dark man rustled the papers in front of his face.

"Just out there at the World's Fair site and just enough to be sure that they were what you wanted."

The pear–shape was relaxed like something made of wax that has melted. His head rested between his hands. He watched the other man look at the papers.

He was completely unprepared for the fury that shot from the man's eyes like heat lightning.

"What are you trying to get away with?" The thin man's voice was low and menacing. He took his hand out of his pocket. It had a gun in it. But the other man could not see it, for it was under the table.

The muzzle of the gun was pointed directly at the bulge of fat that marked the stomach of the fat man. Not knowing this, he lifted dazed eyes. "Get away with? What do you mean?"

As his finger tightened on the trigger the thin man thought, I should have known it. He's double–crossing me. He's put the real papers some place... and he's trying to get more money from me.

"You know what I mean. Where's the real thing?"

"Don't know what you mean." The jowly–faced man looked puzzled and frightened.

As soon as the man pulled the trigger he was sorry. It was his temper. It always got the better of him. Now that he had shot this fat oaf, how was he to find the real papers?

Like a man who has had one drink too many, the fat man fell slowly forward. His hands extended palms up as though he were imploring help.

His head came slowly to rest on his arms. Then he was still. The bullet had not killed him, for a stomach wound never kills fast. It takes days of agony before such a wound finally finishes its work. The shot, the shock of it coming on top of his battered head, was too much. No fat person's heart can take much of a jouncing around.

The thin dark man reached out a hesitant hand and felt for a pulse. The fat around the wrist would have made it difficult to find even if the man were alive.

At the bar the huge bartender slowly put down the sour rag with which he had been making a pretense of polishing some glasses. He sighed a heavy sigh. A shooting. Wasn't that pretty? Now he'd have cops lousing up the joint for weeks.

He started out from behind the bar. He didn't like to be a rat but he could get rid of the cops a lot quicker if he turned the guy that did it over to the police.

At the table the thin man got up and saw the menace represented by the bartender. He grinned, a tight unpleasant little grin and moved the muzzle up so it pointed right at the bartender's middle.

"Ah, were you thinking about interfering with my leaving?"

Looking into the gaping mouth of the steel–blue gun barrel, the bartender reconsidered. He sighed again and

said, "Okay, so I have cops underfoot. Beat it."

Gun steady in a small strong hand, the man retreated from the bar backwards. His mind was in a turmoil. Of all the rotten breaks. He wracked his tired mind trying to imagine where the man could have hidden the papers the real ones.

He was going to have to have an interview with his superior, and he was not looking forward to it. He left the bar and, once on the street, pocketed his gun. Looking up and down the street reassured him. Behind him in the bar, the bartender was phoning for the police, but there were none in sight. No one to keep him from doing his errand.

In a swanky apartment house, he elbowed his way past some stuffy looking women and made his way up to an apartment. Once inside, he gritted his teeth and, with a muscle working in his cheek, he walked across the room. He knocked on a door. A voice answered.

He entered.

CHAPTER VIII

SHREVVIE'S cab ordinarily occupied by but one passenger was carrying two tonight. Harry Vincent and The Shadow. A pleased smile was on Vincent's face. He had seen The Shadow look at the papers which had been the prize in that strange fight.

"I don't think I have ever," said Vincent, "wandered around in such a blind fog. How did you know that there would be fireworks out at the site of the old World's Fair?"

"It was a combination of rather strange things. There was the bloody symbol that Yerkes left, that symbol which might have been the Molvannian symbol, but was instead, his crude, dying attempt to leave us a clue to the Fair grounds. You see what he really tried to draw was the trylon and perisphere which was the sign of the Fair, if you remember. In death, he was too far gone to draw it properly."

"Oh sure. It was a globe and a sort of skinny triangle-shaped pyramid. But how could you have crystal-balled that?"

"I couldn't have, not just by itself. But there was other evidence. Dom Brassle's dying words... 'The world is fair...' He didn't say that. He said, 'World's Fair.' Then, 'Time... cap!...' He was trying, gasping his life out in the attempt, to say the Time Capsule!"

"Whew..." Vincent whistled.

"The way a thing can be interpreted in a variety of ways..."

"Dom Brassle was the victim of an attempted killing just before he got to the U.N. headquarters. I found that out since then. They didn't want to kill him in the circumstances that they did. It was forced on them when he escaped the earlier ambush. They had to kill him before he could tell the world about the contents of the Time Capsule buried away out in the Flushing Meadow."

"Then he was never trying to say that Captain Derry was his killer?"

"He was too big a man to worry about who the individual was that had shot him. All he was concerned with was trying to let us know about the evidence..."

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The cab came to a stop at a red light. The Shadow looked out at the street sign. "You go on with Shrevvie, Harry. I still have some work to do."

Before Vincent could do more than nod, the door of the cab had opened and closed. A sinuous writhing of darkness near a building and that was all that either of The Shadow's agents saw of him that night.

Captain Derry sat behind a table that was shaped in the odd form of an amoeba. It was the functional design beloved of modern decorators. His eyes were cold as he listened to the report of a mission that had failed. He stirred the muddler in his drink and the ice cubes which rattled in the glass were no colder than his expression. He was tight inside. His insides were so tight that he felt if he didn't move something would break. He picked the muddler up out of his drink and snapped it between his strong fingers.

His moody face was drawn thin. It looked as if the skin were pulled tautly over a wire form. There was a dynamic look to him. The look transferred to the dark, lithe man. There were almost visible sparks.

The man had muttered out his story and then stood there, head bowed like a man waiting for the executioner. His eyes were following a pattern in the lovely oriental rug in front of him. His mind was empty. Endlessly, his eyes went around and around a whorl in the pattern.

The lovely room was still. The furnishings, everything was at variance with the emotion that was like a live thing.

Derry put his drink down and picked up the two broken ends of the glass muddler. Meticulously, concentrating on what he was doing, he threw first one then the other half of the muddler into the wastepaper basket. They rattled there breaking the silence.

"You have nothing else to say?" His voice was bitter like aloes.

"Nothing, sir." The man still kept his eyes on the whorl. He was drained. There was nothing left inside him. He knew what was coming and waited for it.

Then the quiet descended again.

At one side of the long room, S. T. Tarr, immaculate, bandage still making a pattern across his handsome features, sat and watched the anger grow inside of Captain Derry. They were both looking at the thin, lithe man who had made his report.

Tarr broke the gathering silence. He said, "Keep me out on this deal, Derry. I'll see you tomorrow."

No one answered him as he made his way to the door. He paused there and looked at the lithe man. "I'll be seein' you."

He left. Then there was complete silence. Derry put his glass down.

On the street The Shadow, completely invisible in a patch of black at the outer edge of a penumbra of light, saw Tarr leave the building. Tarr stopped outside the door and looked up at the blank incurious face of the house. He looked up at a window where light made an eye in the darkness. He shuddered a trifle. His shoulders moved, hunched inside his clothes. He moved away. He had a good idea what the price of failure would be.

As he walked off down the street The Shadow, interpreting the emotion correctly, speeded up his progress.

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There was a fire escape at the side of the building. The blackness was not even disturbed as the black hatted and caped figure of Nemesis climbed steadily.

But, at that, he was a second too late. He peered in through the window. Captain Derry was looking at the fallen body of his agent. The tableau remained static for a moment. Then Derry, leaning over, pulled a chased-handled dagger out of the back of the man who would never move again.

Derry's mouth was tight. He wiped the blade on a tissue. That accomplished, he replaced the knife on the table. It was decorative and looked quite harmless now. A letter opener, one would take it for.

The Shadow, curious to see how the man would handle the problem, waited in the darkness. He watched as Derry, stepping fastidiously around the body, went to the phone.

Ears attuned, The Shadow listened to the clicks of the dial on the phone. Derry stabbed at each hole in the dial as though it were a personal enemy. He had a short wait before he got his party. His voice was low. "Get over here."

A short silence. Then, "Right now."

He hung up. Stepping back across the body, he picked up his glass and without haste drained it.

On the fire escape The Shadow's mind was like a beautifully functioning machine. So far he had been right on every score. The one big remaining problem, that of the identity of Dom Brassle's murderer and the strange secret of the death of his assistant, Yerkes... These questions were being answered in a sort of way. The Shadow could not be absolutely sure. And until he was, he would not act.

Across town, S. T. Tarr walked into the long room that snobbery and snobbery alone had made world famous. It was the fabled dining room of the smart set, the club that was known to the intimates simply as '24.' At the far end of the room past the bowing and scraping maitre d'hotel, Tarr saw a woman.

He smiled and Irene Barret flickered a small smile in reply. She was finishing her meal. She wondered if she were going to be annoyed as Tarr made his way to her table. Even though she did not like him particularly, a womanly reflex made her send a reassuring hand to her hair. She patted it, making sure that all was well and that not a single hair had escaped the shellac that holds an updo in place.

In her middle thirties, she did not make herself absurd by trying to look like a twenty year old. Instead, the charm that is the result of years of experience, made her good looking.

"My dear, every time I see you, you look more lovely."

"Thank you." Irene's mouth quirked up at the edges. It was a lie, but who had ever said that a lie was necessarily disagreeable?

"Won't you sit down?" She had to ask because he looked ready to stand in front of the table indefinitely.

"I'll join you in a B and B." He sat down next to her.

"Very well."

They waited for their drinks. She wondered what he was after. He was so invariably in the company of beautiful women that she could not be conceited enough to think that it was her face that attracted him.

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However, in this she was wrong. Through sheer perversity, because she was so obviously not interested in him any more, Tarr was by way of carrying the torch for her.

"Anything new on the U.N. deal?" he asked.

"Nothing that I've heard and I've had my ear glued to the radio all night. The wire services are just rehashing the whole business over and over again."

"Curious set of circumstances. I wish I'd been able to help the police more. If I could have identified the guy who gave me this tender little memento..." Tarr felt the lump on his head, "It might set things a little straighter.

"But... must we," he asked, "always talk about impersonal things these days?"

"What would you like to talk about, the state of your soul?"

"No," he laughed, "that's in a sorry state. I just wanted to sit and look at you and tell you how beautiful you are."

"I never heard of a woman who would not open at least half an ear to a conversation like that." She smiled at him, but her eyes were cold.

"There," he complained, "you're doing it again. You always do. The minute I talk about anything but politics and world affairs you put on the freeze!"

"I wasn't conscious of doing anything. But perhaps you are right, perhaps I do prefer to talk about the world." She smiled a brief smile.

"Okay, I can take a hint, you don't have to belt me on the head..." He paused and smiled ruefully. "I wish I could have convinced the character that walloped me, of that."

"That is a nasty looking thing. It must hurt terribly."

"It does and that's no lie. However, it feels better if I don't think about it."

"Not many people, around tonight," she said, trying to make conversation.

"Too many for me. I'd like to be alone with you... some place that had all the romantic props, the moon... all that..."

Changing the conversation, she asked, "Would you be able to identify the man who did that to your head?"

"I'm sure I would."

"I don't know as that would help particularly. I'm sure that the killer was just a mercenary hired for the occasion."

"Probably," Tarr agreed.

Irene patted her mouth in a delicate gesture. He couldn't be sure whether she had really yawned or if it was a brush off. He sipped at his drink carefully, drawing it out as much as he could. "Too tired to see the town?"

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"Tonight? Oh... I'm afraid I must beg off. I couldn't really." She patted her lips again and this time her eyes tightened in a real yawn.

They both looked up in varying degrees of surprise. The tall stern faced man who stood over them was Lamont Cranston. The smile at the corners of his mouth softened his face only to a degree. He asked, "May I join you?"

"By all means." The yawn was gone. Irene Barret found this man strangely exciting. The very imperturbability that clothed him like armor was something new to her experience. She thought, he's seen everything and done everything at least twice.

Cranston looked at the bandage on Tarr's head and asked, "How's your head?"

"It's been worse from a hangover." Tarr wasn't too happy about this new table mate.

"Have you anything to add to our knowledge? We were discussing the U.N. deaths."

"Ummm..." Cranston's face was thoughtful. He had come here for a reason. "I imagine I can tell this to you two. The motivation for the death of Yerkes and Dom Brassle has been found."

They leaned forward expectantly.

"Well?" Tarr asked impatiently.

"As I see it the reason that the two men had to be killed on the spur of the moment was because of a pact that was made some years ago. The pact was made between one of the Balkan countries and a not very important corporal who had once been a bad house painter."

"A pact between one of the countries and Hitler?"

Cranston nodded.

"Now the whole business makes a little more sense." Tarr was swishing his drink around in its glass. "As a matter of fact this should tell you who the killer was representing. For, if Dom Brassle as the representative from Ruravia found out, or knew of the existence of such a pact between Molvannia and Hitler, it would certainly behoove Brassle to reveal that fact to the world!"

"Brassle was certainly determined that the world should know of the pact. In that you are right," Cranston said.

Irene's mind was busy. She asked, "Where was that pact, and where is it now?"

Cranston explained about the time capsule without saying anything about the circumstances in which The Shadow had taken it away from armed men.

"In the time capsule at the World's Fair?" Tarr's voice was incredulous. "Wow! No wonder..." He stopped there.

Irene and Cranston looked at him, waiting for him to continue. Instead he said, "I wonder who thought up that wonderful place of concealment?"

Cranston shrugged the question off. Before he could speak Irene said, "The world is fair... time... cap... Brother, did I foul that up in trying to explain it. Of course, that was Yerkes' interpretation to me. Is it possible that he didn't know?"

"I don't think he knew when he spoke to you. The realization must have come to him as he was dying. It was then that he made that scribble."

"The scribble?" Tarr drew his brow together in concentration. Then he snapped his fingers together. "Of course... that was what he was trying to draw. It was the Trylon and Perisphere... not the Molvannian national symbol as that stupid police commissioner thought." He stopped as a man cleared his throat behind him. Tarr looked around straight into the annoyed eyes of Commissioner Weston.

Cranston and Irene exchanged amused glances. There was no amusement in Weston's eyes as he said, "Despite any of your opinions about my I.Q. I'm afraid that I'll have to ask all of you to join me down at police headquarters."

CHAPTER IX

"ISN'T it a little unusual for a Commissioner to make an arrest?" asked Irene.

"In the first place I'm not making an arrest and in the second place, Mario, who owns this place, is a friend of mine and didn't want any flat-footed cops walking in here."

"If it's not an arrest why should we go with you?" Tarr snapped.

"Because I ask you to, and it's going to look a little bad for you if you don't cooperate with me."

"What's up?" Irene asked. "I'm perfectly willing to help in any way."

"Just for the sake of completeness I'd like to subject all of you to the lie detector."

Arranging her furs around her soft white shoulders, Irene said, "What are we waiting for? Let's go."

"Good girl." Weston smiled his appreciation. "What about you, sir?"

Tarr shrugged. "I'll go along with the gag."

Cranston took Irene's arm and followed the broad back of Weston outside to the waiting official car. In a cab nearby Shrevvie grinned at the sight. The way that babe was looking at the boss...

He followed the long black limousine down to Centre Street. He relaxed in his seat as he saw the passengers go up the stairs in between the green lights.

"You all know, I suppose, that courts do not allow lie detectors as evidence?" Tarr asked.

"That's right," Weston agreed. "This is just for the sake of clarification. We are hoping to get some clue, no matter how tiny."

Following the direction of Cranston's gaze, Irene saw a strange looking man being booked at the desk.

"Who's that?" asked Cranston of Weston.

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"His name is Peterson. At least that's what's on his passport. The whole thing is rather curious. We got a phone call, an anonymous tip that we should look into a car that had a certain license number that was driving down towards the East river. We sent out a radio car and nabbed that man and two others in the act of transporting a body from the car to the river."

"Caught him red handed, eh?" Cranston asked. Of course, he knew all about it, for it had been The Shadow who had called. The dead man was the one that Captain Derry had stabbed. It had been Peterson whom Derry had phoned.

But Weston was saying, "In some way I don't quite understand, the dead man is connected with our U.N. case. He was one of the attaches of the Molvannian delegation. Just one more complexity," he sighed.

As they walked past Peterson he leered at Irene. "What'd they get you for, babe?"

Before any of them could move to prevent it, Tarr slapped Peterson across his fat mouth. "Keep that flabby trap shut! and I mean shut!" They left the fish tank behind them as they walked towards the center of the old building. Impregnated in the old wood was that curious compound of odors that identify police buildings the world over. It was made of dust and cleaning with dirty mops. Of disinfectants and of too many unwashed bodies. Of sweat and fear...

The room to which Weston guided them looked completely out of place. As a matter of fact, Irene was right when she said, "My, looks just like a Doctor Kildare picture."

The walls were white and shining. Delicate instruments gave the place the air of a scientific laboratory rather than a room in a police headquarters. The two technicians who stood beside the instrument were dressed like internes, white linen coats buttoned under their necks. They were smiling.

One of them asked, "Shall I call in the others, sir?"

Weston nodded. There was a pause. In the silence that followed, Tarr looked at the sphygmomanometer and the other apparatus. It was impressive looking.

The technician returned. With him was a motley group. Wallaby Willy, imperturbable, smiled a hello to Cranston and said, "Hi, bub."

Behind him were some men from the Molvannian delegation followed by Captain Derry looking furious. Then there were representatives of Ruravia whom Cranston knew only by sight.

They milled around the room and at long last got into some semblance of order.

Weston said, "In any other circumstance I would apologize for dragging you all down here at this ungodly hour. But as you must all realize this is a case where time is of the essence. Therefore, I am asking all of you of your own volition to submit to a test by the lie detector."

He paused. "Any questions?"

"How does that invention of the devil work?" asked Wallaby Willy. His eyes were a gleam with interest. Weston turned to one of the technicians. "All right, Charlie."

"As you may know there are a variety of devices for determining the truth or falsity of statements. Up in Fordham U., Father Lynch uses a delicate machine which can check on the amount of perspiration on your

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palms. An excess of emotion makes the palm of a guilty person become a trifle wetter than it should. His machine will determine what that excess is. Then by plotting a graph of the response to various questions it is possible to tell the difference between the truth and a lie."

"We, however, use the same machine that is used by the F.B.I." He pointed to it with the same pride that a father would display over a new-born baby. "This gadget is really a sphygmomanometer. That sounds very impressive, but if you've ever had your blood pressure taken, the machine or gadget that the doctor used is also a sphygmomanometer."

"Simply, this machine of ours can determine by fluctuations of your blood pressure whether or not you are telling the truth. It involves the emotions when you tell a lie. It is the difference in the emotional level that we chart."

He reached behind him and picked up a deck of cards. He flipped the case off and began to shuffle the deck. He said, "Will someone take a card, any card at all."

Irene whispered in Cranston's ear, "My God, card tricks at this hour!"

"They have found," Cranston whispered back, "that the machine works best when the person who is being examined realizes how the gadget works. Watch this..." It was Captain Derry who with bad grace reached out and took a card. He looked at it. It was the king of spades. Holding it so that no one could see it, he replaced it in the deck. The technician let Derry shuffle the deck and put it in his pocket.

"Are you satisfied that you are the only one who knows the name of the card you looked at?"

"Yes. You'd have to be a mind reader to find it."

The technician seated Derry in front of the machine and made various adjustments as he fastened it to the Captain.

"Was your card the ace of clubs?"

Derry shook his head, no.

"Remember when I do come to your card do your best to fool me. Be as poker faced as you can, try to say no in just the same tone you have used all along."

"I understand. You won't be able to tell."

The technician went through the deck rapidly, calling off the names of the cards. It didn't take long.

When he had finished calling off the names of the cards, Derry said, "Well, can you tell?"

The technician was looking at a rotating smoked drum. An arrow had cut an impression into it. Wavy lines up and down showed the normal ebb and flow of the systolic and diastolic rate. At one section, the graph showed a high peak and then a sudden drop. The man looked at it and then checked with the time schedule.

He looked at Derry and smiled. "You are positive that by no gesture or facial expression did you tell me that the name of your card was the king of spades?"

The people in the room were surprised at the response on Derry's part. He swore under his breath in his own

tongue and turned white.

"It is witchcraft!" he spluttered.

Cranston took Weston by the arm and led him out of the room as the technician took out a prepared list of questions in preparation for the beginning of the real test.

Outside earshot of the room, Cranston asked, "May I see the list of questions?"

Weston wordlessly handed him a carbon.

"I see." It was a list of questions, some innocuous and others loaded. All the loaded ones were in regard to the murders at the U.N. building.

"I would suggest that you add to the list these questions." Cranston reeled off some questions about the time capsule and about the World's Fair. He finished by saying, "Only Irene Barret and Tarr have any right to know about this, for I told them. Any emotional response on the part of the others will be a good indication of guilty knowledge. I would suggest too that you include the man, Peterson, in your lie detection experiment."

"I had intended to do that. But, about this other business... What's all this about the World's Fair?"

Cranston outlined what had happened sketchily.

"Whew." Weston's brow corrugated and he said, "This keeps getting worse and worse, Cranston, we must get this out of the papers and quickly before the... before the match is applied to the powder keg that is the world. If anything goes wrong now... atomic warfare... It must not happen!"

"The best way to prevent it is for you to get those accessory questions onto your examiner's list right now."

Weston bustled back into the room. He drew the technician to one side and spoke to him.

Tarr had volunteered to be the first guinea pig. He had said that he wanted to get home, not to wait there all night. He sat quite composedly in the chair with the shining instruments to his left. He winked at Irene and she smiled back.

"Now that you have seen the way the machine works, would you mind clearing the room?" Weston shooed them out of the room, leaving Tarr alone with his interrogators.

Time dragged on. Outside the window of the room in which they waited, a grey and leaden dawn was breaking over the metropolis. Irene smothered a yawn and drawing her furs closer to her cold body, said, "Wake me when anything happens, will you?"

Cranston nodded. The list had grown shorter. There were only two people left. Peterson and Irene. He had not wanted to look at any of the reports till they were all together and he could make comparisons between them.

Peterson left and returned. Irene got up sleepily and went into the question room. The questions were craftily worded, she realized. The first ones lulled you into an unsuspecting state and then at just the point where, if you were guilty, your senses were dulled, they'd drop in a loaded question that sent your pulse rate skimming up.

Hers took less time than the others, for they didn't bother with the questions about the World's Fair. "All

done?"

"Yes, and thanks a lot for your co-operation." Weston smiled at her. She had been a good sport about the whole thing. Not like some of the others, like Derry and Peterson. They had had to use force on Derry. His phlegmatic calm had been wrested from him by the original demonstration. There were too many things in the back of his canny mind that he had never thought would be in danger of being spotted by other eyes, or ears...

As she left the room, Cranston joined Weston. They looked down at the mass of data that waited their interpretation. Weston pointed to it. "It doesn't seem possible that in that mass of paper there may be the solution of this desperate case."

"The solution is there, I am sure, if we know how to interpret it." Cranston's face was set. He had picked up the first record, that of S. T. Tarr.

He walked over to the technician and asked him to go over it with him. They sat down.

"He's a cool customer. Look at the low level of the plateaus."

"I see that," said Cranston. "Just offhand I'd say that he was in the clear," said the technician. "Some of the curves are high, but none of them are on the loaded questions. As a matter of fact, as you can see, there's a drop on most of the important questions, as though he not only didn't know about the matter, but was also not much interested in it."

"What about these high curves?"

"Let's see... the highest was when I asked whether he had seen Irene Barret at the U.N."

They smiled at each other. "That means that he is more than interested in her, doesn't it?" asked Cranston.

"And how. She must be his pinup gal."

"I see. How about Captain Derry's report?"

The technician spread it before Cranston. Weston looked over their shoulders.

"My money would be on him for the man you want, but for this." The technician pointed to a level line on the graph. "As you can see he had almost no response on all the questions that had to do with the death of Dom Brassle and Yerkes... all his high points are in regard to the World's Fair... and curiously, about a question I asked about Peterson."

Cranston could understand why Derry would be upset about Peterson. After all, Derry had never expected his co-worker in the vineyard of crime to be arrested before he could throw Derry's victim into the river. It must have been quite a shock. But then, Derry was going to be in for some worse shocks before this new day was over.

CHAPTER X

WHEN Cranston and Weston left the room, they found that all of the people involved who were not under arrest had left. Tarr had taken a very sleepy Irene home.

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"How do you think we stand now?" Weston wanted to know.

"A little better than we did before." After all, The Shadow had a tremendous weapon in reserve. He had the pact hidden away. When the time came, that would be his heavy artillery. Added to that was the knowledge gained by the lie detector.

"Can I drop you off?" Weston asked. "I've got to get some sleep."

"No, thank you, I'm not going home yet. I'll take a cab." Outside, the leaden sky had brightened a little. Cautious shafts of sunlight made their careful way across the dirty street. One such, made tiny by the aperture through which it entered the car, had focused on Shrevvie's hat, making his hack badge a golden, lovely thing. Cranston touched Shrevvie lightly. His eyes popped open, as Cranston said, "Wake up now."

"Who's asleep?" asked Shrevvie with high indignation. "I just was restin' me eyes." He grinned as he realized the futility of trying to fool Cranston. "Awright, so I grabbed a fast fifteen. Where to?"

"Drive uptown while I try to get my thoughts in order."

The cab slewed around a narrow corner. This end of Manhattan, old as the city itself, had never been redesigned. Streets originally made by the errant feet of wandering cows, had simply been covered with cobbles and left to their own devices.

At this time of day all of the traffic was in the other direction going downtown. Shrevvie eeled the car in and out around obstructions, past street pushcarts, across town and up the East River Drive. Here modern city planning had made an artery that took into cognizance the fact that people of today drive cars, not cows.

Cranston, eyes blind to the passing scene, was juggling elements around in his mind. Rarely if ever had a combination of events contrived so to obscure the real pattern.

There were two lines, two motives at work. The danger was that one might confuse one with the other. One set of circumstances revolved around the deaths at the U.N., the other around the pact that had been hidden away so long.

One man and only one man served to fasten those varying lines together. A cool canny opportunist who stopped at nothing. A man who was just, on a bigger scale, a gun for sale. But in his case the gun was equipped with a brain. That brain was as much for sale as the hand that held the gun.

Only intelligence can be a real threat. Sheer brute stupidity may be frightening, but the horror that brings crepitations along the spine comes when it is an active mind at work, and that work is all evil.

Adding, subtracting, Cranston arrived at a sum total that was indisputable. The enemy had not missed a chance. The enemy moreover was a past master at making the obvious seem like the reverse. He maneuvered the way a magician does. Using misdirection so that the eye followed the wrong hand, the enemy had misdirected the forces of law and order so badly that if Cranston missed out, and if the figure that was The Shadow did not come through, then the enemy stood a good chance of getting away scot free.

Shrevvie was jockeying for position for a turn, as is the wont of New York cabbies. Cranston was brought back to his surroundings with a start. A cab next to them had cut them off short. Shrevvie had only two choices, to ram the other car, or to drive up onto the concrete island that separated the northbound traffic from the south.

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Swearing a blue streak, he yanked the wheel over and jumped up on the island. His front wheels spun in the air. The driver of the other car looked back out of his cab and waved a derisive hand in farewell.

Whoever it is that weaves the cloth of fate had dropped a stitch, thought Cranston wryly, for, with his cab incapacitated, he saw, in a passing car, the white, drawn face of Captain Derry.

Derry was oblivious to the near accident of the cab. His car speeded forward. Cranston might have been tempted to add to Shrevvie's vocabulary, if, watching, he had not seen Derry's car cut off the parkway and park in front of an apartment house.

Picking up the inevitable brief case, Cranston left the cab. Shrevvie turned around to ask what he should do, only to see his employer stride off across the street. Cranston had a feeling as he followed the figure that was Captain Derry that if he could understand the relation of Tarr to Derry a bit better, then some of the puzzling aspects might be cleared up.

From bits and pieces that he had gathered together, the master manhunter thought that Tarr's role might well be that of a suppress agent. If this were true, then Cranston could understand some of Tarr's motivations. But what was still puzzling him was who Tarr's employer was.

It was full daylight now and the role of The Shadow was impossible for the moment. Instead, Cranston followed discreetly behind Derry as he went into the apartment house.

Taking advantage of a newsstand in the lobby, Cranston buried his head in a paper as Derry waited for an elevator. Soon Derry was ascending.

Cranston folded the paper he had bought and waited for the car to descend. When the door opened he said, "That friend of mine who just went up dropped this. I'd like to return it to him."

"This" was a wallet. As a matter of fact it was Cranston's. The elevator boy looked at the well filled wallet with avarice gleaming from his eyes.

"Okay, I'll take it up to him." He reached out a hand.

"Umm... if you don't mind, I think I'd like to give to Captain Derry myself."

The boy was surly as he closed the door. At the tenth floor he slammed the door open and jerked a thumb down the corridor. "He went into 10F."

The door of the elevator did not close all the way. Cranston realized that the elevator boy was watching him through a crack in the car door. There was nothing to do but walk up to the door. He reached down and pretended to press the button of the doorbell. He waited. Then he turned around and glared at the elevator door. That did it. The combination of seemingly pressing the bell and the glance at the door. The door clicked all the way shut and he could hear the car descend.

As soon as he heard the car go, he raced from in front of the door down to the end of the corridor. There was a window there, but no fire escape. Glancing out, he saw a tiny ledge.

Hoping that no one would see him, he stepped out of the window. Just the tip of his toe connected with the narrow channeling. He pressed down testing the ledge.

It was bad, he thought, but not as bad as some traverses he had made in the mountains of Switzerland. Testing

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each foothold before he allowed all his weight to rest on it, he made his cautious way along the narrow strip that spelled the difference between life and death to him. There was a window ahead. If the building was laid out as he hoped it was, this should be the first window of the apartment.

It was. Clinging to the window ledge with his fingertips, with his feet spread-eagled under him, he peered in through the curtains.

It was small and high and as he hoped, it was a bathroom window. He eased it up. It had obviously not been opened in ages. Shards of putty fell from the window to the floor inside the room. He stopped. No sound... seemingly, no one had heard him.

Reaching up, he grabbed the top of the frame of the window and kipped up. His feet entered the room first. He stood on solid footing again and it was a pleasant feeling.

Knowing that the construction of a floor is most solid near the wall, he inched his way forward toward the door, staying as close to the wall as he could. This way, staying near the wall, there was less chance of creakings from the floor giving away his presence.

The door was partially open. It led into a bedroom. It was a nicely appointed room, but a little overdone. He looked around the room. The bed was large, and over the head of it were some pictures. He smiled grimly. They were quite a give-away to the type of mind the owner of the room had.

Now he was at the door that led from the bedroom out into the living room. He peered through the aperture between the inside of the door and the jamb.

It was a narrow long slit. Through it he could see the room and most of its contents. Again the room was a little effete. It looked as though its primary function was to put a woman at ease.

Reclining on a long couch was the bandaged-headed figure of Tarr. He was in a dressing gown. He looked at his visitor, Captain Derry, with a peculiar expression.

Derry was saying, "I'm not taking much more."

"What's gotten into you? I thought we were doing business nicely." The expression had not changed. Cranston tried to decipher it. It was a compound of fear and something else.

"You've been pushing me pretty hard, you know, Derry."

"And I'll push you harder. Don't you realize I've lost the pact!"

Then Tarr's expression became static. All expression was gone. "How did that happen? Who's got it?"

"That's the hell of it. I don't know."

"Have you done anything about it?"

"Done anything about it? I've disciplined... the man who was responsible for the failure. But that doesn't help much."

"And you have no idea who has it?"

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"There was some kind of a pitched battle out in the meadows over it. One of the men kept mumbling something about a black figure that hovered around. But that was just an alibi for incompetence."

"A black figure...?" Tarr's eyes narrowed. "I wonder..."

"Wonder what? Speak up, man, don't make me threaten you again. I hold all the cards and don't forget it."

"How could I? You never let me..."

"Well?"

"It sounds improbable... but your black figure might well be The Shadow!"

"The Shadow? What kind of fantasy are you giving me. Who or what is The Shadow?"

"No one knows much about him. He's a man who fights for the other side from us."

"You mean a fool who believes in democracy and all that rot?"

"Uh-huh."

"In that case, why do you bother telling me fairy tales? Come, we must have some concrete suggestions, not democratic heroes!"

"In that case, I am afraid I can not help you at all. After all, the getting of the pact was your province, not mine. You failed... well..."

"Do not speak of failure. There has been enough of that kind of talk. The time now is right for action... not futilitarianism!"

"This is not the time, however, for speeches, my friend. You are up the creek, let's face it. Your biggest weapon is gone. What now?"

Anger made the muscles in Derry's jaw jump. "There you go again with your defeatism! Admittedly we have lost a valuable piece. But in chess, one can lose even the queen and still win! Remember that with Dom Brassle and Yerkes dead, our worst enemies are gone. Follow your usual course and we will try to do with diplomacy what has failed with force!"

"Okay, if that's the way you want to..." A knock on the door interrupted him. Tarr got up and went to the door. He opened it.

In the doorway stood the elevator boy. He said, "Maybe this ain't none of my business... but did a guy bring a wallet back to your friend, Mr. Tarr?"

"Wallet? What are you talking about?" Tarr swiveled his head around and stared at Derry. Derry put his hand to his breast pocket and took out his wallet.

The elevator boy said, "Huh. I thought it was a con! Some guy said he wanted to return this here now wallet, see? I dump him off on this floor. But then I get an idea maybe it ain't copasetic. So I figgered you'd maybe wanna know about it."

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Tarr handed the boy a ten dollar bill. "Here and thanks. Keep your eyes open. We'll take care of this."

Derry had a gun out as the door closed. They both looked at the bedroom behind which stood Lamont Cranston. Tarr said, "There's only this room, the bedroom and the bath."

"Should be easy to nab him." They both walked toward the bedroom door.

CHAPTER XI

TIRED of sitting in the cab, Shrevvie got up and stretched his legs. He saw a candy store across the street and made his way there. Munching on a candy bar, he noticed a phone booth. He was bored, so he called up Harry Vincent.

"What's new by you?" he asked.

"Nothing too exciting. I've been doing some research on a gent named Tarr. S. T. Tarr. The boss asked me to give a look."

"Whadja find out?"

"Something curious. Tarr seems to be a Suppress Agent."

"Huh? What's that? Do you mean a P. A.? A Press Agent I know about."

"This is the opposite. Sometimes it's of benefit to some people to have Suppress Agents who keep their names out of the papers."

"That's cute. I never heard about it before."

"Neither have most people. That's why the Suppress Agent is valuable. They're cute cupcakes. I been looking up how they work and it's neat. Suppose that a phony deal of some kind is being pulled..."

"Oh, I get it. The suppress agent pulls strings to keep it outa the papers, huh?"

"Ordinarily, yes... but then there are times when not even pull can keep something out of print... that's when these boys really get in their licks. Look... suppose you owned a railroad and you were getting away with some kind of shenanigans. You don't want too much attention on what you're doing... so your smart boy rigs up publicity deals that show you as a kindly old codger who goes around giving a nickel's worth of chewing gum to every child he meets.

"Papers that ordinarily wouldn't touch a publicity hand-out go for this nonsense because it's a human interest story... so... on the front page are pictures of you giving the gum to some starved little orphan... and on the back pages where no one ever reads it, is the news about the double dealing you are guilty of..."

"I get it... and come to think of it, I've seen that in operation... I can remember more than one time I've seen it in the papers just like you said..."

"Sure. But, as far as I can make out, Tarr is hired by countries and not individuals. It's a new profession and he's the star of it."

Through the walls of the telephone booth Shrevvie heard what might have been a backfire. It dawned on him

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that The Shadow might be in trouble. With a muffled gasp he hung up the phone and ran out onto the street.

Shrevvie stopped in the middle of the street, realizing that he was running around like a chicken with its head cut off and not getting anything much accomplished. For, as he stood there, there was nothing but the ordinary street sounds of a big city. Cars riding by, brakes squealing occasionally, the hum of humanity, but as to the sounds that he feared had been shots there was nothing to show from where they had come.

He looked up at the building where Cranston had gone. Its face was as blank and impersonal as a doll's. But behind that facade, Cranston had run into one of the most ticklish moments of his life.

As the two men, death in their eyes and guns in their hands, walked toward the door behind which he was hidden, he had taken a moment of precious time and draped the black cape and hat on his body. This time they could not conceal him. He was using them only to hide his identity.

The door slammed open, hard. For Derry had pushed his foot against it and straightened his leg with all the force of his massive pectorals. The door made a noise like a pistol shot when it caromed into the spot where a moment before Lamont Cranston had stood. The door ricocheted.

Derry and Tarr, fingers tense on their guns, stood still and looked into the room. As far as they could see it was empty. Tarr flickered a glance at Captain Derry. The glance, full of wonder, was returned. They were both positive that someone had been behind the door. But... They looked into the room. Pulling so hard on the trigger that the hammer was drawn back dangerously far, Derry walked stiff leggedly into the bedroom.

"Did you leave the bathroom door opened or closed?" he snapped. Tarr thought a moment before he replied, "Open."

"It's closed now." Like a period to the end of his sentence, Derry sent a shot through the bathroom door. It echoed and re-echoed in the enclosed space.

In the bathroom, an ominous black shrouded figure hovered like some huge bat. Fearing random shots, The Shadow had shinnied up onto the top of the shower curtain bracket and was now poised there like the insane figment of some opium-eater's dream.

The bullet that smashed through the thin door clattered down from the wall where it had smashed a section of the moulding from its place.

Derry, naturally, had shot at breast level. He could not know that his target was perched higher than his own head.

He sent another bullet through the door. There was no answer. There was no sound. They waited, guns poised like hunters waiting to hear their quarry fall. The silence was maintained.

From his vantage point The Shadow could hear a whispered colloquy. They were trying to make up their minds whether or not it was safe to enter. The Shadow looked from the bullet riddled door to the open bathroom window where he had made entry. He had an idea and it caused his lips to curl up in a mirthless smile.

He reached under his black cape and his hand emerged with the brief case in which he ordinarily carried the equipment that could change him in a minute from Cranston to the figure of darkness which he now was. Outside the door the whispers had become louder. The continuing silence was reassuring the men. The Shadow broke the silence.

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He threw his brief case through the double glass of the raised window. The noise, nerve shattering in its violence, sent the two men through the door as though shot there.

As they ran in, some of the shards of glass from the fractured window were still falling. They would not have been human if they had not done what they did. They ran past the shower, past the place where The Shadow lurked, and shoved their heads out the window.

They looked down. Straight down. It didn't seem possible that whatever had made the noise could have gone anywhere else, or in any other direction. They strained their eyes expecting to see a huddled, smashed form. Instead, they saw the bulky form of what looked like a cab driver walk to an oblong brown object and pick it up.

Shrevvie, eyes glued to the building, had seen the brief case emerge. He was holding it now trying to riddle the meaning of the case.

He didn't know whether it was a call for help, or what. He looked up from the brief case to a window ten stories up where two tiny heads peered down at him. He shook his fist at them.

In the bathroom, The Shadow, lightly and quietly as a piece of thread going through the eye of a needle, made his way down from his perch, out of the room and into the hall.

He had learned, long, long ago, that man, tied to the earth by gravity, was not in the habit of ever looking above his own eye level for any other human.

He even remembered a killer who had taken advantage of the blind spot that we have by stabbing a man and then, throwing a knife into the ceiling. The killer had been right in thinking that no one would ever look at the ceiling for it.

If he had had only one more tiny piece of evidence, he would have ended the scene in a different way. But it still was not time for The Shadow to pick up the men who were involved in this ghastly plan.

He left behind him, as he made his way out of the building, two badly puzzled men and in a way frightened men. For, given an insoluble problem, man has the habit of either balking at it and putting it completely out of his mind as most have done with the atom bomb, or else they become fearful and tremble in the presence of the unknown like a savage making obeisance to an idol.

Derry said, "It can't be."

"I know what you mean... how could anyone have survived a fall like that? And if he didn't fall, where did he go?"

They left the bathroom and returned to the living room. Both were wracking their brains trying to remember what they had said in the presence of the unknown eaves dropper. They sat down. Tarr reached out to a cellarette and picked up a bottle. "Drink?"

"By all means."

They threw the straight brandy back into their throats like unpleasant medicine. Then they just sat.

"Did I give away anything?" It was Tarr who asked.

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"I'm trying to reconstruct. I don't think we did. But how can we tell, not knowing who our visitor was?"

Down on the street, a man who was well dressed, but who looked out of place because of a bundle of black cloth which he carried balled up under his arm, walked across the street and got into a cab.

"Ya made it. Whew. That took ten years offa me life."

"I'm sorry. I knew you'd be worried when you saw the brief case come sailing out the window, but it was my only way out of an untenable position. Did you get it, by the way?"

Shrevvie handed the case back to Lamont Cranston. "Didja find out whatcha wanted?"

"I think so. By the way; I better call Harry."

"Oh, I almost forgot." Shrevvie told Cranston what Vincent had told him about suppress agents.

Cranston leaned back against the cushions as the car got into gear. He leaned forward. "Seven Sixty West 80th, Shrevvie."

They rode to the destination in silence. Cranston had replaced the black cape and hat under the zippered compartment in the case. He carried it under his arm as he left the cab.

He rang the bell. An attractive Negro girl answered the summons. She asked, "Yes, may I help you?"

"Would you tell Miss Barret that Mr. Cranston would like to see her?"

The girl guided him to a living room that was as restful as a day in the country. He sat down and let the arms of the chair and the springs of its back help him to relax.

"Hi there. What's doing this early?" Irene was in a house coat and its soft lines made her even more attractive than usual. She gestured at it and said, "You'll have to forgive me; these are my working clothes. I've been doing my column."

"I'll not forgive you, but I'm grateful. However, I won't take up much of your time."

She leaned forward as she sat down with interest lighting her face. "How can I help?"

"Did you ever think that S. T. Tarr might be a suppress agent?"

She snapped her fingers. "What an idea. Why, if you're right a lot of baffling things about him will be explained." She sat quietly while she thought the matter out. "I think you're right. I won't take up your time telling you why I agree."

"Fine. Now, please, take your time. Have you any idea as to what country would be most likely to employ him?"

That stopped her cold. She had been thinking along the lines of a private employer. But how about some of the strange places she had run into the man? How about the deference with which he was treated in certain foreign capitols?

Cranston still relaxed, sat and watched her as thought made a pattern across her intelligent face. She ran her

fingers through her hair in an unfeminine manner that was evidently habitual with her.

"This is strictly off the cuff." The question was unspoken.

"Of course. Just your guess."

"I know Dom Brassle hated him with a deep and undying dislike. You know, I imagine that he is a close friend of Captain Derry's. I can only think that he's in the pay of Molvannia."

"Good. You've analyzed it almost the way I did. Now..." Cranston paused a moment while he phrased his next thought. "Here's another idea to play with."

She said, "Some more dynamite?"

He nodded. "I think so. What would you say to Tarr being in the employ of not only Derry and Molvannia, but of Ruravia as well?"

She whistled. "You have some pretty wicked ideas for this early in the morning. But... if what you say is true... But wait, what about Dom Brassle?"

"Dom Brassle was not the only man in Ruravia. Consider this. Dom Brassle represented the common man in his country. What about the others, the landowners, the manufacturers? They're pretty much alike no matter what country they inhabit."

"Working both ends against the middle. But if either side ever found out he was in the employ of the other..."

"I think that has been found out, for Derry controls Tarr in a way that is only explainable by some kind of blackmail. That was what got me thinking along this line."

She looked at his set features. They were drawn and harsh. She realized that he probably hadn't had any sleep at all. She said, "You must be starved."

Cranston realized with a start that he was, although he had been too busy to realize it. It was pleasant to sit there and be waited on. He took all the enjoyment from it that he could, for he knew that as soon as he finished eating he would be on the go till the case was ended.

A radio which she flipped on made his resolution that much stronger, for an announcer was barking in his ear, "The tragic death of Dom Brassle has caused all sorts of wild talk, folks; don't look now, but we heard that the cyclotrons are working overtime, that our uranium stockpile is being put to use. Will this be it? Is this to be Armageddon? Are we facing an atomic war?"

Irene threw the switch off in annoyance. She said, "Throws it pretty much into our laps, doesn't it?"

He nodded.

CHAPTER XII

CRANSTON sipped the last drop of coffee from his cup. The scene was peaceful, but like most moments of peace in a parlous world, subject to change without notice. As Irene got up to pour him some more coffee, the door slammed open.

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The maid looked a little frightened. She called over the man's back, "I tried to keep him out, but he..."

The man was Tarr. He stood in the center of the room and looked from Irene's housecoat to Cranston, from Cranston to the dishes in front of him on a tray.

"Very cozy," he said. His mouth was twisted and it made his words loaded with obscene significance.

"What?" Irene's voice was unbelieving.

"Don't you think I can see? It's pretty obvious."

"What gives you the right to think that you can burst in here and, having done so, to berate me?" Irene sat down and was completely the master of the situation. Her face showed quite clearly what she thought of Tarr.

He controlled his emotions and his habitual poker face slid down again like a mask. Looking at him, Irene thought how completely reversed the situation had become. For the scene almost paralleled one that she had been guilty of in her youth. She had followed Tarr into a hotel and confronted him angrily when she found him with another girl. He had been quite amused and superior about the whole thing.

He saw the amusement in her eyes and must have remembered the same thing she was thinking, for he twisted his smile and said, "I get it."

She smiled back and turned to Cranston to continue the conversation, but Tarr broke in, "May I speak to you alone, Irene?"

"Why?"

He nodded at Cranston, who looked off into space as though not conscious of what was going on around him.

She shrugged and followed Tarr out of the room. Through the wall that separated Cranston from the couple, he could barely hear their low voices. It was rather pathetic, what he could hear of it, for it was obvious from what little he could hear that Tarr was proposing. It was equally obvious that this was not the first time that this had happened. Irene seemed to have made a habit of refusing him.

They came back into the room. Tarr was nonchalant. The refusal had not disturbed him. Cranston could see that Tarr was determined. He probably thought that Irene's refusal was just coquetry and that in time he would have his way.

Cranston offered to drop Tarr off. Tarr looked at Irene questioningly to see if he might stay. As though waiting for her to say "don't go." But he waited in vain. He turned away from her now impassive face and said, "Okay, thanks."

He looked back at her once more, but she had turned her back and was literally giving him the cold shoulder. She called out, "Good-bye, Mr. Cranston."

"See you later," he replied.

Tarr said nothing and followed Cranston out of the house. They got into Shrevvie's cab. "Where shall I drop you?"

Tarr shrugged. "Oh, what difference does it make?" He thought a moment and then said, "Oh, my club, I

guess." He gave the address.

"If it'll make you feel any better," Cranston said after they'd been riding for a while, "I got to her house about a half an hour before you did."

"Thanks, I didn't really think anything... I must apologize to you. I'm acting like a sixteen-year-old schoolboy. I never saw a woman before who could affect me the way she does, blast her."

He sat in silence then, staring out the cab window, until they reached his club. He waved his thanks and good-bye as he got out.

As soon as he had gone into his club, Shrevvie said, "Boy, he's got it bad, huh?"

"Yes indeed. I wonder just how badly..."

"Where to?"

"The U.N. headquarters. I want to see if there's been anything new."

"The papers ain't had a word but re-hash."

"Nothing from Commissioner Weston?"

"Nah. Just the usual, 'an arrest is expected within a few hours!' Who they gonna arrest?"

"That is a question, isn't it?" Cranston smiled.

But no matter how Shrevvie probed, that was all the information he could get out of Cranston. They stopped en route while Cranston called Burbank, his man of all trades, his main source of data.

But Shrevvie could find out nothing about that either. They went clothed in silence to the U.N. building. Co-incidentally Captain Derry walked up the stairs of the entrance just before Cranston.

They exchanged distant nods. Shrevvie, watching, realized that Cranston was giving Derry plenty of rope, but wondered if the rope weren't getting a bit too long now.

Inside the building Weston was standing staving off some reporters. He looked up with gratitude as he saw Cranston. He pushed his way through the importunate men and said, "Just the man I've been hoping to see. Come here, will you please?"

Wondering what was up, Cranston followed into a small room. Once inside, Weston wiped his forehead and said, "Am I glad to see you!"

"How come?"

"Because you rescued me from them!" He pointed to the door beyond which the reporters were keeping their vigil.

"Oh, then there's nothing new developed?"

"Not a thing! I have never been so exasperated. I just seem to go around in circles like a puppy chasing its

tail! I need help!"

From Weston this was a shocking request. Or supercilious about any help he received from the man whom he considered little but a dilettante, it was a gauge of the seriousness of the situation that he should call for aid.

"The case began here in these halls that are dedicated to the preservation of peace, and I shall preserve the peace by ending the whole muddle this afternoon when the U.N. is in session!"

Weston did a double take. Cranston's voice was serious. He meant what he said. "You mean you actually know what this is all about? You can show me the killer?"

Cranston nodded.

"And you'll do it this afternoon?"

"Immediately after I do something that Dom Brassle died in trying to accomplish!"

"Wh... what do you mean?"

"I shall give in evidence the pact that Brassle knew about. The pact for which he was killed so that it would not be brought out into the daylight!"

"Good grief! What kind of a pact?"

"It's the pact between one of the Balkan countries and Hitler!"

"Hitler... what's that dead rat got to do with this?"

"At the time the pact was signed, the dead rat was very much alive and the men who signed for their country meant to take advantage of what they considered a rising star!"

"Good lord. This can only mean... since Dom Brassle wanted to reveal it, that the pact is between the enemy country, Molvannia, and Germany, eh?"

"That's the way it looks, doesn't it?"

There was an undertone in Cranston's voice that baffled Weston. He asked, "The way it looks? You mean appearances are deceiving?"

"Very!"

Cranston turned on his heel and headed for the door. Weston grabbed hold of his sleeve. "Wait, don't stop there. Tell me..."

"I can't tell you any more now. Just be sure to have plenty of your men around this afternoon right after the congress convenes!"

"B-b-but wait!"

Cranston was gone. He left a sorely puzzled man behind him. Weston paced back and forth across the floor, hands folded behind his back. The pact was between the Fascists and either Molvannia or Ruravia. Dom

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Brassle, Ruravian patriot, was anxious, so anxious that he died in order to try to tell the world about the pact. Therefore, the pact must be between Molvannia and Hitler. But if it was, then why had Cranston spoken the way he had?

It was a tough nut to try to crack. So tough that only The Shadow had been able to add up extranities, like a print on a bloody gavel with the contents of the Time Capsule out in the Flushing Meadows. Added these disparate facts together, and then arrived at a recognizable total!

The total meant the end of a curious killer, for the strangest thing in the whole case was the motivation.

It was that which had cost The Shadow the most brain work!

CHAPTER XIII

GARISH as a woman with stage makeup out in the sun, the Rosebud Taverne was rundown-looking, with the daylight making the scaling scabrous paint look like some dread disease. It was a disease. One that is symptomized by lack of care; by low real estate values. By what the sociologists call a depressed area.

It was not only depressed, it was depressing as Captain Derry walked in. He eyed with distaste the walls which were sweating. It had not been his idea to have a rendezvous here.

He walked to the back of the bar the way, such a short time before, one of his employees had. He followed the same pattern, for, before he sat down to wait, he dropped some money in the coin music machine.

The day bartender was a fit mate to the one who owned the bar and ran it at night. His fat was ill fitting; like an over-sized suit it hung down over his ankles and his wrists in folds.

He looked up as the dapper captain sat down, he snorted to himself something about why didn't some people go to the kind of bars they belonged in, instead of bothering him.

The man who joined Derry seconds later was the one whom Derry had called on to get rid of his erring member. The man was uncomfortable in these surroundings and looked it. He swished his hand over the table as a many legged visitor ran away.

He asked, "Why here?"

Derry didn't even bother to speak. It is doubtful if he even heard the question. He said, "Perhaps I travel in circles which are too rarefied. That is why I left the U.N. and told you to meet me here. This whole infernal business has slid around in my hands so that I don't know which end is up. Tell me..." he leaned across the table confidentially, "what would you say if I told you that involved in our affairs was a man who goes around all draped in black..." He waited, expecting his hard boiled companion to laugh.

Instead the man looked covertly over his shoulder and said, "Do you mean to say The Shadow is mixed up in this..." His gulp was audible.

It set Derry back on his heels. "You believe in this fairy tale? You give it credence?"

"You kiddin'?' That guy's poison on wheels. Lissen..." The man told Derry of a few of The Shadow's exploits.

"I see... I have been guilty of a bad error. I have been underestimating my opponent... It must have been The Shadow then who had vanished from Tarr's bathroom..."

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"Is there any way to contact this man? Can he be bought?"

"You still don't get it. I can see that. You can't buy him and so far no one's been able to kill him."

"Hmm. I see." In Derry's mind a resolution was forming. "Perhaps," he said, "I may not come out of this with a whole skin... but if I so much as see this character of blackness... neither will he."

Although Derry spoke aloud, he was but speaking his thoughts. He went on, "My existence is not too important, but our plans are. If I go down to defeat there will be others who think like me who will carry on. Yes, I will somehow remove this menace, for it is only too obvious what a thorn he will be in the side of anyone who comes after me..." His voice faded off.

The hardened criminal who sat across the table did not like the look in Derry's eyes. It was not quite sane. Certainly it boded no good to The Shadow. There was no doubt of that.

They looked up as the bartender shuffled his slow way to their table. "That be all, gents?" he pointed to their now empty glasses.

"Yes, quite enough," Derry said and paid the tab. "Come, I don't know when I shall see you again."

The bartender watched as the two men left. In his experience these flossy guys never were very good for business. He looked down at the table. Sure... a dime tip. Just what you'd expect from somebody rich enough to wear clothes like that. He wondered why it was only the poor or the newly rich who tipped decently. Maybe because they knew what it was to work for a living.

He sighed again. He'd be just as happy if they'd stay out of the joint.

"How come that joint," the man asked Derry.

"It's handy and I've communicated with some of my men there from time to time. It is a safe place to meet. But enough. Good-bye." And the tone made the words mean good-bye and not au revoir.

Derry flagged a passing cab. As he got into it he said, "If I miss, there will be a nice bundle for whoever knocks him off."

"I get it... Open season on..." He didn't mention The Shadow.

"Right." Then to the driver, "The U.N."

The cab drove off. The man still on the street pushed his hat back and scratched his head thoughtfully. Derry was really loaded for bear. Bad boy to have mad at you, the man thought, and then went on about his nefarious business. Derry paid well, maybe some of the trigger happy lads might want to make a try for The Shadow. He, personally, had no intention of being that foolish. He'd just pass the word around.

At the U.N. the delegations were settling themselves comfortably for the business of the afternoon. There was much noise from chairs being pushed back and forth as each tried to extract the utmost in comfort from the seats.

The same people who table-hopped in restaurants indulged in their vice here. They went from desk to desk passing around the latest joke, the latest tidbit of gossip, saying hello to friends, snubbing enemies, and in general enjoying the passing moment.

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Irene Barret, pad poised in front of her, sharpened pencil ready, wondered at the compulsion that drove people to behave in the patterns that they did.

She looked around, behind her and to the left. Derry had just come in. He had drifted around and then suddenly left. But there, he had just returned. He passed Tarr without a flicker of recognition.

The men who were settled in their seats fiddled with the mikes that sat in the middle of their desks. She let her gaze wander and saw near the door Lamont Cranston in conversation with a man whom she identified as the commissioner of police. He looked worried, as well he might.

Cranston's face, poker-faced ordinarily, was as impassive as a statue or an animated Indian brave. No flicker of expression passed over it. He seemed to be turning a deaf ear to some kind of a plea of Weston's, for she saw the commissioner shrug resignedly and walk away.

She watched as Cranston, tall, spare and capable looking, made his way past some of the people who were attached in various ways to the different legations represented.

His movements were graceful, she realized, and it came as a shock, for somehow grace was tied up in her mind with dancers and certainly Cranston was far from one of those. He moved, she thought, like an athlete who had never been out of condition a day in his life.

She caught herself blushing as he caught her eye and smiled. She brought herself up sharply. Good heavens, at her age? She was acting like a schoolgirl. She was determined not to be so trapped by her emotions again. So it was that when he had joined her and had spoken to her she replied shortly, almost gruffly.

He said, "Aren't things about due to begin?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'm afraid I shall have to interfere with the smooth workings of parliamentary procedure..."

The meeting was called to order and the business of the day begun. The minutes of the last meeting were skimmed through. It was obvious that all were trying to pretend that nothing extraordinary had occurred. They were carrying on as though but a short while before a bullet had not cut off Dom Brassle in the middle of his speech.

But Lamont Cranston could not allow that to happen. Instead he raised his hand in order to get the floor. The chairman recognized him with a frown and said, "I am sorry, sir, but you must realize that you are out of order. I can not allow you the floor."

"I am sorry, too, sir, but I must be allowed the floor. Admittedly I am out of order, but more than one thing is in that state and this is the only way that I know of to rectify things. If I may, I will be brief."

The chairman looked around helplessly. This was not covered in the rules. His frantic eyes met those of Weston, who was standing in the rear of the meeting room. Weston nodded his head, yes, vigorously.

The chairman shrugged and said, "If it is the feeling of the membership that this gentleman be allowed the floor, I should like it put in the form of a motion."

One of the Ruravian delegation got to his feet and said, "I so move."

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The chairman asked, "Any seconds?"

Quite a few voices seconded the motion.

"All those in favor, say aye..." The chairman was determined that things should proceed in an orderly manner.

There was a chorus of ayes.

"Any nays?"

Derry and some men near him shouted nay, but they were in the minority.

The chairman said, "It is so moved. You may proceed, Mister uh..."

"Cranston. Lamont Cranston. First I would like to say that my motive in appearing here today is in the furtherance of the high ideals for which the United Nations stands.

"I am sorry to have had to operate in this manner, but it is the only way that I can see to bring this ugly matter to a head. It may be painful, but if one had a carbuncle and the doctor ordered that it be lanced, why, you would have it lanced at no matter what the cost."

Irene looked around nervously. Cranston was pushing all his blue chips out in the middle of the table. There was going to be trouble; of that she was sure. She was even surer when Cranston reached into his pocket and withdrew some papers.

He said, "As evidence, I shall have to present something that has been hidden away from all eyes for several years. This is a pact. A pact between a Balkan country and Hitler. I shan't at this time go into where it was hidden, although I think that Dom Brassle had something to do with it. You see, this is a photostat of the original. I think that Brassle had something to do with the secret taking of these photographs. I think, too, that he it was who figured out the ingenious hiding place where they were secreted.

"What gives credence to my belief is the fact that all of you heard him trying to leave word as to the hiding place as he died."

Irene noticed with part of her mind that even at such a time when surely all his attention was on what he was saying, that his ever present brief case was at his feet where he could scoop it up in a moment. She had thought at first that the pact might be in the case, but when he took it from his breast pocket she went back to being puzzled about the function of the brief case. She put the errant thought out of her mind, for Cranston was saying, "The motives involved in the hugger-mugger that has been going on are tangled. So tangled that at first I was surprised when I saw who the signers of the pact were.

"Here, sir, is the pact." He threw it onto the chairman's desk.

The chairman looked it over casually. Then, as he came to the last page and saw who had signed it, he gasped. He said, "But... you said that Dom Brassle wanted the contents of this made known!"

"Precisely! And I can see that your response is like my own at first. For, it took quite some thought to see the truth in all this."

Cranston stopped speaking for a moment and then turning so that his gaze took in the whole room, he said,

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"You see, Dom Brassle, Ruravian patriot as he was, wanted it known that Ruravia had signed the pact with Hitler!"

There was a united gasp this time. Ruravia; which had been so pro-ally in the course of the war, the secret signer of this pact? It did not seem possible. Irene could read in the eyes of the people who had turned to look at Captain Derry that they would not have been surprised if Molvannia, Derry's country, had been one of the signers.

But Cranston was speaking again. "It became peculiarly confusing then, when I found out that not only was Dom Brassle anxious that the world know of this pact, but that Molvannia in the guise of one of its representatives here, was anxious that the knowledge be kept secret!"

This time all eyes were on Derry. His face was set and white. His hands beneath the level of his desk were busy. He had his gun out, and it was pointed at Cranston's heart. He was determined to hear Cranston through, although every word made his position clearer and clearer. His plan was ruined. But he would not go down alone to defeat!

His brain worked frantically; somehow in the back of the sick, insane area he was becoming confused. He had two enemies, The Shadow and Cranston. But they were becoming enmeshed. One was turning into the other. Each was as guilty as the other of interference with his plans.

It was not to be borne. And he would not bear it!

CHAPTER XIV

"LIKE all blackmail weapons, this pact would lose its value, once the world knew what it was that the blackmailer held over the head of his victim.

"The knowledge of the pact, although not coupled with information as to where this photostat was, has been used for years to force Ruravia to take steps which were against Ruravia's best interests."

Cranston looked around. An actor would have been proud to get the amount of attention which was his. All were watching him, every eye was on him and even breaths were being held as he went on, "If you will look back over the recent course of developments in the Balkans quite a few heretofore unexplainable actions will become plainer.

"You can imagine the position a man like Dom Brassle was in when he had to accede to the demands that were made on him. The time came, as it comes to most blackmailer's victims, when the price became too high. When that time came, when Dom Brassle refused to kow-tow any longer; when he made it plain that he was going to tell all, he was killed."

A man who was high in the government raised his hand in inquiry. Cranston nodded to him.

"A point of information if I may. Knowing Brassle's background I find this pact hard to take. Do you know anything about the circumstances?"

"You do too, but you've probably forgotten. It was quite a long time ago. In 1939, Dom Brassle was forced, willy-nilly, to come here to America as representative of his country to the World's Fair. It was an ignominious post for a man in his position and it came as a result of a political coup.

"He was sent out of the country so that men at least they are generally called that of the same breed that

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helped Hitler to power in his country, wanted Brassle out of the way so that they could sign this very pact.

"They were the men who thought they could do business with Hitler. The men with umbrellas and the munition factories, they made the pact in the name of the country which Dom Brassle loved.

"I don't know by what fluke of fate, or by what trick of espionage Dom Brassle managed to get a photostat of the pact. I do know that he used his position as one of the dignitaries at the World's Fair, one of the men at ceremony of the burial of the Time Capsule, to place this guilty document there.

"He must have placed it there thinking that if all went well no human eyes would see it for a thousand years, by which time it would not matter much.

"If on the other hand it ever became necessary to get his hands on it, he knew that it would be safer from the ravages of time there than almost any other place in a tumultuous world.

"It was a wise choice from any angle at which you look at it. But this is all extraneous. The crux of the murders in which we are concerned is the motive. As always once the motive can be discerned the features of the killer show through the tangle!"

That did it. Captain Derry's finger tightened on the trigger. He was ruined. His country had been hurt more than it had been helped by the things he had done.

There was nothing left to be done, now that everyone knew that he had blackmailed Ruravia the way he had, but to end it all. The end would be fast. It would follow the death of Lamont Cranston.

He pulled the trigger.

Once again the ugly bark of a gun shattered the quiet of the conference room of the United Nations. This time no primitive silencer made the shot quiet.

Behind him Tarr let his breath out in a long gasp, for he had seen the shot enter Lamont Cranston's body. Cranston fell forward the way Dom Brassle had.

Irene was out of her chair and at Cranston's side almost before his body hit the floor. Reproaches were on her lips. She gasped, "You poor dear, sweet fool! You knew there was death in the air, but you went ahead anyhow! Oh, bless you and blast you for being a brave fool!"

Her mind refused to grasp what was happening. For, Lamont Cranston looked up from the floor where he lay and his eyes were on hers. She couldn't, no matter how hard she tried, make sense of it. As he looked at her, a smile crinkled the corners of his mouth and he winked.

Behind them, behind the tableau which for a moment had grasped every eye like a magnet, there was new confusion. Derry had sprung to his feet and started to put the gun, still smoking, to his forehead. But a plain clothes policeman, all attention centered on Derry, had leaped forward and grasped his gun arm. They were wrestling now for possession of the gun.

Derry swore through his gritted teeth, "You fool, let me alone. I just want to kill myself... let me... the shame... the disgrace."

With all attention on the wrestling men, S. T. Tarr made his way to the door. He wondered at what had gotten into Derry. What point was served in shooting at Cranston?

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The detective grunted, "Drop the gun, you fool, or I'll break your arm."

But Derry was deaf to any voice but that of death's. He forced his arm up and up. The gun was almost pointed at his head now. But the detective, taking a deep breath, forced it down by inches.

Jaws gritting, Derry tried to raise his arm again. He groaned when he realized that he was going to fail. The detective saw the waning hope in Derry's face and tried doubly hard to get the gun away and then just when Derry had completely given up, he got the boon he craved.

The detective looked stupid with wonder as he felt his opponent's body go slack in his arms. He looked into Derry's eyes and saw him die. He looked from the swift glazing eyes to the muzzle of the gun. There was no smoke coming from it. He hadn't failed, then. But how had the man died?

The shot which killed Derry came at just the second that Cranston, gasping with the pain in his chest, got to his feet. He put his hand to the area where the bullet had struck him. A flattened pellet of lead dropped out of the cloth which it had penetrated.

He looked at the puzzlement, the bewilderment on Irene's face and smiling to hide the pain caused by the impact of the bullet, he said, "Bullet-proof vest. My hero days are over. I put it on before I came out on this case."

Her face relaxed. She smiled back at him.

He said, "But don't ever let anyone tell you that a vest like this does any more than stop the bullet. I feel as though I'd been kicked by the granddaddy of all mules."

She smiled trying to hide the emotion she had felt when she saw him fall.

He tore his eyes away from her and looked over at the spot where Derry lay. "He succeeded in that, even if he couldn't take me with him, eh?"

The detective who had been struggling with Derry called out to Weston, "Who did it, Commissioner? He didn't shoot himself! I'll swear he didn't!"

Weston whose face had just been reflecting the relief he felt from what he had considered the end of this case, contorted. "What?" The question was full of disbelief.

"Somebody musta shot him!"

Cranston snorted. "Of course, how stupid of me. The real killer couldn't take the chance that Derry wouldn't die. He had to be sure..."

"The real killer? Then Captain Derry didn't shoot Dom Brassle?" Irene sounded as incredulous as had Weston a moment before.

Cranston stooped over and scooped up his brief case, grunting as pain creased his chest. He muttered, "No, I'm afraid not. I've got to go get him now."

She stood there with her eyes wide open as he ran out of the room. There had been death in his eyes. The door closed behind Cranston's speeding form.

Seconds later, if there had been anyone but Wallaby Willy in the hall they would have heard what he did. An eerie triumphant laugh, the laugh of The Shadow when the end was in sight, the chortle, for it was more than a laugh, lingered while Willy ran shaking hands over the nape of his neck, where the sound had made the hackles stand on end.

"Coo lummie," he said. "Fair puts the wind up me, it does!"

CHAPTER XV

A POLICEMAN brought to sudden attention by the sound of the shot coming from the interior of the building, was waiting, all prepared as a hurtling figure tried to pass.

The cop thrown to one side by the impact of the man's body, swore and grabbed at the fabric of the man's coat. The fabric pulled from his hand. There was no time to draw his gun. Instead, as the man began to run away, the cop threw his night stick.

It hurtled across the top of the stairs that led away from the entrance of the building. The nightstick, revolving rapidly, spun in between the man's legs.

He tripped on the top step. The nightstick made a barrier. His flailing legs, smashing into the nightstick, caught at his feet. He fell forward completely out of control. The cop followed his nightstick, a pleased expression on his face.

He ran down the stairs, following in the trail that the man had made, as tumbling from step to step; he fought to regain his balance. Almost at the base of the stairs, he gave up and fell in a sprawling heap.

The cop, jumping down two steps at a time, was almost behind him as he landed. But the cop was a trifle over-confident and as he stepped over the fallen figure, a lancing leg shot out and caught him. He catapulted backwards and his head hit the edge of a step.

He was unconscious as the man got to his feet and after one glance at the cop, turned and ran towards the street. At the edge of the curb his car was parked in readiness.

He vaulted into it, just as the black caped figure of The Shadow raced through the door at the top of the steps. The Shadow seeing the man getting into the car did not hesitate for a second. In one smooth motion his hand flashed under the folds of his cape and when it reappeared it was heavier by the weight of a .45 automatic.

Not taking time to aim, he snapped a bullet at the car's rear tire. The sound of the tire exploding was like an echo of the shot itself.

But, flat tire or no, the man threw the car into gear and careened down the street. The Shadow wasted no time. He made tracks for Shrevvie's cab. Shrevvie needed no directing. He followed the car as it made a crazy turn around the corner.

Brow furrowed with concentration. Shrevvie trailed the car. He said, "Where's the jerk headin' for? He can't make no getaway this way. There's nothin' down this way but the Third Avenoo El."

"I don't quite see what's he's up to, either. He seems to be trying to get in front of that trolley car."

They were under the superstructure of the El. The pattern cast by the light cutting through the iron work made comic figures from some mad harlequinade of the passersby. The patches of light and dark made them look

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as if they wore many-colored garments.

The rubber on the exploded tire was flapping like a tramp clown's floppy shoe as the fleeing car cut across in front of the trolley car and speeded ahead.

The iron rim of the exposed wheel clattered on the trolley track. The car was about a block ahead of the trolley when the driver suddenly cut the wheel over and slammed the car to a halt at the curb.

Shrevvie's cab was a block behind the trolley car. The Shadow leaning from the window watched as the man got out of the parked car and ran towards the street corner where the trolley would pass.

"Is he completely screwy? Does he think he can beat it on a trolley?" Shrevvie laughed at the idea. "Besides, dat's a odd numbered street and the trolley's on'y stop on de even ones!"

The man, slouch hat drawn over his face, waited next to an El pillar just as if he were some worker going home, waiting for the trolley to take him there.

The trolley careening along as the old cars do, looking as if they are speeding when they get up to fifteen miles an hour did not pause as it came up to the waiting man.

The cab was only a quarter of a block behind now. Both Shrevvie and The Shadow could see the strange expression on the man's face as he looked at the trolley coming towards him. It was like a scene in India where fanatics wait before the car of Juggernaut and throw their helpless bodies beneath the pitiless wheels of the monstrous car.

Shrevvie said, "Is he gonna take a jump in front of..." He stopped. The trolley had come even and then passed the waiting figure of the man. He gazed after it in dumb amazement.

"I don't get it," said Shrevvie, and his voice was aggrieved. "Unless... did he maybe mean to take a jump under de wheels and lost his noive?"

"No." The Shadow's voice was calm. "No, I doubt that was what was in his mind. It was a bold gamble. It just couldn't work. Well, I think it is time now for us to pick up Mr. Tarr."

But as the cab neared the man he seemed suddenly to have gone berserk. Nearby were a handful of men working on the road. Two of them held air hammers which, with a grating noise, were occupied in tearing up the street. Tarr, with madness in his eyes, leaped toward the workers. With a scream, he tore an air hammer from the hands of one of the men. He seemed to be furiously tearing up the pavement with the drill.

Shrevvie swerved his cab around to the other side of the street to be nearer the action. Suddenly, Tarr collapsed in a heap in the midst of the workers who were trying to take the machine away from him.

"Hey! Looka his feet!" Shrevvie's face was white as he looked at the mangled remnants of Tarr's extremities.

The group of men stood stock-still. Then one dashed into the Rosebud Taverne across the street to phone for an ambulance. The toes seemed to have been chopped away from both Tarr's feet. The man lay writhing in the street.

Getting a firm grip on himself, Shrevvie sighed. "Why'd he do that?" he asked.

"He thought it meant safety. He feared I had seen through his stratagem, as I had. He tried the street car first,

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but of course, the body of the car hangs too far over the wheels for it to work."

The bartender from the Rosebud Taverne had joined the curious onlookers, but he soon hurried back to the dingy bar.

"This oughta be good for business," he thought ruminatively. "They always want a drink to wipe out the memory." He walked back into the sanctity of his bar and began to wipe it with a sour rag in preparation for the orders he was sure would come.

Soon the customers were lined up two deep at the bar.

A beat cop, notebook in hand, was standing next to the injured man. As always, regardless of the existence of pain, cops obey their orders and demand the name and address of a victim, even though he may be gasping his last breath.

"Just run around the block so I can change these clothes. I would like to get a closer look but can't get out dressed this way," The Shadow ordered Shrevvie.

The cop was returning his notebook to his pocket when a cab drove up to the curb. Behind it was an ambulance. Lamont Cranston descended from the cab and got out of the way as the orderly dropped off the rear of the ambulance.

"What goes, O'Hallihan?"

"This creep went crazy all of a sudden; got his toes in an argument with a cement breaker. He lost."

The orderly looked at the man's feet incuriously and getting a stretcher from the ambulance had the cop assist him get the man safely inside.

The ambulance drove off. The crowd had dispersed. The cop noticed Cranston and said, "Okay, chum, the fun's over. Beat it!"

"I'll beat it," said Cranston, "only after you have ordered a guard, a police guard for that man that was just taken to the hospital. He's the killer responsible for the murders at the U.N."

The cop pushed the peak of his uniform cap back. "Why, I ask you why, do I always get the bright boys? Look, chum, go get a drink and you'll feel better. Maybe the excitement was too much for you."

Shrevvie grinned. He liked to see cops taken down a peg. But he was due for a disappointment, for Cranston did not waste any time. He walked into the bar as though to obey the cop's suggestion. Shrevvie was puzzled till he saw Cranston go into the phone booth. Of course, he was going to call Weston and see that his order was carried out.

"Weston?" Cranston asked into the phone.

"Here. Is that you, Lamont? Where did you go? The U.N. is all in a frazzle of nerves again. I've just had Derry's body taken away. Where are you? Where's the man who killed Derry?"

"He will soon be in the hospital and I'd like a guard around him, for I'm afraid now that he's taken his last chance he may become even more dangerous."

"Of course. Where is he?"

Cranston told him and then said, "You realize now, I suppose, that Derry did not kill Dom Brassle or Yerkes. That it was Derry's murderer who did those other killings."

"Huh... oh, yes, of course. Naturally. That is to say... No. I did not realize any such thing! Can you prove it?"

"Yes, I think so. Join me at the hospital and I'll bring you up to date."

"I'll get right down there. But who is it?"

"Why S. T. Tarr, of course. Who else could it have been?" Cranston hung up the phone on Weston's grunt of surprise.

CHAPTER XVI

IRENE BARRET stood at the crisp white bedside and looked down at Tarr's drawn face with pity. But then, as she thought of that magnificent old man, Dom Brassle and his only a trifle less magnificent aide, Yerkes, of what he had done in helping the enemy, the expression was wiped off as if an artist had used an eraser on a completed drawing.

Weston stood at the other side of the bed with Cranston. There was no slightest trace of pity in either of their faces. Weston spoke first.

"So much has happened that I am a trifle confused. Correct me if I am wrong, but didn't we prove by the fingerprint on the gavel that was used on this... this man's head, that he could not have been involved in the shooting? And please don't say anything about forged fingerprints or using rubber impressions, or... Well, please don't for they won't work. Any expert can tell the difference in a moment."

"No," said Cranston thoughtfully, "I won't. Instead I will have to direct you to that monument of police lore, GROSS ON CRIMINOLOGY. There you will find that what Tarr did was first used about forty years ago by a shrewd French thief.

"I don't know if you remember, Weston, but when we found Tarr unconscious, or feigning unconsciousness in the room where he had just shot Yerkes, one of the first things he did was tie one of his shoelaces. It was partly undone.

"In the excitement of the foul deed which he had just finished, he had not tied the lace as tightly as he should. You see, all he did was press his big toe print onto the handle of the gavel! You remember, do you not, that the fingerprint man commented on the size of the print, and assumed that it must have come from a thumb and a large one at that?"

"Whoa. Wait a minute..." Weston looked down at Tarr's face, which was impassive. "Then he deliberately cut his toes off. Just so that we would not be able to compare..." Weston paused and then said, "Well, I suppose if I had a choice between death and the loss of some toes, I might do the same thing..."

Irene spoke for the first time. "I see the modus operandi of the print, but he then hit himself with the gavel. How did he prevent his fingerprints from showing? Surely he could not, after smashing himself pick up a handkerchief and replace it in his pocket!"

"That puzzled me for a time," said Cranston. "But it's only because we are trained to think of a gavel as

something which you hold in your hand and then strike with."

"He reversed the procedure. He let the gavel remain motionless on the floor and flailed at it with his head! He smashed his head down on the gavel and passed out."

"Hmmm," said Weston thoughtfully. "You've taken care of the fingerprint and gavel. Now," Weston presented his biggest puzzle to Cranston, "how did he get around the evidence of the lie detector?" Looking back at the scene at the time when the people concerned in the case had subjected themselves to the machinery of science, a flicker of a smile crossed Cranston's face. "You were dealing, as you now know, with a shrewd mind that operated under stress even better than it did under normal conditions. Oh, one final thing before we get to the lie detector. You realize, of course, that Tarr did not frame the killing of Yerkes to look like an impossible crime?"

"What then?"

"His crime was craftily conceived. But it almost came tumbling down around his ears right at the beginning, for he had an incredibly bad piece of luck! When he shot Yerkes and then battered his head on the gavel, he had no idea that there would be a witness or witnesses to prove that no one had entered or left the room!

"He meant it to look as if a stranger had done the killing and then had left the room and gone about his business. He didn't, couldn't know that the circumstances would conspire to make it look as if the hypothetical killer had vanished into thin air.

"But he thought quickly and turned the bad luck into good account by passing the buck to Captain Derry."

"I see," said Weston. "I can see how it happened, but now, the lie detector. Don't tell me that it is valueless?"

"Only valueless when used for such a short time as it was." Cranston looked down at Tarr's body. His face was buried in the pillow.

"Let me digress a moment, One of the most baffling occurrences the operators of the lie machines ever ran into was the time they used it on a man whom they were morally certain had killed his fiancée.

"Her name was Rosie and as usual they had loaded questions which they threw in about Rosie. They functioned by comparing a normal response to an unloaded question with the response to a loaded question. Imagine their surprise then, when they found absolutely no guilty peaks on the graph. Seemingly, he had no emotional response to any of the 'Rosie' questions.

"They got him later on circumstantial evidence and he confessed. It was only then, under questioning, that they found how he had beaten the lie detector!"

Tarr turned his head around and looked up at Cranston with a bleak look in his eyes. But he said nothing.

Weston asked, "How did he do it? The machine works on your blood pressure and surely if you've murdered someone your pressure is going to go up on the mention of the name of the person whom you killed?"

"That is the theory, of course. However, what they found out, and it is laughable in its simplicity, is that he had had at one time another girl by the name of Rosie! His mind had no guilty associations at the mention of her name. Therefore, there was no response from his blood pressure. Every time they asked about the girl Rosie whom he had killed, he thought of the girl Rosie whom he had gone out with when he was a kid! Diabolically simple, is it not?"

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"Diabolical, if not simple. But Tarr couldn't have used that. Or could he?"

"No, he didn't need to. He did something even simpler! Let me preface this by saying that any complete, long-drawn-out examination by the machine would have detected his trick. But you," Cranston looked at Weston, "were just using the machine in a desperate, hurried attempt to get some kind of a lead.

"You see, what Tarr did when they first put the apparatus on him when they were testing to see his normal line," said Cranston looking down at the man and pausing before he went on, "was to run his blood pressure up. That way they had too high a line for his normal pressure and the subsequent questions never came near that height!"

Weston practically spluttered, "All he did was run his blood pressure up... Why you make it sound as easy as closing your eyes! How could anyone do that?"

"Very simply and it is as easy as closing your eyes. You can try it experimentally with your doctor when he's testing your blood pressure, if you'd like. All you have to do is think of something that affects you tremendously emotionally!

"If you were very much in love with a girl and you put all your thoughts on the love you bore her, your blood pressure would, I assure you, go kiting way up!"

"And that's what he did?" Weston glanced from Tarr to Irene. "I can see now how it might work!"

"Of course, we made it even easier for him to concentrate on the object of his love because she was right there near him." Cranston looked at Irene this time. She lowered her eyes.

There was a silence. Behind them the machinery of a well organized hospital went on. The noise seeped into the room and made the only sound other than their breathing.

Weston was running over the case in his mind. "Derry controlled Tarr by his knowledge that Tarr was working as a suppress agent for both Molvannia and for Ruravia, is that correct?"

"Yes. For, of course, the essence of Tarr's value to either country should have been the fact that he worked for them alone. Tarr, of course, was bound up tightly in the mesh of Fascist politics..."

Irene this time looked down at the man in the bed with loathing in her eyes.

"And that, at long last, gets us to the real motivation of this shabby tale of double dealing." Cranston was looking at Irene. He asked, "What, my dear, would you think, with your knowledge of the political aspects of this case was the reason that Tarr fastened a potato to the front of a gun and shot down Dom Brassle in the middle of a speech?"

She paused, marshaling herself. "Why to keep Brassle from saying anything about the pact. That is the only reason I can see."

"Ah, but what in the pact do you think was so necessary to Tarr's peace of mind, that it had, at all costs, to be kept quiet?"

"Why... I don't know. Now that I think of it, I can't see why. He wasn't concerned in it, was he?"

"That is the crux. Tarr didn't give a fig one way or the other about whether the terms of the old pact were

revealed. He wouldn't be hurt by the world's knowledge that Ruravia had one time signed up with Hitler. Not in the least... but for one thing!"

Tarr spoke for the first time. "Must you?"

"You give me no choice." Cranston's mouth was a thin straight line.

"Come on, come on, speak up." Weston was impatient. "Now you've got me all puzzled again. If Tarr didn't give a hang whether or not anyone knew what was in the pact, then why..."

"Ah, there's the rub. He didn't care about the terms of the pact. He did care about something that was in it! And that was his signature!"

Irene and Weston exchanged puzzled glances.

"You see," said Cranston looking down at Tarr, whose face was not pleasant to see, "Tarr signed for Hitler as his emissary."

It was done.

Tarr moaned like an animal in pain.

"But the war is over... some war criminals got away. Why was it so essential that this fact not be known?" Weston asked.

"It was essential to a man in love," said Cranston and for the first time his voice was a little less harsh. "Look at the position he was in. Here he was an avowed Fascist, who had only one piece of real evidence against him and that was hidden away in the Time Capsule. He had no particular worries about it at all. Not until he fell in love." Cranston looked at Irene.

"Fell in love with a renowned anti-Fascist. A person who had devoted her life and all her energies to fighting what he represented! He was willing to do anything to keep the knowledge away from her! He hoped that somehow he could make her fall in love with him and it was a possibility as long as she did not know of the pact.

"He killed for love."

They left the room. The three of them. They stood outside the door. Weston said, "When all's said and done we don't have much evidence against him. Of course, destroying his toes is negative evidence of what he did, but, I don't know..."

"I wouldn't worry about its ever coming up in court," Cranston said. "I don't even think that Tarr will ever leave the hospital alive."

A nurse elbowed her way past them through the door. She closed the door behind her, then they heard a rustle of movement and the door opened again. She looked at them.

"Was he all right when you left him?"

Cranston nodded.

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"He's dead now." She paused and said, "I smelled bitter almonds on his breath. Where could he have gotten that? He was examined when he entered..."

"I imagine," said Cranston as he took Irene's arm and led her down the hall, "that you will find that he had a cache in a tooth, like another prominent member of the same political faith as his."

Weston breathed, "Like Himmler..."

THE END