

HANDS IN THE DARK

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I

The strange characters of the cryptic message were a blood red hue. They were vivid and mysterious beneath the oval light of the desk lamp.

"A dead man's message!"

Reynold Barker looked about him as he spoke. The silence of his gloomy surroundings worried him. His fingers trembled. The paper crinkled. Even that slight sound was startling.

The dark-paneled walls of the room were oppressive to Reynold Barker. He felt that he was in their grip; that he could never leave them. He was in Theodore Galvin's study the spot that had been his goal for seven days. He had found the paper in the secret drawer of the desk the exact place where Galvin had told him it would be. But the silence of this sullen chamber was maddening. It brought back recollections of those dying eyes Galvin's eyes.

Barker steadied his nerves with mighty effort. He tried to laugh. It was excitement, he told himself. Shakiness

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following those long airplane hops from South America. He stared at the paper. His lips forced a smile as he comprehended its meaning.

A sudden gurgle came from Barker's throat. Hands from the dark had gripped his throat! He dropped the paper and sought to break the throttling hold. He could not. His own hands were feeble. The clutching fingers tightened choking, choking, choking! Reynold Barker's brain was whirling. His eyes were bulging, but unseeing. He heard a roaring in his ears louder than the thrum of an airplane motor. Then came blackness, sickening blackness, more terrible than the shadowy darkness of that sinister room! Again, the strangling hands were tightening...

CHAPTER II. A MIDNIGHT VISITOR

BOB GALVIN looked around the room and smiled. He remembered the place from his boyhood this quaint old room, with its dark, oak-paneled walls.

He still felt a slight trace of the awe that had gripped him here, for this had been his uncle's room the uncle whom Bob remembered as a stern, gray, grim-faced man.

"Does it remind you of old times, sir?"

The question came from Hodgson, the old servant. Hodgson had been Theodore Galvin's attendant for many years. To Bob, he seemed like a part of this old room.

"Yes," replied Bob, "it does. So do you, Hodgson. You're just the same as you were why, it must be nearly twenty years ago!"

The servant nodded.

"Close to that since you left here, sir. I'm not the same as I was then, sir. I can't see the way I did once. My eyes" he shook his head sadly "are very poor, sir. It seems like I feel my way about the house, Mr. Bob. I know the place so well –"

But Bob Galvin wasn't listening. Instead, he stiffened as his eyes, turning toward the heavy casement window, fixed themselves for a moment on a strange form outside.

It was a face, shrouded in the shadows. The lower part of the face was hidden in blackness, but the piercing eyes seemed to be studying Bob's own features. Bob only had a chance to see the face an instant then it was gone.

The old butler sensed that something was wrong. He turned toward Bob.

"What what was it, sir," he stammered. "Did you feel suddenly suddenly ill?"

"No a face! Out the window! Peering in at me! Did you see it, too, Hodgson?"

Then, Bob realized that Hodgson had indeed spoken the truth when he said he was nearly blind. The old man's stonelike, groping expression told that. Hodgson shook his head.

"No, sir. It might have been something caught in those branches that sway against the window. There's a single tree in the garden out there."

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Bob pushed back his chair and crossed the room to the window. He unfastened the latch and opened the casement. Only the branches of the lone tree swayed mournfully against the casement in the night wind. Nothing more.

Bob bolted the casement again, and shook his head, his lips compressed.

"Strange strange," he muttered. "I could have sworn some one was out there, spying on me."

Then he turned again to Hodgson. "Did my uncle have any enemies, Hodgson? Men who wanted his ruin his life, perhaps?"

"No, sir. Not that I know of, sir."

"Well have you noticed anything peculiar about the old place, Hodgson? Is Miss Betty all right?"

The old man moistened his lips and hesitated. Then he spoke.

"EVERYTHING is just as it used to be, sir. When Mr. Galvin went away, he closed the house. I went out to the country house with Miss Betty. We were there when we learned that your uncle had died.

"I came in and opened the place, sir, when I knew that you were coming home. Miss Betty is still in the country. She said she would wait until you arrived."

"I am going to phone her shortly."

"She will be glad to hear from you, sir. She has been waiting there several days now.

"I am glad that I came in alone, sir. I wouldn't have wanted her to see what I found in this room!"

"What was that?" Bob's interest was evident.

"A dead man, sir! He was lying right where you are standing by the desk."

"A dead man! Then there was something! Who was he?"

"The police have not learned his name, sir," Hodgson continued. "Perkins, the chauffeur, was with me when I stumbled on the body. The detectives were sure the man was a thief."

"What killed him? Was he shot?"

"He was strangled, sir. He must have been dead for two or three days when we discovered him.

"We couldn't tell how he came in all the doors were locked, and the shutters were closed and barred. The detectives think he must have had a key that opened the little side door.

"They are sure he came here with another man both of them probably thieves –"

"Ah, I understand," interrupted Bob. "One killed the other and escaped. What could they have been after, Hodgson?"

"I can't imagine, sir," the servant said. "There was nothing here of value. We could find nothing missing, sir.

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"The detectives think that one man had a grudge against the other. That he brought him here to kill him –"

Bob's face gleamed with understanding.

"I see their idea!" he exclaimed. "The murderer told his pal this was a place worth cracking. Then, when they got in here, he strangled him. No noise plenty of time to get away –"

"That's just it, sir," replied Hodgson, admiringly. "That's just what the inspector said. There was quite a piece in the paper about it, sir; but it was while you were still on the boat, coming home –"

THE dull ring of the doorbell came as an interruption. With slow, faltering steps, Hodgson left the room to answer.

Bob Galvin watched the old servant as he passed into the gloomy hall. Hodgson seemed truly to be feeling his way through this old, somber house.

Two minutes passed. The servant returned and almost tottered into the room.

"Mr. Mallory is here, sir," he said.

Bob advanced to greet Hiram Mallory. Mallory had been one of his uncle's oldest friends. Bob recognized him immediately a quiet, kindly-faced old gentleman who still bore himself with youthful vigor.

"Most regrettable, your uncle's death," said Mallory, when he and Bob were seated at the flat-topped desk. "It was a great mistake for him to travel so far away in his state of health. Asuncion, Paraguay, still has its yellow fever at times and it brought your uncle's death, Robert."

"Whatever did he go for?" asked Bob.

"He was depressed, Robert. His real estate business here in New York was a large one, and successful, but recent unwise investments have lost him a great deal of money. I fear there is little or nothing left of the estate."

Bob's face grew thoughtful, "I heard from him very seldom, you know. I suppose South Africa, where I've lived for the past twenty years, made it seem to him as if I was in another world.

"So you think the estate is in bad shape?"

"I'm afraid so. Have you seen the will yet?"

Bob shook his head. "I received a letter from the lawyers," he said. "Whatever's left is to be shared by myself and Betty Mandell, my uncle's ward. She's lived with my uncle since she was a child."

Mallory smiled a wry smile. "That means," he said, "that she will be virtually penniless. She will have no home, and what money she receives cannot last long."

"She needn't worry," smiled Bob. "I've done well in South Africa, Mr. Mallory. She'll live here, as she's always done. And that reminds me, sir, I have to call her. Pardon me for a few minutes."

Bob consulted a card he drew from his pocket and reached for the desk phone. In a few moments, Mallory smiled again, observing the beam of happiness on Bob's face as he spoke.

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"Yes, Betty," Bob was saying, "this is Bob... I'm glad to hear your voice, too... A good many years since we've seen each other... You are coming in to-morrow? That's great... No, Betty, you mustn't talk that way. This is your home, as it has always been... I'll see you to-morrow, then? Wonderful!"

After the phone call, Bob chatted with his uncle's old friend. He was glad to meet some one in New York.

Bob had left, when only a youth, to seek his fortune in South Africa, where his father, Theodore Galvin's brother, had left him some property.

He told Mallory of his adventures there. He brought out papers from his suitcase, and showed them to his uncle's old friend. The papers were piled upon the desk by the time their conversation had ended.

Hiram Mallory arose. He held out his hand.

"You have done well, Robert," he said. "I only regret that your uncle did not live to see you and talk with you as I have. He would have been delighted to learn of your success.

"He was a broken man when he went away, Robert. He wanted to go to some distant country, where he could relieve his mind from all his worries.

"He was old, Robert, but I believe that he would have recuperated some of his losses if he had returned. But that was not to be –"

Mallory paused speculatively as he stood by the doorway. He glanced at his watch and smiled at the lateness of the hour.

"Half past eleven," he said. "I am usually in bed by ten o'clock. I must go. I shall see you again, Robert."

"Good night," replied Bob. "I'm certainly glad you dropped in, Mr. Mallory. I'll turn in myself after I've gone over those papers on the desk. That will mean an hour's work, at least."

Alone, in the gloom of the oak-paneled room, Bob lost himself in the work before him.

He had come away from South Africa rather hurriedly; but on the boat he had attended to all details. He had only these final matters left. As soon as they were finished, there would be no reason for him to worry about the affairs that he had left.

Bob worked quickly. It required less time than he had anticipated. The old clock in the hallway was striking twelve when he completed his labors.

His own business ended, Bob began to study some documents that Hodgson had laid on the desk. They referred to his uncle's affairs, but were of minor importance.

While Bob was considering these, he became conscious of a slight noise behind him. He swung in his swivel chair, expecting to see Hodgson.

A startled gasp came from Bob's lips as he found himself staring into the muzzle of an automatic.

The gun was held by a man who wore a dark overcoat and a black cap. The stranger's face was partly obscured by the collar of his coat. The peak of his cap hid his eyes.

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"No noise!" warned a low, growling voice. "Put up your hands!"

Bob obeyed, wondering. He remembered the burglary that Hodgson had mentioned.

But this was a more daring entry and its futility was perplexing. There was nothing of value here. Neither did Bob have any great amount of money on his person.

He arose at a command from the man who held the pistol. The stranger's left hand tapped Bob's pockets in search of a weapon, but none was there.

"Put on your hat and coat," the man ordered, motioning toward the corner. Bob followed instructions.

The stranger was beside Bob now.

"You're coming with me," he said in a low voice. "No funny business. Understand? Don't try to tip off that old guy that works for you. Tell him you're going out. Get me?"

Bob nodded. Then he was being urged forward. They entered the hallway. Bob could feel the pressure of the automatic pressed against his side.

They encountered Hodgson in the dimly lighted hall.

"Are you going out with Mr. Mallory, sir?" questioned the old servant.

The gun nudged Bob. He realized that Hodgson did not know that Mallory had departed half an hour before.

The old servant's poor eyes could distinguish but the forms of two men. The blankness of his gaze indicated that Hodgson was simply assuming the other man's identity.

"Yes," said Bob huskily, "I'm going out for a while, Hodgson."

"You have the key with you, sir?"

"Yes, Hodgson."

"All right, sir. Shall I wait up?"

Bob hesitated. If Hodgson remained waiting for him, it might be to his advantage. The old servant would suspect something wrong if he did not return.

"You might do that, Hodgson," he said.

The man with the gun made no comment. Bob smiled as he was nudged along the hall. His ruse had worked. Hodgson would be waiting.

The old servant moved hurriedly ahead of them. He opened the door and stood by the darkened vestibule, while Bob Galvin and his captor walked out into the night.

CHAPTER III. SHADOWS OF NIGHT

BETTY MANDELL stared across the table. Her gaze was fixed upon Bob Galvin's face. It seemed sallow in the dim light of the dining room. Two candles on the center of the table furnished the only illumination.

"What's the matter?" demanded the man, as he noticed the girl's stare.

"Nothing, Bob," replied Betty. "It's just well, you look so different from what I expected you to be."

"Yeah?" Bob's voice seemed rather sour. "What's the matter with me? Don't you like my looks?"

"It's not that, Bob," said Betty hastily. "I like you, and I'll always like you, Bob. It's just that you're well so different from the way I pictured you."

The man laughed good humoredly.

"You haven't seen me since we were kids," he said.

"I've seen your picture," reminded Betty. "The one you sent me two years ago with one of those wonderful letters that you know how to write."

"That's so. I sent you my picture. But photographs sometimes fool you, Betty. Maybe I've changed a bit, too. People say I've been changing in appearance."

"I guess that explains it, Bob. But when I heard your voice on the telephone last night, it was as if I could see you while you were talking. But now well it all seems different."

"You didn't see me last night. That was just your imagination."

"I didn't imagine I heard your voice! That's different now, Bob! When I came in this afternoon, I was amazed the moment that I heard you speak."

"A voice never sounds right over the telephone."

"That must be it, Bob," Betty consented, then went on.

"Don't think I'm disappointed. I'm just bewildered, that's all. I'm just trying to get used to you. You understand, don't you?"

THE man arose and walked around the table. He patted the girl on the back. Somehow the action annoyed Betty, although she made no sign.

"You've been worried, little girl," said Bob. "That's all. Poor old uncle dying. It's a hard blow for both of us."

"Maybe you oughtn't to stay in this old house too much. Why don't you take a trip down to Bermuda, or somewhere like that?"

"I don't have the money, Bob," said Betty frankly.

"You've got it coming to you from the estate, haven't you?"

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"I'm afraid there isn't going to be much, Bob."

"Don't worry about that. There'll be plenty. I've got plenty of money, Betty. I'll take care of the trip."

The girl shook her head.

"I wouldn't want you to do that, Bob –"

"It's all right with me, Betty."

"Perhaps, later. After things are more settled. I'd rather stay here right now, Bob. That is, if you want me to –"

"Of course I want you here! Didn't I tell you so last night?"

Betty nodded.

"All right," said Bob. "That settles it!"

Hodgson entered.

"Gentleman to see you, sir," he said to Bob.

"What's his name?" asked Bob.

"He didn't tell me, sir."

"Well, I'll see him, anyway. Take him in the study."

"All right, sir."

Betty looked at Hodgson as the man spoke. She observed a strange expression on the old servant's face.

He was staring at Bob Galvin as though his dim eyes were trying to see the young man's face more closely.

The old servant turned and left the room.

"I'll be back later," declared Bob as he left for the study.

Betty remained in the candle-lighted room. Theodore Galvin had always liked candlelight. The dining room had never been equipped with electric lights. Even in the other parts of the house, modern illumination was sparse.

The gloom was oppressive to Betty; but it was not because of the flickering candles alone. She was really disappointed in Bob Galvin, although she had tried to deny that fact.

Bob had greeted her upon her arrival in New York; but there had been something forced about his manner. Somehow, she did not trust him.

Yet, when he had spoken over the telephone the night before, the sincerity of his voice had been impressive. It was only the memory of that conversation that reconciled her to the man who varied so from her

expectations.

Hodgson was back. The old man was keen, despite his poor vision. He sensed the melancholy that had come over the girl.

"What's the matter, Miss Betty?" he asked.

"Nothing, Hodgson."

"Is it Mr. Bob?"

"Yes," admitted Betty. "He's different from the Bob Galvin that I expected. I can't explain it, Hodgson, but –"

"You are right, Miss Betty," said the servant, in a low voice. "He is different different since last night!"

"Since last night!"

"Yes, ma'am. He went out with Mr. Mallory. That was about midnight. He came back an hour later, and I spoke to him when he came in. He didn't say anything. He just went up to his room.

"To–day, when he spoke to me, he seemed changed. There was a difference in his voice, Miss Betty."

The old servant's words were perplexing.

Why had Bob Galvin gone out late with Mallory, of all persons? Perhaps Hodgson was mistaken about Mallory. But he could not be mistaken about Bob.

Who was the visitor here to–night?

Betty wondered. She rose from the table and went out into the hall. There she encountered Bob Galvin and another man coming from the study.

The visitor was not easily discerned in the gloom, but Betty noted that he wore a cap pulled down over his eyes. There was a toughness about the man's face all that Betty could see of it. Bob turned suddenly.

"Hello, Betty," he said. "I'm going out for a while. I'll see you later."

He was wearing his coat and held his hat in his hand. He did not introduce the stranger. He and the other man departed, leaving Betty astonished.

THE evening dragged slowly by. Betty read a book in the big library – a room as gloomy as the rest of the house. Betty was used to this atmosphere, although at times it chilled her.

It was nearly midnight when Betty retired. Before she went to sleep, she heard the front door close ponderously. The stairs creaked.

Bob Galvin had returned.

Silent minutes went by. Betty could not sleep. Somehow, her mind kept picturing the old study downstairs. It was there that Bob had received the odd visitor to–night.

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Betty was seized by an uncontrollable impulse to go downstairs. She felt for her slippers; then recalled that they were in her trunk, which had not been brought in from the country.

Barefooted, she stole down the carpeted stairs, with one hand on the banister. There was no creaking under her light tread. She moved noiselessly along the hall, then stopped suddenly as she turned the corner that led to the door of the study.

There was dim light in the hall, coming from the study. The door of the room was open; and the table lamp must be on!

Perhaps Bob had left it burning; perhaps he was there now. In the latter event, Betty could explain her presence by explaining that she had heard a noise downstairs and had come to investigate.

Nevertheless, it might be well to observe Bob before he saw her. With catlike stealth, Betty advanced to the doorway.

The light on the floor of the hall fascinated her. It was more than a gleam. Into it came a peculiar shadow the elongated silhouette of a man's profile.

The patch of blackness swayed. Betty watched its motion. She stepped forward and turned to look into the room.

BY the desk stood a tall man clad in black. His back was turned toward the door. He seemed a strange phantom of the night a living being that had come from nowhere. Across the floor lay his long, weird shadow, stretching into the gloom of the hall.

Betty's hands gripped the sides of the doorway, as she stood horrified by the presence of this uncanny personage.

She could see the folds of the black cloak which hung from his shoulders; the back of the broad-brimmed hat which was upon his head. He was examining the desk the motion of his black-gloved hands indicated that fact.

While Betty stood, entranced, the man must have sensed her presence. He swung suddenly to face the door. As his cloak spread wide, the girl caught a glimpse of its crimson lining and the thin, black-clad form within the cloak.

The face of the man was invisible, obscured by the collar of the cloak and the low brim of the hat. All that Betty could see was the glow of two piercing eyes that shone beneath that hat brim; eyes that saw her standing in the doorway.

The girl raised a hand to her mouth to repress a scream. Then a low, soft laugh echoed through the room. It came like a spectral whisper an eerie sound that seemed beyond reality.

A black-gloved hand swung upward. A click followed. The room was plunged in darkness.

Betty stood there, suddenly wondering if it had all been imagination. With boldness that she could not understand, she crept into that black room, toward the spot where the man had been. She was determined to meet this stranger of the night to learn his purpose to discover the mystery that surrounded him!

Silently she moved forward until she knew that she was near the desk. There she reached out and found the

lamp. She pressed the switch and turned quickly as the light came on.

She was alone in the deserted study! All that she had seen now seemed a creation of her imagination. She peered into the shadowy depths and saw nothing.

She could not believe her senses, for she knew beyond all chance of doubt that a man had been standing in that room. Now he was gone!

Noiselessly, like a shadow of the night, he had vanished!

CHAPTER IV. HODGSON INTERFERES

IT was at breakfast that Betty Mandell decided to tell Bob Galvin what she had seen the night before.

The girl had spent a troubled night. She had slept fitfully, awakening frequently at slight sounds.

Once she had been really frightened. She had imagined that two shining eyes were staring through the open window from the outside darkness. It had proved to be the reflection of two distant street lights.

But even now, in the light of morning, Betty felt herself shuddering at the thought of that strange, weird man in black whom she had discovered in the study, and who had so mysteriously eluded her.

"Bob," she said solemnly, "something strange happened last night. I came downstairs very late. I guess I guess I must have heard a noise. The light was on in the study."

Bob Galvin laid aside the morning newspaper. A quizzical look came over his face; an ugly look, Betty thought.

"In the study?" Bob's voice was tense.

"Yes," said Betty, "and that was not all. There was some one in the study a man dressed in black. He looked like a great big shadow."

"A a shadow!" Bob's exclamation came suddenly. He caught himself and smiled sourly.

"Was this real?" he asked. "Or was it just your imagination?"

"I'm sure it was real," Betty declared. "Some one must have been there. For, while I was still trying to believe my senses, the man turned around and the light went off.

"I I was afraid; but I went in the room just the same. I turned on the light. I was alone!"

"Alone," said Bob, in a low voice. His eyes were staring with a far-away look. "The shadow was gone!"

"Yes, the shadow was gone," replied Betty, "but it was more than a shadow, Bob! A shadow can not turn off a light!"

"I was frightened, Bob. I went all around downstairs, but I found nothing. Not even a window open."

"You'd better forget it," said Bob. "Your imagination is getting the best of you. How about that trip I suggested? Why not go?"

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"I don't want to leave New York," declared Betty firmly.

"But this house is no place for you," returned Bob. "Not while you're in your present state of mind."

Betty was inclined to agree. She remembered that she had been invited to visit a friend in the city Alice Wheeler. Perhaps Bob was right when he said that she should go away a while. So she offered a compromise.

"Alice Wheeler wants me to visit her," she said. "Suppose I go over there for a few nights?"

"But I don't like the idea of you staying here, Bob," she went on. "Something is wrong in this house!"

"Don't you worry about me," declared Bob. "I'll be all right. It's you I'm worried about. I'd advise you to go today.

"When something like this begins to worry you, a change is the only cure. I think it was your imagination, Betty thinking you saw a man in the study."

As Bob uttered the last words, Hodgson entered the dining room. The old servant stood stock-still. He did not move a muscle.

"I'll call Alice now," declared Betty.

AS soon as the girl had left the dining room, Hodgson approached the table. He leaned close to Bob Galvin and whispered.

"Have you told her?" he questioned. "Told her about that man that man in the study –"

"What man?" snapped Bob. The old servant seemed rebuffed by his new master's tone.

"About the man I found there," explained Hodgson, "the man I told you about the dead man!"

"No," said Bob, in an unpleasant voice. "Listen, Hodgson. I don't want you bothering me this way. Understand? When I want to tell you any thing, I'll tell it without your asking. Remember that!"

He picked up the newspaper. Hodgson stood trembling, hurt by the words which Bob had spoken. He turned and tottered from the room, his head bowed in dejection. He encountered Betty in the hall.

"What is the matter, Miss Betty?" he inquired. "Has something happened?"

"Nothing important, Hodgson," said Betty, in a restrained tone. "I've just decided to visit Miss Wheeler. Call Perkins to be here in half an hour. I'm going to pack."

"Miss Betty" Hodgson's voice was pleading "you must tell me what is the matter!"

The girl could not resist the old servant's plea. She realized that Hodgson was the only person in whom she could confide, for she had lived a lonely life for many years, with only her uncle and this servant.

If there should be danger in the house, it was but right to tell Hodgson. She felt sure that Bob Galvin would not do so.

She drew the servant aside and told him what had happened the night before. Hodgson nodded.

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"It would be best for you to go, Miss Betty," he declared. "Things are not right here. I don't know what you saw. It might have been –"

"A ghost?" questioned Betty, half laughing in spite of herself.

"Perhaps, Miss Betty," declared Hodgson solemnly. "A man was killed in that very room while you were away. I found his body."

The statement horrified Betty. She was not superstitious, yet this revelation caught her unaware.

She was about to question Hodgson when Bob appeared from the dining room. Betty turned and went upstairs. She heard Bob tell Hodgson that he was going out.

Betty did very little packing. She felt that a few days would be the limit of her stay.

She came downstairs with a small bag just as the doorbell rang. Hodgson was not in sight, so Betty answered the door. Perkins was there with the car. He took the bag. Betty went to find Hodgson.

Something attracted her to the study. The door was closed. She decided that Hodgson must be in there. That would account for the fact that he had not answered the bell.

She opened the door and entered. Hodgson was standing by the desk. He started and turned away when the girl entered. He tried to hide something. The girl saw that it was a revolver.

"What are you doing, Hodgson?" Betty asked in surprise.

"Nothing, Miss Betty," began the servant. Then he realized that the girl had seen the revolver. "I'm just preparing, ma'am, that's all.

"I'm a little bit worried about Mr. Bob. I thought it would be best if I had a revolver handy. That's all."

"Do be careful," said Betty in a low voice. "I hope nothing happens while I am gone. You'll look out, won't you, Hodgson?"

After the girl had left, Hodgson stood staring grimly at the dark oak walls. He nodded as though talking to himself. He put the revolver in his pocket and went out of the study.

IT was late in the afternoon when Bob Galvin returned. He was accompanied by Hiram Mallory. Evidently Galvin had dropped in to see his uncle's friend.

Mallory spoke a kindly word to Hodgson. Then he and Bob entered the study and closed the door. It was nearly dinner time when Mallory departed.

Bob Galvin dined alone that evening. Hodgson waited on him and the old man's face was grim. Bob did not appear to notice him during the meal.

In the evening, there was a visitor the man who wore the black cap. It was after ten o'clock when he went away. Bob returned alone to the study.

It was then that Hodgson entered. He was close by the desk when Bob heard his footsteps. The young man swung about in his chair.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Hodgson, a look of grim determination on his face, was standing near. In his trembling hand the old servant held a revolver.

Bob Galvin gripped the arms of the chair. He was startled, even though Hodgson could not detect the expression that came over his face.

"What's this, Hodgson?" demanded Bob. "Put down that gun! Understand?"

"You will go away from here!" declared Hodgson, in a quavering voice. "Go away and do not come back! You do not belong here. You are not the man you claim to be –"

"That's nonsense, Hodgson," interrupted Bob Galvin. "Give me that gun and get out of here!"

"You must go away!" repeated Hodgson, voice quavering but determined. "I have suspected you ever since that night you went out with another man. You are not Robert Galvin –"

The young man laughed. After his first surprise, he did not fear Hodgson. He did not think the old man would shoot without provocation.

"Mr. Mallory was here," he declared. "He knows that I am Bob Galvin. Your eyesight is bad, Hodgson, that's all. Call up Mallory and ask him who I am."

For a moment the old servant hesitated. He looked puzzled; but the doubt soon faded from his face and he became more determined than before.

Bob Galvin noticed the change. He realized that a sudden understanding was coming into Hodgson's mind.

"I shall not call up Mr. Mallory," declared the servant, in a decided tone. "I shall not call him up, because –" He interrupted himself quickly.

"I do not want to talk to you," he said. "You must go now! I shall give you just ten seconds to leave this room!"

Bob Galvin stared but did not move.

"One –" said Hodgson, counting slowly, "– two –"

Bob Galvin was moving now, inch by inch. He was coming closer and closer to Hodgson, but the old servant's eyes did not detect the motion. Hodgson kept on counting.

"– Eight –"

Bob Galvin's hand swung suddenly upward. It struck Hodgson's wrist. The revolver flew across the room.

Galvin leaped upon the old man. They grappled.

The odds seemed greatly in Bob's favor, but he encountered a surprise. Hodgson's feebleness lay only in his legs.

The old man's grip was ferocious. He wrestled bravely with his young adversary. They fell to the floor. Hodgson was on top.

HANDS IN THE DARK

IT seemed that the old servant was due to overpower his opponent. Bob had one hand free, but he could not use it to advantage. He stretched his arm wildly and his fingers encountered the barrel of the revolver.

Bob picked up the weapon. With a quick twist, he freed himself for the instant. In so doing, he laid himself open to a new attack by Hodgson.

As the old man flung himself forward, Bob's arm swung. The butt of the revolver struck Hodgson's head. The servant sank with a groan.

With cruel viciousness, Bob swung again. He rose to his knees and battered the helpless man's head with the revolver.

There was no limit to his fury. Hodgson was dead from the fourth blow, but Galvin kept on and on until Hodgson's head had become a terrible sight.

Then, an ugly leer spreading over his face, Bob arose and looked down at his handiwork.

"You knew too much," he said. "You know nothing, now!"

Bob laid the revolver on the desk. He sat looking at Hodgson's body while he called a number on the telephone. Sure that he was talking to the person he desired, Bob Galvin gave a simple, quiet order:

"Come up to see 'em as soon as you can," he said. "I have changed my plans. There is work for us to do."

He laid aside the telephone and sat grinning at the gruesome form on the floor.

CHAPTER V. MURDERERS PLOT

"To-night's the night, Briggs!"

"So that's what the Boss told you, eh, Bob?"

The two men who were talking sat in that same study that had once belonged to Theodore Galvin.

One of them was the young man who called himself Bob Galvin. The other was a big, powerful fellow, who was dressed in the quiet clothes of a servitor almost the identical garb that Hodgson had been wont to wear.

"Yeah," said young Bob decisively. "We're going to make a stab at it tonight. At least, you and Clink are. I'm going to stay right here.

"As soon as Clink comes in, you and he go to meet the Chief. Get your final instructions from him."

The big man nodded. His iron-jawed face was sullen. His eyes gleamed with a murderous look.

Bob Galvin saw that look, and a sordid grin appeared upon his face. The young man's expression became one of brutality.

"After to-night," remarked Briggs suddenly. "What then?"

"If things go right," returned his companion, "it will be all jake. If they don't, we'll have to play the game like we figured it.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"You'll be Briggs Briggs, the butler, or whatever we call you the guy I hired because old Hodgson was getting feeble."

"He wasn't so feeble three nights ago," retorted Briggs.

"You're right," said Bob. "But people don't know that. The girl is the only one we've got to bluff. I sent Hodgson off on a long vacation, that's all. Thought he needed it. Big-hearted stuff, you know."

"Briggs, the butler," said the big man with a grin. "Well, Briggs is a good name and it happens to be my own.

"That makes it easy. No slip-ups. Briggs is my name, just like yours is Bob. Bob –"

"Galvin," interrupted the young man at the desk. "Remember that part of it. No slip-ups there. Understand?"

BRIGGS nodded. He looked around the room, the grin still on his face.

"We've both done our bit in this place," he said, "eh, Bob? I started it when I did away with Barker. Tried to double-cross us, the rat. Then you fixed this guy, Hodgson, when he tried to interfere. You acted kind of quick when you did that –"

"No quicker than you," interposed Bob. "I guess there was only one way to handle Barker. But it would have been good if you had made him talk before he went out. He may have known some things we don't know."

"Couldn't help it," said Briggs sullenly. "He could scrap, that guy. So I didn't give him a chance. Say" he turned the conversation suddenly "when's the girl coming back?"

"To-morrow," was the quick answer. "That's why we've got to be ready to play the game. Remember, you call me 'sir' or 'Mr. Galvin'. Got that straight?"

"Sure enough. And she's Miss Betty. But, listen" Briggs spoke seriously "what do you think, now, about that time she came in here. Do you really think she saw –"

"The Chief has figured it out," interrupted Bob. "She may have been imagining things. If that's the case, it doesn't mean anything.

"But if she really saw some one, it's probable that it was well, you know who."

"The Shadow!"

"Yes."

Briggs shook his head doubtfully.

"He's a tough guy to buck, Bob," he said. "I reckon the Boss can do it. He's a smart bird.

"But The Shadow ain't no softy himself. He's spoiled a lot of good lays for a lot of clever guys. He might not get at us but he's liable to cause a mix-up."

"The Chief has doped it, Briggs," said Bob, impatiently, as though he did not relish the conversation. "You know what The Shadow does he looks in on a lot of jobs that the police have slipped up on. That's his game, isn't it?"

HANDS IN THE DARK

"So I've heard."

"Well, figure it like the Chief does, then. This Barker proposition was passed up by the cops. They got nowhere with it. So The Shadow decided to look.

"But before he does, I'm in here! Bob Galvin, I am, come into my own. The girl's O.K. so's old Hodgson. It's not any person The Shadow's after it's the scene of the crime."

"That sounds O.K."

"ALL RIGHT," continued Bob. "He snoops in to look for a clew. He doesn't find any. Why? Because you covered up; and the Chief and I checked up after you.

"Reynold Barker wasn't hooked up with us regular. His name can't mean anything, even if The Shadow has found it out. So he missed when he came after a clew. The girl helped, by walking in on him.

"He's laid off this place now. Maybe he's trying somewhere else maybe he's quit."

"The Boss is a smart guy, to dope it that way," declared Briggs, in a relieved tone.

"Call him Chief," advised Bob. "He likes that better."

"The Chief, then."

"Besides," added Bob, "we're safe on old Hodgson's account. We got away with his body without any trouble. Had plenty of time to do it. It fixed every thing for us, because it put you in here and let us ring in Clink, too.

"Don't forget that Clink's been watching in this room every night. He's seen nothing of The Shadow."

"Going to keep Clink on the job, if we have to stay a while longer?"

"No!" exclaimed Bob. "It's all right for him to drop in late at night, while we're alone. But not with the girl here!

"How would we figure him in this place? That mug of his is all right behind a mask or under the front of a big cap. But if he ever had to show it –"

"You're right," admitted Briggs sheepishly. "He's a good guy, Clink is, but he looks bad."

"He doesn't belong here, that's a bet," Bob added. "You're all right, Briggs. As good as the average servant, I guess. But Clink well, he's out; that's all."

"I hope The Shadow is out," observed Briggs.

"He is, all right," said Bob, "but we're playing it safe. That's why you and Clink have the job to–night. The Chief and I are laying low.

"We're playing a safe game, all right. Every one knows that old Galvin's estate is blooey. No chance of anybody working a phony game like mine just to grab off this joint and a cheesy old country house.

"Old man Galvin sure fooled them! Came near fooling us, too! It took the Chief to get wise to him."

HANDS IN THE DARK

There was a ring of the doorbell. Briggs grinned as he arose to answer it. He returned shortly with the visitor a man with a dark overcoat, his chin concealed behind its collar. He also wore a cap with the visor over his eyes.

It was the man who had walked out with Bob Galvin, the night before Hodgson had begun to suspect his new master. The man entered the room with the air of a familiar visitor.

"Hello, Clink," said Bob.

"Hello," came the gruff reply. "Same old gag to-night? Stay up and watch?"

"Not to-night," was the reply. "You and Briggs have a job. A big one. We've been waiting for you. Both of you go down to see the Chief, right away."

Big Briggs was putting on his hat and coat.

"The Chief will tell you everything," declared Bob. "Get going and do the job right!"

WHEN the men were gone, Bob sat alone, smiling. There was a piece of paper on the desk. Upon it, he drew certain marks, then rubbed them out. He wrote the letter S twice; then erased the letters.

He picked up the telephone book and looked under H. He came to the name Richard Harkness. He repeated the number to himself and closed the book. He glanced at his watch.

"Ten o'clock," he said softly. "That will be just right unless I hear to the contrary before that. It looks good tonight.

"Smart of the Chief, figuring that code meant a name. Very, very smart. I didn't figure it.

"The whole thing fits in with what we're after. That's the best part of it. If Harkness doesn't know well –"

He paused speculatively. He was remembering a conversation that he had held earlier in the day. This was the first guess to-night and it appeared to be the best one.

"If we miss this time," observed Bob, "we're only started. You can't beat the Chief. He figured old Galvin's game before. He'll get it right again."

With that, Bob picked up a book and leaned back in his chair. As an afterthought, he placed his watch upon the table.

He leaned back again and began to read, calmly and with apparent interest. At times, he stopped to glance at the watch; and on each occasion, a brutal smile flickered on his lips.

Ten o'clock was approaching. Some dastardly scheme would reach its culmination then. The young man with the evil leer was awaiting the zero hour for to-night's crime.

CHAPTER VI. THE THIRD KILLER

RICHARD HARKNESS was a middle-aged architect with eccentric ideas. He was artistic by nature, and had always regretted that he had not become a portrait painter.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Because of his artistic sentiments, he lived alone in an obscure house on the fringe of Greenwich Village. To him the spot was a sanctuary in the midst of Manhattan's tumult.

Harkness was a bachelor. He usually spent his evenings alone. Knowing his retiring habits, his friends seldom called him on the telephone.

To-night, Harkness was reading a new book on portrait painting. He sat in his third-story living room a studio, he called it. The walls were decorated with pictures some of them painted by Harkness himself.

The room was comfortable, although plainly furnished. It was exceedingly neat. That was due to the attention of the housekeeper who came to the place every afternoon, for Harkness never troubled himself with keeping the place in order.

He, himself, was the one contrast in the room. Sprawled in an easy-chair, attired in a dressing gown, with his gray-tinged hair an uncombed mop, Richard Harkness seemed the personification of carelessness.

Despite his intense reading of the book before him, Harkness became suddenly alert at the sound of a slight noise that came from outside his room. He listened.

A puzzled expression came over his sharp features. He closed the book and walked across the room. He flung open the door and stared down the dark steps to the second floor.

Hearing no repetition of the sound, he closed the door and strode back to the center of the room, turning the leaves of the book to find the page that he had been reading.

Again, that slight sound. Harkness turned. The door was open. He thought, for an instant, that he had seen something move in the darkness.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

There was no reply. Harkness strode toward the door.

Suddenly he was confronted by a man who stepped from the stairway, holding a leveled automatic. The man was short. He wore a black overcoat and a cap pulled down over his eyes.

Beneath the cap, covering the man's chin, was a dark, folded handkerchief.

As Harkness stood stock-still, a second man appeared. The second man was considerably taller than the first, and bulkier. His face was also hidden by a handkerchief that served as a mask, and an automatic was in his hands.

"Sit down," came a low, commanding tone.

Harkness obeyed. He moved backward to the easy-chair and dropped into it. The men evidently took it for granted that he was unarmed. They were robbers, by their appearance.

Harkness wondered why they had come here. This was a poverty-stricken neighborhood. He realized then that his presence might have led these men to think that he had articles of value in his studio home. Such was not the case.

Harkness felt no great fear, but he was annoyed.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said in a slightly sarcastic voice, as the two masked strangers stood before him. "I suppose you are after valuables and money. I have no valuables here.

"There is some money about thirty–five dollars. You are welcome to it. My wallet is on the table in the corner. Help yourselves."

"We don't want your dough," said the big man, talking in a voice which Harkness could tell was not the man's natural tone.

Harkness was puzzled. He could not understand. He was a man who had few friends and no enemies.

An architect by profession, a portrait painter by desire, he had lived very much apart from the world. He could see no menace behind this visit; at the same time, he detected a very definite threat.

"We want to talk to you," continued the big man, in a growling voice. "Before we begin, we want you to understand one thing. You're to keep your mouth shut about this! Is that plain?"

Harkness nodded.

"We don't want questions from you," the man went on. "No monkey business, either. We mean business and it's our business. Keep that in your head.

"Don't try anything after we go away. No calling the cops. If you do well, we've heard that you don't look for trouble. But you'll find it if you try to double–cross us! Get me?"

"Your meaning is quite evident," returned Harkness. "It appears that you require information. Under the circumstances, I am inclined to furnish you with it provided that I know what it is –"

"And you don't blab about it! Understand?"

"You may consider this a confidential interview," replied Harkness, with a wry smile. "I am at a loss to understand why you have come here –"

"We'll tell you that," interrupted the big man. "Let me do the talking. You do the answering."

He paused to shift his position. He found a chair and sat down close to Richard Harkness, thrusting the gun forward until it was uncomfortably close to the architect's body.

The smaller man did not move. He had been standing like a statue, his automatic constantly in readiness. He remained in the same position.

"YOU were a friend of a man named Theodore Galvin," stated the big man in his low growl. "Is that right?"

"I knew Theodore Galvin," replied Harkness.

"You worked for him, didn't you?"

"He employed my services as an architect."

"All right. Did he ever get you to do anything phony for him?"

"Phony?"

"You know what I mean! Did he have you make up special plans for buildings? Put in places that people wouldn't know about like a secret room, for instance?"

"Practically all the buildings that I designed for Mr. Galvin," said Harkness, "were modern office buildings. They were intended purely for commercial purposes –"

"That's enough. Answer my question!" The gun muzzle pressed against the architect's ribs. "Were there any phony places in them?"

Harkness shook his head solemnly. He stared coldly at the man before him. He sought to fathom the face behind the mask.

The automatic drew away; then it stopped.

"You're going to talk" a sullen laugh came from the handkerchief that covered the speaker's face "because we mean business.

"There's a place we're looking for. You know where it is. If you don't tell us, it will be curtains for you!"

"I have designed many buildings," Harkness declared. "I would remember any unusual plans such as you suggest. The buildings that I designed for Theodore Galvin were simply office buildings. I shall have to consult my office records to give you a list of them –"

"Listen now" the voice meant business "and quit this stalling. When old Galvin built that house of his where did you come in on it?"

"That house was built long before my time," replied Harkness. He was staring at the automatic. "It is a very old house."

"Wait, now" a thought seemed to flash through his mind "I do recall something. There were some very unusual arrangements in that house –"

He paused and looked sharply at the man before him.

"Go on!" came the order.

"Just a minute." Harkness felt confident. He knew that the automatic would not fire while he promised revelations. "I'm not inquiring your purpose. I just want to know your attitude toward me.

"I'll let you know just what you want and I'll keep this matter to myself. Does that mean that you'll stay away from here after this?"

The big man hesitated before making a compromise. At length he made a proposal.

"Give us the straight dope," he said, "and we won't bother you any more."

"All right," agreed Harkness, in a satisfied tone. "I promised Theodore Galvin to say nothing about the designs I made for his house. In fact, I had forgotten about the matter.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"Galvin is dead now, I understand. So it doesn't mean anything to me."

He raised his hands and gestured. "Let me have pencil and paper. I can show you."

"Wait!" cautioned the big man. "I'll get them for you. Where are they?"

"Right here." Harkness motioned to a table at his right side.

THE big man found a large pad in the table drawer. He also brought out a pencil. He gave the articles to Harkness. The architect began to draw a rough plan.

"The cellar stairs are here," Harkness explained. The big man was watching the drawing; but his companion still covered Harkness. "Here's a passage. At the side are two steel posts against the wall.

"The posts look like supports. Actually, they are dummies. They can be driven sideways, in opposite directions.

"When that has been done; you will observe that the section of the wall is actually a large door. Behind it is a secret vault an old, unused compartment of the cellar."

He handed the pad to the big man.

"Take it," said Harkness. "That's what you want."

"Yeah?" The man laughed. "Is that the only place?"

"Positively," replied Harkness. "I designed the wall for Theodore Galvin. It was the only special work that he had done in the old house.

"He brought in two men at night to do the work. They didn't know the location of the house. He brought them in an automobile and sent them away in the same manner."

The big man studied Harkness. He looked at the plan. There was something in his manner that made Harkness feel the man was satisfied. Yet he made no move to leave.

While Harkness was still wondering, the telephone rang. The big man pounced upon the instrument.

"Hello," he said. "O.K. It's in the old house. Yeah. Down the cellar stairs." He referred to the plan.

"Passageway and two posts at the end. Dummies. Hammer them outward. O.K."

He hung up the receiver.

"So you've got a pal," observed Harkness.

"That's enough out of you," declared the big man. "We've got a lot you'll find out about if you don't keep your mouth shut.

"Maybe I'll get a few more calls if I stick around a while. So we'll stay here to keep you company."

Harkness yawned.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"I had hoped we would part company," he said. "If you don't want that pad, you might let me have it. The pencil, too.

"I'll draw you a diagram of how the door works you may need it."

The big man handed him the pad and the pencil. Harkness smiled as he received them. He began to sketch. The big man looked suddenly forward.

"Hey!" His voice was filled with anger. "What're you drawing there?" He snatched the pad away from Richard Harkness. The pencil dropped beside the chair.

The big man ripped the paper from the pad and tore it. He thrust the pieces in his pocket.

"None of that stuff!" he exclaimed. "Drawing a picture of me, eh? Smart, eh? That's enough from you. Hand me that pencil!"

HARKNESS reached down to the floor and fumbled for the pencil. His hand came up. It paused an instant by a little compartment in the table a compartment which had a half-opened door. Then his hand came in view.

It held an automatic!

The big man uttered a cry as he saw the gun. Harkness had caught him unawares. The big man's own gun was lying on his lap.

Had the big man been the only adversary, he would have been an easy prey. But Harkness was ignoring the big man. As he brought up the gun, he turned its muzzle toward the silent short man who stood watching him.

The architect's act was hidden by the table until the big man gave his cry. He was the first of the two thugs to see the gun.

Harkness fired the instant the alarm was sounded. Hardly had he pulled the trigger before the short man's gun responded.

Harkness, hurrying his aim, had missed. But the masked man was a marksman. His bullet entered the architect's body below the right shoulder. Harkness gasped as he fell back in his chair.

The big man was on his feet, alarmed. Then he realized that the shots had probably gone unheard.

Harkness was badly wounded. The gun had fallen from his hand. His eyes had closed; now he opened them. At that sign of life, the short man came forward, crouching over his victim.

"Tried to kill me, did you?" His voice was an angry threat, spoken in tones filled with venom. "You got yours and that's not all –"

His hand came up, bringing the automatic on a level with the architect's eyes. A sudden terror gripped Harkness, when he saw death facing him.

"Don't shoot!" he gasped. "Don't! I'll tell you tell you where –"

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed the big man, leaping forward.

HANDS IN THE DARK

He was too late. The hatred of the crouching man had reached his climax. A revengeful oath came from beneath the masking handkerchief as the small man pressed the trigger of his automatic.

Richard Harkness lay dead, shot down in cold blood!

The short man was laughing hideously. He gloated like an evil monster as he stood above the body of his victim.

His companion also stared at the dead man in the chair. Into this silent scene came the ringing of the telephone. The big man answered it.

"All right," he said in a tense voice. "No... It's too late now. I'll tell you later. Wait until I call you."

He laid down the telephone and took the handkerchief from his face, revealing the features of Briggs.

"Keep your mask on, Clink," he warned. "I need this for a minute."

He wiped the telephone and took great care to make sure that no telltale finger prints remained. He studied the room carefully.

Satisfied that no clues remained, he motioned to his masked companion.

"Come on, Clink," said Briggs. He looked at the body of Richard Harkness and laughed. "You should have waited, Clink. He was saying something when you gave it to him. Another stall, I guess.

"Well, Clink" there was a congratulating tone in the big man's voice "there was two of us before to-night. Now there's three.

"I got mine. Bob got his. Now you're with us.

"You're a killer, Clink. The third killer!"

CHAPTER VII. THE PAPER CLEW

"He's been dead nearly twenty-four hours, inspector," said the detective.

Acting Inspector Herbert Zull looked steadily at the body of Richard Harkness. Then his eye roved about the room, taking in all the details.

"How did you happen to find the body, Crowell?" he questioned.

"The woman that comes to clean house," replied detective Crowell. "She found the door locked when she came in the morning.

"She used to get here before Harkness left. Locked door meant he had gone early she was to come back at dinner time. She came back at six o'clock."

"What then?"

"Well, again there wasn't any reply when she knocked. She heard the phone ringing.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"She came back again at eight it was her pay night, and she was sure Harkness would be in. The phone was ringing again.

"Then she called Lester young architect who works for Harkness. He had been trying to get Harkness on the phone all day, for Harkness hadn't come to the office at all. Lester called the police.

"I came up here and we broke in. There you are."

"Nothing disturbed?" questioned Zull.

"No, sir. Waiting for you."

"Did you notice anything looking around?"

"No, sir." The detective hesitated. "Only the corner of that rug." He pointed to a small rug near the door.

Zull looked and laughed. One corner of the rug was tucked underneath. He straightened it.

"The murdered man is over here, Crowell," he said. "Yet you're looking at rugs, ten feet away. What's the matter with you?"

"I've looked at the body, sir," protested Crowell. "We know that the man fired before he was killed. His automatic is here beside him.

"I admit it's funny, my noticing that rug if it wasn't for something that happened once before –"

"When?"

"The time we found that dead man in Galvin's home. You remember, I was there with you, inspector? There was a rug in that room, too, with a corner turned under.

"You must have noticed it, sir you straightened it with your foot."

"You are observant, Crowell," said Zull, approvingly. "I don't even recall the incident. Was it after we had examined the place?"

"No, sir, it was while you were walking around, thinking. The rug was near the door of that room, too. I only noticed it because you straightened it, just like from force of habit.

"I never thought anything about it until now seeing the corner of this rug reminded me of the other one."

"Just a coincidence, Crowell," said Zull, laughing. "Nevertheless, it shows keen observation. The point is this: apply your talent to more important use. Watch me study this."

ZULL began a minute inspection of the chair in which the body lay. He picked up the gun and examined it.

He glanced at the table under the glare of the desk lamp. He produced a microscope to study its surface more closely.

While he was thus engaged, a policeman entered the room, followed by two men.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"Reporters," he announced. "What shall I do with them?"

Inspector Zull looked up. He recognized the two men. He remembered the name of one of them Clyde Burke, now on the staff of the Classic.

"Hello, boys," he said. "Stay up here if you want; but keep out of the way for a while. I'm pretty near through my preliminary inspection.

"Give them the details you told me, Crowell," he added to the detective.

Crowell talked with the reporters near the door, while Zull continued his search for clues. Burke was listening to Crowell's story; but he was watching the inspector from the corner of his eye.

Acting Inspector Zull was a unique figure on the New York force. He had a considerable reputation as an investigating detective. He usually arrived to make special notes and check with the detectives later.

It was on this account that Burke displayed his surreptitious interest in the inspector's actions.

Burke knew that he could check on Detective Crowell's statement with the other reporter. He wanted to learn whatever else he might through observation of Acting Inspector Zull.

There was a look of satisfaction on Zull's face as he continued his work, not knowing that he was being observed. That was surprising to Burke, because Zull did not appear to be finding anything unusual.

Zull had a poker face one that registered emotions to a slight degree, but did not change frequently. It was only because Zull thought himself free from observation that he indulged in a sudden change of facial expression. His eyes chanced to notice something that lay on a small bookcase a few feet to the left of the chair which held the body of Harkness.

It was a pad of paper. Zull started to step across the room. Burke could tell that his objective was the pad.

Suddenly, Zull stopped. He turned to Detective Crowell.

"That's enough here, Crowell," he snapped. "Take the boys downstairs if you want to tell them more."

"All right, sir."

BURKE and his companion were ushered to the steps. As they started to descend, Burke turned suddenly.

"Must have left my notes up there," he said. He started up the stairs. Before he reached the top, he stopped. "No," he laughed, "here they are, in my pocket!"

He rejoined the other men and they descended to the street.

Before Crowell left the two reporters, to return upstairs, Burke asked him a single question.

"Will Inspector Zull have anything to say before he leaves?"

"He'll have something to say," rejoined Crowell with a grin, "but not to you fellows. He always looks around a while and keeps things to himself. Wants to check up on us, you know.

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"He may give me a couple of suggestions. Same with Devlin, who will be here inside half an hour. Devlin was out when we got wind of this. They sent me up ahead."

With that, Crowell went back into the building.

Burke looked at his companion. The other reporter shrugged his shoulders. Burke drew him to a street lamp. This was an isolated spot, a quiet zone amidst the roar of New York.

"Let's see what you got," said Burke, glancing at the notes the other reporter held.

"Not a lot," was the reply. "Zull is a cagey bird. I've run into him before. We'll have to slide down to headquarters on this case.

"Devlin will know more after he talks with Crowell and Zull. There he goes now."

Burke looked up just in time to see a short, broad-shouldered man turn into the entrance that led upstairs to the room where Harkness had been murdered.

"He'll spend half an hour with Zull," commented the reporter, while Burke was checking the notes. "Maybe more. Maybe we'd better stick here and pump Devlin when he comes out."

"I'm going to turn in what I've got," replied Burke.

He left the other reporter and walked to Seventh Avenue. There, he found a public phone booth and called a number.

It was not the number of the New York Classic. It was an unlisted special number that Burke called on important occasions. A quiet voice answered him.

"Burke calling," said Clyde. "Reporting on Harkness murder."

"Go ahead."

Burke gave the simple details that he had received from Detective Crowell. He added that Acting Inspector Zull was on the job. Then he stressed an important point, speaking in a low voice.

"Zull has found something important," he said. "A pad of paper lying on a bookcase. He was going to pick it up, but didn't. He told us to leave. We went.

"But I came up the steps again just far enough to see the bookcase. The pad was gone. I think Zull took it."

"Purpose?" came the quiet voice.

"I don't know unless he wants to take credit on this case, which is likely. Crowell evidently didn't notice the pad. Devlin is coming up he's there now.

"Maybe Zull wants to study the pad alone, without the detectives knowing it. He's an efficiency man special investigator and it may mean something to him to get dope the others don't have. It's got me puzzled."

"Is that all?"

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"That's all."

Burke was still puzzling over the matter when he started for police headquarters. He had given his report to a man whom he had never met; but whose voice he knew well. The man was known to him as Burbank and through him, Burke's messages were relayed to another man whose name Clyde did not even know.

For Burbank, like Burke, was an agent of that mysterious person known as The Shadow a superman who defeated the master minds of gangdom with their own methods.

The Shadow was interested in the death of Richard Harkness. He was interested in all mysterious murders. Clyde Burke, now on the staff of the New York Classic, was an ideal man to serve The Shadow's purposes.

BACK in the room where the body of Richard Harkness lay, Acting Inspector Zull was talking with the two detectives. Devlin was a more experienced man than Crowell. He was inspecting carefully, and Zull was watching him approvingly.

Devlin had just come from headquarters. He was telling Zull of other investigations that were under way in connection with this case.

The housekeeper was being quizzed. Lester young associate of the murdered man was at headquarters.

"It looks like the solution has got to lay right here," was Devlin's comment. "Crowell and I have got about all the data we can get. You haven't any suggestions that might help, have you, Inspector?"

"You're doing a thorough job, Devlin," replied Zull. "You're in charge now. I'm going down to headquarters."

He descended the stairs and stood at the street door. His keen, shrewd eyes roamed in both directions. Suddenly, they became centered upon a spot across the street.

Zull glanced at his watch. Immediately afterward, he again concentrated on that spot.

"Pretty near an hour since the reporters went," he said half aloud. "They got wind of it quick. I wonder –"

He strolled out into the street. He crossed casually and went by the place that he had been observing. It was dark here, and Zull threw a sidelong glance at the blackness of a building wall.

"Maybe I was imagining," he said. "It did look as if something was moving something like a shadow –"

He strolled along the street and passed a light. A few yards farther on he stopped and turned as though remembering something.

His eyes were upon the glare beneath the light. There, he detected a peculiar shadow it seemed almost to resemble the silhouette of a man.

There was a grim smile on Zull's face as he continued his way slowly along the street. He stopped at a little alleyway that led between two buildings. There he paused thoughtfully. He could see the outline of the top of a wall twenty feet within the alley.

The place was a cul-de-sac a veritable trap with its only outlet to the street. Inspector Zull strolled onward. Again he stopped.

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This time, he turned and began to retrace his steps.

His scheme was well planned and well timed. The shrewd detective inspector was sure that he was being followed. If so, the man who had been behind him in the darkness should be close to the little blind alleyway.

It would be the logical place for the follower to hide. Zull grinned as he realized that the trap was set.

He proceeded carefully until he reached the corner of the cul-de-sac. There he paused and brought two objects from his pockets a flashlight and an automatic.

PEERING around the edge of the wall, the inspector turned the rays of his torch into the little alleyway. They revealed a short, narrow, stone court, with a brick wall at the end.

There were shadows there deep shadows yet no sign of a living being. Zull had his gun ready, but he was not anxious to use it until he found his man and the man seemed absent. If there happened to be a human being lurking in that darkness, it was plain that Zull had trapped him.

Still, the inspector sensed danger. The man could fire at him from the gloom. Nevertheless, Zull felt that he had the advantage.

In the space of twenty seconds, Zull had eliminated all parts of the cul-de-sac, except two shadowy corners near the far wall. Zull now doubted that any one could be there. But it would be easy to find out.

He turned out the flashlight and crept into the darkness. He weaved his way inward, his automatic moving backward and forward in his hand.

If Zull's adversary was invisible, so was Zull himself. At the first sound, he intended to fire, spraying that blank wall with quick shots from his automatic.

He stopped as he neared the wall. He listened. There was no sound other than his own breathing. Zull knew that it would be dangerous to approach more closely.

Now was his opportunity. Quick shots well-spread bullets! That would do the trick! At this close distance, the flashlight would reveal whatever might be there, and there was no possibility of escape.

The inspector's finger was on the trigger of the automatic. The thumb of his other hand pressed the button of the flashlight.

Instantly, the unexpected happened. There was a man in the darkness, and it seemed as though he had followed Zull's actions and thoughts with uncanny perfection. For, just as the light came on, a long, black form shot forward from the darkness.

Two arms shot out. Gloved hands caught the inspector's wrists. Before Zull could fire, his right arm was twisted in a viselike grip. He failed to press the trigger, for his fingers lost their hold upon the automatic.

Then his body was whirled under the impetus of a jujutsu hold. He was precipitated headlong, in a mammoth whirl. His senses left him as he crashed upon the paving of the alleyway.

Silently and swiftly, Inspector Zull had been rendered helpless in the darkness of the alleyway. Then, a light appeared the glare of a tiny electric torch.

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The light flickered upon the motionless face of the stunned sleuth. Its rays were focused upon the pockets of his coat. The light went out. A form bent above the unconscious man for barely a moment.

The tones of a low, weird laugh reverberated from the walls of the cul-de-sac. It was a laugh that carried a foreboding chill a laugh that seemed too weird to have been uttered by human lips.

Then the man who had laughed was gone. Only the still form of Acting Inspector Zull remained.

Silence followed the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. TELLTALE MARKS

WHEN Acting Inspector Zull opened his eyes, he was immediately conscious of a dull pain at the back of his head. He sat up and wondered where he was.

All was black about him. He rubbed his eyes; they became accustomed to the darkness. As he looked about him, Zull could see a vague, gloomy patch of light not far away.

He realized what had happened. He had entered this alleyway to find a man lurking in the darkness. Despite his alertness and the caution of his approach, he had been attacked and overpowered.

He could still remember the sickening sensation which he had experienced. He had been whirled like a windmill, catapulted in a gigantic somersault that had brought him prone upon his back. It was fortunate that he was not severely injured.

Zull saw now the mistake that he had made. Entering the cul-de-sac, he had not realized that a slight light had formed a background behind him.

He could see the dim glow of the entrance to the alleyway. It had been to the advantage of the hiding man. Lurking in a dark corner, he had been able to watch the outline of Zull's form.

Thus had the trapper been trapped.

Groping in the darkness, the inspector suddenly discovered his flashlight. He turned it on and rose unsteadily to inspect his surroundings.

He was alone in the alleyway. His adversary had gone. He turned his light toward his watch.

An exclamation of surprise came from his lips. He had been lying in this place for nearly an hour!

Confusedly, Zull reached in his pocket and brought out the pad that he found there. He exclaimed in satisfaction as he observed it.

The top sheet bore slight indentations. The man who had overpowered him had not taken this pad of paper. Zull flicked out the light.

Despite the fact that his head still throbbed, he began to concentrate in the darkness. Zull's analytical mind tried to piece together the incidents which had occurred.

First, he had been followed. His pursuer had taken up the trail outside the house where Richard Harkness had been murdered.

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Zull could see no definite object in that unless the man who had trailed him had suspected that he was on the way to trace some clew pertaining to the murder.

NO ONE had seen him pick up the pad Zull was sure of that fact. The fact that he still had the pad was proof that his follower had not been cognizant of its importance.

There could be so Zull argued but one reason for the attack here in the darkness. The man following him had been trapped. He had made a successful attack, and had fled.

Despite the fact that the attacker had left no trace of his identity, Zull was positive that he knew who the man was.

Only one person could have planned such a bold onslaught and carried it through to such perfection. That was The Shadow.

"The Shadow!" whispered Herbert Zull through set teeth. "What brought him into this! If he —"

Perplexed thoughts followed.

To Inspector Zull, keen graduate of detective ranks, The Shadow was a reality not a myth. He had often heard of this mysterious being, who so frequently dominated the affairs of New York's underworld.

No one knew who The Shadow was. A strange personage of the night, he appeared from nowhere, garbed in black, and vanished as amazingly as he appeared.

Time after time, The Shadow had thwarted the affairs of master crooks.

While none knew what The Shadow was, many Zull among them knew what The Shadow was not.

They knew that he was not a detective though his ability at solving crime surpassed that of the most expert sleuths. They knew that he was not a criminal though he understood the ways of crooks and gangsters and fought them successfully with their own weapons.

It was rumored never proven that The Shadow was a man of wealth, who studied criminology through contact with crime. Yet he seemed to choose his activities with the care of a connoisseur, ignoring certain crimes where one might logically expect him; stepping into others when not anticipated.

Gangsters and detectives alike had surreptitiously sought to trace The Shadow through one source his radio broadcasts.

Once a week, this mysterious man appeared at a great broadcasting studio, and sent his voice over the air on a national hook-up.

But every effort to learn his identity had failed. Even those connected with the radio programs did not know The Shadow.

Sometimes he broadcast from a room with black hangings, which evidently had a secret entrance. There he was hidden from prying eyes.

But on one occasion, when alert eyes had been watching that special room, The Shadow had entered the studio in disguise. He had deliberately broadcast from the very room in which the actors in a radio drama

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were doing their parts.

At the time his voice had sounded, there had been a dozen persons standing by different microphones. A chill had come over the spectators as The Shadow's weird voice had pervaded the room.

Yet no one there could tell which person had uttered those mocking tones!

On other nights, The Shadow had tricked his would-be discoverers by using a telephonic connection that brought his voice to the studio from a distance.

His laugh had been taunting a proof that he knew he was thwarting the plans of those who attempted to trace him.

It was evident that The Shadow was a master of disguise a man of many faces, whose own face could not be recognized. It was probable that he had various agents who reported to him, yet did not know his identity themselves.

The activities of these agents had been suspected; but following The Shadow's instructions to the letter, they had become mysterious also.

ZULL had seen the hand of The Shadow in different police cases that had come under his investigation. He had heard dying gangsters scream in delirium "The Shadow! The Shadow!" but their statements had been incoherent.

More than once, The Shadow had eluded the police when they had arrived while he was investigating the scene of a crime. To-night, he had done more than that. He had entered into open combat with an officer!

As Zull walked to police headquarters, he began to obtain a clear theory as to The Shadow's purpose to-night.

Wherever mysterious crime occurred, The Shadow might decide to investigate. He could not have entered the room where Richard Harkness lay. The police had been the first to learn of the murder. Therefore, Zull decided, The Shadow had come to make his own observations.

With both Crowell and Devlin there, it would be useless for him to wait. So he had followed Zull, who had evidently learned facts that might be of interest.

Viewed in this light, Zull began to consider his defeat as a partial triumph. He had, at least, detected the fact that The Shadow was trailing him. Since he had noticed it once, he could discover it again.

Zull smiled grimly as he thought of what might occur in their next meeting. It would be a feather in his cap if he could unmask The Shadow!

Zull stopped in front of a small cigar store. From the doorway he glanced up and down the street.

Satisfied that The Shadow was no longer on his trail, he entered the store and went into a telephone booth. He obtained his number.

He spoke in a low voice. His first words were inaudible; as he concluded the conversation, his tone rose slightly and his final statement pertained to The Shadow.

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"He's a wise bird," said Zull. "But there's only one place he can get a lead that's from me; and he hasn't done it. I'm going down to headquarters. I'm keeping mum until I've worked out a solution the way I want it.

"If The Shadow is trying to learn anything from Crowell and Devlin, he won't have any luck. Crowell is a dumb mug, and Devlin is on the job too late.

"No matter how good The Shadow is, he'll need a couple of days to get started on this Harkness murder. So everything is all jake."

With that, he left the store, smiling broadly. Herbert Zull was the lone wolf of the detective force. He obtained results in his own way; he ignored assistance and resented interference.

He was secretive in his methods, using contacts which were unknown to his companions on the force. It was Zull's boast that he could lay a snare for any man who crossed him.

He had met such a man to-night The Shadow. They would meet again!

"Lying low," muttered Zull, contemptuously, "that's what he's doing now! Pulled one on me when he got away. Nervy bird The Shadow except when he gets cold feet.

"Well, I'll be ready for him. He'll be back on my trail if he's as clever as he's supposed to be and I'll lead him everywhere except where he wants to go!"

When Zull reached headquarters, he found a stack of reports awaiting him. He studied the statements made by Lester, by the housekeeper, and by others who had known Richard Harkness.

While he was thus engaged, his mind reverted to The Shadow. When he thought of that mysterious man, Zull pictured him hiding away in some dark room.

STRANGELY enough, Zull's conjecture was not entirely wrong. At that very moment, The Shadow was immersed in the darkness of a room not many blocks from the house where the body of Richard Harkness lay.

But The Shadow was not there from fear. He, too, had work to do. As Zull began to inspect the reports more closely, The Shadow began an examination of his own.

There was a click in the dark room where The Shadow was wont to go alone. A low-hanging light threw its rays upon the surface of a polished table.

Two hands appeared there. They were long, slender hands; white hands, with tapering fingers. Upon the left hand glowed a peculiar gem – a rare fire opal that caught the rays of the light and reflected them from crimson depths.

This gem a girasol was The Shadow's own talisman. Like him, it was mysterious, baffling and ever changing in its appearance.

Those finely shaped hands produced a sheet of paper and laid it upon the table. That paper told a story. It proved that Inspector Zull had missed his guess when he thought that The Shadow had overlooked the evidence which had been taken from the studio of Richard Harkness.

The paper was the top sheet of the pad which Zull had pocketed!

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There were indentations in the paper marks made by the pressure of a hard lead pencil. A small envelope came into view. The fingers opened it and a black substance poured upon the paper.

The fingers spread the finely ground powder over the surface of the sheet. A flick of the hand swept away all but a thin film of graphite. The marks showed plainly, now, like the tracing of carbon paper. Telltale marks!

Upon the paper was a partly finished sketch of a man. It was not enough to give a clue to his identity, for it showed only the head and shoulders, and a face hidden by a folded handkerchief that served as a mask.

But the paper showed something else not quite so plain as the sketch. It revealed a rough diagram that indicated a flight of steps, a passageway, and a section of a wall.

The Shadow studied the diagram. He traced it upon a sheet of paper. Then his hands they alone were visible beneath the light began another diagram drawn from memory. It was a ground-floor plan of the old Galvin mansion.

The hands held the diagrams side by side. Their points of similarity were evident.

The plan which The Shadow had discovered from the telltale marks corresponded in its chief details with the ground floor of the building which The Shadow had visited that night when Betty Mandell had seen him in Theodore Galvin's study!

The hands were motionless. An invisible mind was at work in the gloom. A master brain was determining the significance of these diagrams that looked so much alike.

Then the light went out. A low, sinister laugh came from the darkness. It seemed a part of the room itself; the very walls seemed to join in that weird mockery.

The laugh died away. The room was silent. The Shadow was gone!

CHAPTER IX. THE VAULT OF DOOM

A VAGUE feeling of terror swept over Betty Mandell back in the Galvin home, as she groped for the cord of the bed lamp. She found it and gasped with relief as the light clicked.

The illumination was comforting. Betty glanced about the bedroom, wondering now what had caused her sudden fright.

She felt that horror had awakened her the horror of some impending danger. To-night was terribly like that other night, when she had discovered the strange man in black on her visit to the study.

Betty reflected. Perhaps an instinctive dread of loneliness had oppressed her. She should not have come home to-night. In so doing, she had failed to obey Bob's orders.

He had called her at Alice Wheeler's that morning. She could remember his words distinctly.

She could also remember that his voice still sounded different from the voice that had been Bob Galvin's. She could not forget that first telephone call the night that Bob had arrived in New York.

It had been Betty's intention to return home to-night. Bob had phoned to tell her not to come. Business was taking him from town, he had said. Hodgson had gone away.

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Bob had spoken in a kindly manner when he referred to the faithful old servant. He had decided that Hodgson deserved a vacation. So he had sent him away on a trip South.

There was a new man to take Hodgson's place while the old servant was gone. Briggs was the name of the substitute. But Briggs would also be away to-night. The house would be empty. So Bob had told Betty to wait until to-morrow.

Yet Betty had not obeyed. She felt that she had stayed long enough at Alice Wheeler's. So she had packed a suitcase and had come to the old house late in the evening.

She had found the house solemn and gloomy; a huge pile of blackness. Nevertheless, she had entered using a key which she always carried and had gone upstairs to her room.

Despite the fact that this had been her home since childhood, the place had seemed forbidding. Betty had passed quickly through the darkness of the downstairs hall and had hurried up the stairs, anxious to gain the seclusion of her room.

Once there, she locked the door. Her qualms ended, she had gone to bed and had fallen asleep.

But now she had awakened suddenly and unaccountably. She was positive that some unaccountable noise had caused the awakening.

BETTY felt apprehensive. She listened for a few minutes. Finally she extinguished the light and placed her head uneasily upon the pillow.

It was then that she became conscious of a dull, distant sound. She sat up in bed. She heard the sound no longer. But with her head once more resting upon the pillow, the sound came again.

It seemed to be a slow, muffled hammering, from the depths beneath her.

Thoroughly alarmed, Betty turned on the light again and listened intently. She arose from bed and leaned her head against the wall.

The sound was quite evident now. Solemnly, but regularly, the muffled strokes seemed to come upward to her ear. The girl was sure that the weird noise had its origin in the cellar of the old mansion.

At first she thought of flight; then her natural bravery allayed her fears.

Donning a dressing gown, Betty turned out the light and softly unlocked the door of her room. Once in the hall, she could hear nothing of the sounds from below. She descended the stairs cautiously.

Gripped by eagerness to fathom this mystery, her fears had vanished. Her footfalls were noiseless as she turned into the side hall downstairs and reached the door at the top of the cellar steps.

She tried the door. It was unlocked. That was unusual. She opened the door. A faint light was visible.

Now she heard the sound plainly; the stroke of a muffled weight against metal.

Betty hesitated on the top steps; then, with determination, she proceeded to the cellar.

The light glowed dim from a passage near the foot of the stairs. The hammering had ended. Betty could hear

only a slight scuffling.

She sensed the coldness of the stone floor as she stepped softly to the end of the passage. She peered around the corner.

THREE men were working, some twenty feet away. Their backs were turned as they pushed against the side of a square steel post that formed a support against the wall. Their efforts ended as one man grunted a command.

Betty shrank away. Then, realizing that she was in a fringe of darkness, she pulled her gown closely about her and continued to peer at the scene before her.

Two of the men were half facing her. One was still working at the pillar.

And of the two whose features were visible to Betty, one was Bob!

The other was a stranger whose sullen features and heavy jaw gave him a pugnacious expression.

"Rest up a minute," came Bob's voice. Betty disliked the tone.

"Hear that, Clink?" questioned the big man, turning toward the one who was pushing at the post. "Lay off, Maddox is bossing this job."

"Listen, Briggs," growled Bob, "I'll talk to Clink. And lay off that Maddox stuff. That's the second time you've slipped up!"

"Sorry, Bob."

"Forget that, too. Call me Mr. Galvin. You'll have to do it regular beginning to-morrow. The girl will be back then."

"All right," agreed Briggs. "Don't worry. I'll be careful. But what about this job? That first post moved all right. How about hitting this one a few more cracks?"

He leaned to the floor and started to pick up a sledge hammer that had a piece of cloth wrapped about the head. Bob stopped him with a gesture.

"Give it another push," he suggested.

The two men joined the one who was working at the post. Under their renewed efforts, the steel pillar began to budge. It slid slowly along the wall, with a rasping noise.

Betty could see Bob push the others down the passage as he began to examine the wall at the spot which had been covered by the sliding post. An excited exclamation came from his lips.

"Heave here," he said in a low voice.

The three men united their efforts. They massed themselves against the wall.

To Betty's amazement, the section of the wall opened at their force. Then Bob's arms went out as he held the others back.

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"Take it easy, boys!" he commanded.

Betty was watching Bob. He now held a flashlight. He turned its rays into the opening.

Betty could see his face plainly by the small electric light in the ceiling of the passage where the men were working. She observed an expression of disappointment.

"Empty!" came Bob's exclamation. "Empty!"

THE other men were staring over his shoulder. Bob advanced and they followed. For a full minute, the men were out of sight.

Completely amazed, Betty awaited their reappearance. This whole episode was as unbelievable as it was mysterious.

She tried to fathom the conversation that she had heard. She could remember the words; yet their meaning was not quite clear. Of one thing only was she certain; that Bob had intended to conduct this secret operation without her knowledge.

She wanted to return upstairs, but curiosity compelled her to remain.

The men emerged. First Bob, then Briggs; finally the third man, whose face she had not yet seen. He moved backward a few paces, in Betty's direction.

Bob was speaking now in a low growl. The girl was anxious to hear his words.

"What luck!" came his declaration. "It looked like a sure bet. We've missed. A bum steer!"

"We found the place, all right," answered Briggs, sullenly. "Maybe Harkness didn't know anything else about it."

"That's quite probable," retorted Bob, "but it doesn't help us any. The place is empty. A good little cubby-hole, but that's all. We've got to begin all over again. Nothing else to do, except tell the Chief –"

So intent was Betty that she had not noticed a motion of the man in front of her. Not until he had turned so his face was partly toward her did she realize he had changed his position.

She glanced quickly at him and her eyes froze with horror. She was staring at a hideous, monstrous face a countenance with twisted, gruesome lips and a horrible, misshapen nose.

The sight of those deformed features was like a nightmare. Betty gasped in sudden revulsion.

The ghastly creature turned at the sound. The girl was paralyzed with fear as two gleaming, catlike eyes saw her standing just within the range of the light.

Before Betty could turn to flee, the man pounced toward her. Betty screamed in terror; then clawlike fingers were upon her. A filthy hand covered her mouth to stop her cries.

She struggled vainly as she was dragged down the passage. Other hands seized her. She was in the power of the three men.

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The girl fought with despair. Hands choked her; she was battered against the wall. She slipped to the floor in a hopeless effort to escape. Everything became black as she fainted, overcome by dread.

WHEN she reopened her eyes a few minutes later, Betty found herself resting against the wall. Her hands were bound behind her back, tied with the leather belt of her dressing gown.

She looked upward and again saw that hideous, merciless face of Clink. She turned her gaze toward the second man Briggs and recoiled as she observed his brutal features.

She turned piteously toward Bob, and saw that he was the most terrible of the three. The friendliness that he had affected in the past had been a pretense. Now his true nature was revealed.

His eyes flashed hatred and venom.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded.

Betty tried to reply, but failed.

"Did you see what we were doing?"

The girl nodded.

"I could kill –" Bob raised his hands, then lowered them as he saw Betty shrink toward the wall.

"What are you going to do with her?" questioned Briggs, in a hoarse, brutal voice. "You didn't waste time with that old flunky –"

"Sh–h–h!" exclaimed Bob. His face became harsh and cruel. He looked quickly at Betty and realized instantly that she knew what had happened to Hodgson. In fact, the girl's accusing eyes were already upon him, and she began to voice her condemnation.

"You killed Hodgson?" Betty's question came clear. The thought that the old man had been murdered had given her the strength of indignation.

"Yes," said Bob coldly, "I killed Hodgson. You've found it out and it means the end for you. You've seen too much or we might have let you out. It's too late now."

He turned to his companions. "We've got to get rid of her, boys. That's all."

CLINK chuckled harshly. His eyes were gleaming as he moved forward, intent upon choking the helpless girl. A wild, murderous look had come over his face.

Betty wanted to scream. She could only gasp. Then Bob intervened. He threw out an arm and thrust Clink back.

Bob pressed one hand upon Betty's mouth. With the other, he ripped away the broad collar of her gown. Quickly and efficiently, he forced the cloth into the girl's mouth to serve as an effective gag.

"Lend a hand, Briggs," he ordered. "We'll do two jobs at once. Why waste time?"

Betty was raised to her feet. At Bob's command, the big man lifted the helpless girl. As Bob pointed ahead,

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Betty divined the fate that he intended for her.

"Into the vault!" were Bob's words.

In a few seconds, Betty lay in the corner of the small room. The glare of Bob's flashlight revealed its solid stone walls. There was not a crevice in their surface. A sneer came from the man behind the light.

"You can think it over here," were Bob's malicious words. "You've got an hour or two at the most.

"You've found out plenty to-night. You know who killed Hodgson. Tell it if you can!"

The flashlight was extinguished, but Betty could see the forms of the men in the lighted passage. A huge, dark wall swung inward. Something clicked as the wall came into place.

Muffled sounds followed. The posts were being hammered back to their positions. Then came silence horrible silence. The men had gone!

Here, in a vault of doom, a tiny room hewn in solid stone, Betty had been left to die. The closing of the barrier had sealed the vault so closely that no draft of air could enter. Impenetrable blackness seemed to engulf the helpless girl.

The choking hands of the hideous-faced Clink would have been merciful compared to the slow, gruesome death that now held Betty Mandell within its frightful grasp!

But the false Bob Galvin and his heartless allies had reckoned without the shadowy figure Betty had seen in the study.

CHAPTER X. THE SHADOW OF LIFE

THE three men listened in the corridor outside the secret room. Their faces were expressive of their feelings. Bob displayed a look of shrewd satisfaction. Briggs wore a contemptuous sneer. The hideous features of Clink grinned in delight.

The differing emotions of the three were evident. Bob, the leader, was congratulating himself upon his cleverness. Big Briggs was amused at the ease with which they had disposed of their victim. Both were indifferent to the fate of the imprisoned girl.

But Clink was happy. He was gloating as he stared at the closed wall, enjoying the thought that a helpless person was dying behind that barrier.

The twisted face of the man was a true index of his misshapen spirit. To Clink, misery, suffering, and death were delightful to contemplate.

"Come on," Bob said.

He moved along the corridor, followed by Briggs. The two men stopped when they reached the end of the passage. Bob looked back. Clink was still staring at the wall.

"Come along, Clink."

Bob's command sounded sullen and hollow in the spaces of the corridor. He and Briggs had reached the

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gloomy end of the passage. They were watching the evil-faced little man as he still stood gloating.

Clink was loath to leave the scene. Reluctantly he turned and joined his two fellows.

Bob flicked out the light and led the way up the steep, dark stairs. When they arrived on the first floor, he turned on a dim hall light.

With Briggs and Clink beside him, Bob produced a key and locked the cellar door. Then the two men followed Bob into the study.

"What next?" questioned Briggs.

"Nothing," returned Bob. "I'll hear from the Chief later. In the meantime, we'll continue as usual."

"I'm going to dope out a plan to account for the girl being away. That will be easy."

"Maybe we should have held her," replied Briggs uneasily. "Maybe the Chief won't like it –"

"I'm running this!" interrupted Bob harshly. "You know how we work, Briggs. The girl's just the same as Barker was or Hodgson, or Harkness. When they're dead, they don't talk!"

"I know that," agreed Briggs. "Still you might call the Chief now –"

"I don't call him from here," declared Bob emphatically. "He calls me. That's the present system. I won't hear from him for another hour. By that time –"

"The girl will be dead," Briggs concluded the sentence.

"Right! And the dead don't talk!" There was a note of final decision in Bob's voice. It sounded the doom of Betty Mandell.

Briggs lost his indecision. He realized that Bob was right. There were no pangs of remorse governing the big man. He had suggested keeping the girl alive simply as a matter of policy not through any feeling of pity. Now he realized that Bob's plan, even though it had no flexibility, was decisive and positive.

Bob was explaining that fact now.

"We found the hidden room," came his low words. "It was the wrong place. We have no more use for it. We've closed it up. It's forgotten from now on.

"The girl's in there and she's forgotten, too. Why go back to the place? We're through that's all!"

Briggs nodded. He was satisfied.

"Here, Clink." Bob tossed a bunch of keys to the man with the hideous face. "Go on duty. Stay out in the big hall, and if you hear anything, find out what it is."

Clink's face became contorted. His attempt to smile made his features more gruesome than before.

Bob remembered the fascination that had gripped this monstrous man while they had been in the cellar, outside the wall of the secret room.

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"Keep out of the cellar, Clink," was Bob's warning. "Remember what I told Briggs just now. That's all forgotten. So far as we are concerned, the girl is dead now.

"Don't go anywhere, except the hall, unless you hear something suspicious. Understand?"

Clink nodded. He left the room.

Bob became thoughtful as he sat at the old, flat-topped desk. Briggs took a seat in the corner. They were awaiting the call from their chief.

Neither one was perturbed. So far as they were concerned, Betty Mandell was already dead. The vault of doom was below another portion of the house. These heartless men were indifferent to its existence.

CLINK would have gloated had he been able to see within that dark and forgotten secret room. For there, in the depths of the living tomb, Betty Mandell was undergoing all the agony that can come to a mind ravaged by fantastic terrors.

The air had become stifling. Betty was accustomed to the gag by now, yet she was breathing with difficulty. The air supply in the tiny room was rapidly becoming exhausted.

Betty knew that she had no hope. She had listened intently after the room had been sealed, trying to hear some sound from without. She had been unsuccessful. Once the muffled hammering had ended, there had been no further noise.

She did not know whether the men still remained in the corridor. She felt sure that they had gone, leaving her to the fate they had intended.

Betty had struggled with the cords that bound her. Now she fought no longer. Betty knew that if she did release herself from the bonds, nothing would be gained.

Her loudest cries would be completely stifled by the massive walls of this room. Escape was impossible!

Her head was swimming. Vague, terrifying thoughts swept through her brain. She fancied that she heard the voice of Bob Galvin the voice of the real Bob, coming through the receiver of a telephone. Then it was drowned by the harsh tones of the man who had pretended to be Bob Galvin.

Betty had heard the impostor's true name uttered to-night, but she had forgotten it.

Then came weird recollections of the face of Clink. It was the sight of that hideous countenance that had made her utter the cry which had betrayed her.

Her reflections were gruesome and incredible. They added to the girl's dismay. Her mind was reverting to the past, covering days and months in a span of a few seconds.

Suddenly her thoughts centered on the night when she had entered the study and had surprised the man in black. She fancied that she could see his eyes glowing through the darkness.

Until now, Betty had always thought of that sable figure as a terrible being; now she found a strange comfort in the recollection. Somehow, she felt that his presence was not an evil one.

She wondered who he was, and why he had come to this house. She remembered him as a shadowy

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form almost a part of the night itself a specter that came and went in darkness.

Of all living beings, only he, if any one, could penetrate to this forgotten place. Perhaps that was why the memory of him brought comfort to her aching mind.

Betty breathed slowly and laboriously. She knew that the end was near. Not many minutes lay between her and death. She would die here, in silence. Any sound would be welcome, now.

Even as she thought, Betty fancied that she heard a slight noise. It was like the muffled pounding, but much fainter. She listened.

She was sure of it, now!

Some one was working at the pillars that held the barrier! It was imagination no longer! Who could it be?

THE sound continued, while Betty gasped the stifling air. She seemed to be breathing blackness itself. She was too exhausted to again struggle with her bonds!

The gag had fallen from her mouth, but the girl was far too weak to cry out.

Help was coming, but it would be too late!

The noise ceased at the barrier. Silence followed.

Betty slumped to the floor. She knew that death was close.

Her ears detected another sound a sharp click. Then came a gust of pure, fresh air.

The girl could not realize what had happened. She could only breathe in gladness.

There was another click, and a beam of light swept through the room. Betty looked up into the glare of a flashlight.

For the first time she comprehended that the barrier had been opened. Then fear robbed her of hope.

Perhaps her captors had returned to save her from death only to plan new tortures and some more terrible end.

The light went out. Betty felt herself lifted and carried from the room. She was placed upon the cold floor of the corridor. She lay there, still bound.

She heard soft footsteps going up the passage. The light in the ceiling came on, and Betty could see the yawning abyss of the room from which she had been carried.

Betty turned her gaze toward the end of the corridor. There she saw the strange form of a man in black that same fantastic being whom she had observed in the study, nights before! His shadow formed a long, grotesque silhouette along the corridor.

The man was approaching. Betty felt no fear. It was as though her hopes had been answered.

The man leaned over her and Betty gazed intently upward, trying to glimpse the face beneath the

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broad-brimmed hat. But his head was between her and the light. She could see only the gleam of two eyes.

Betty gasped audibly. A low, warning hiss came from the man in black.

The cords that bound her were cut. The man in black turned away, and closed the barrier that hid the secret room.

Now the girl watched with still greater amazement. She had seen the efforts required to move those pillars that concealed the opening. Three strong men had struggled with them.

The man in black required no assistance. With smooth, powerful effort, he moved the pillars back into place. Betty could see a black-gloved hand as it pounded against one pillar.

This strange, shadowlike man was doing with his bare hands the work that the others had accomplished with the muffled sledge hammer.

His work completed, the man in black went along the corridor and turned out the light. He came back through the darkness so silently that Betty did not know of his approach until he was beside her. She felt the folds of a cloak as they fell over her.

"Who are you?" she whispered, in the darkness.

A soft laugh came in response. A sibilant voice spoke.

"You can call me The Shadow!"

THE girl had never heard the name before, but it seemed appropriate. The man was a shadow invisible in the darkness; a black form in light.

Betty felt the strong arms of The Shadow lifting her to her feet. She drew the folds of the black cloak about her. It seemed like a garment of invisibility.

She tried to walk, but stumbled. She was raised from the floor, and The Shadow carried her along the passage as easily as one might carry a small child.

They were on the steep stairs now. The Shadow did not falter. The girl's weight was no burden to him.

To Betty, it seemed as though she were being carried through the air by an unknown force. Silent and soundless, The Shadow was taking her to safety.

Near the top of the stairs The Shadow stopped, and again Betty heard his warning whisper.

They were in the midst of solemn, black silence. The door was but a few feet ahead. Betty could hear nothing, but The Shadow's keen ears had detected a trifling sound.

There was a shelflike beam at the right of the stairs. Betty felt herself placed gently upon it.

"Stay here," came the sibilant whisper. "Do not move!"

Betty waited alone. Several seconds went by. The door opened at the head of the stairs.

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At first, Betty thought that The Shadow had opened it. Then she saw a face in the dim light above. She bit her lips to repress a cry of horror as she recognized the hideous countenance of Clink.

Betty shuddered and drew the folds of the cloak about her.

Where was The Shadow? Had he left her to her doom?

There was no sound nor sign of him. He had disappeared!

Betty waited breathlessly. She knew that Clink must have suspected something. It was improbable that he had heard the noise from below. Probably he had found the cellar door unlocked.

The girl was worried. She felt that there was only one hope that Clink would go away without making an inspection.

She could see the hands of the monstrous man. In one he held an automatic. In the other, a flashlight. The gun was pointed down the stairs.

Betty was terrified. When that light clicked, she would be seen. So would The Shadow, unless he had slipped to the cellar below.

A shot from Clink's gun would mean death to her or to the man who had saved her.

It would also sound the alarm to the other men.

Betty realized the helplessness of The Shadow. He might still be here in the darkness; but he could not fire at Clink. That, too, would serve as an alarm.

THE light came on. Straight down the cellar stairs shone its glare. It moved back and forth, and suddenly its rays were focused upon Betty! Her white face was revealed amidst the black mass of the cloak.

At that instant just when Betty knew she was discovered she saw something else.

The long, thin form of a man seemed to emerge from the steps.

A face came within the glare of the electric torch.

It was the face of The Shadow a solemn, monkish profile that shone a ghastly green as the light revealed it!

Two black hands shot forward with amazing swiftness. They caught Clink's ankles in a viselike grip.

Betty could see a startled, twisted expression on the hideous face of the man with the flashlight. His body went upward as though impelled by a powerful spring beneath. The gun and the light shot ahead of him as he was precipitated forward.

Headlong, like a high-diver, Clink shot down the cellar stairs with terrific impetus!

Betty could hear the man's long, wailing cry, as he dived helplessly into space.

The Shadow was beside her, now. She was lifted in his arms. They were in the hallway. The cellar door was still open; but no sound came from it.

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Betty could hear voices, and the scramble of feet along the hall. The Shadow stepped into a side room, behind a curtain, carrying her with him. There she was lowered to the floor as two men rushed by Bob and Briggs.

They had heard Clink's wailing shout!

A few minutes passed and Betty no longer sensed the presence of The Shadow. She heard footsteps from the cellar stairs. Bob and Briggs stopped in the hallway.

"The fool!" came Bob's harsh exclamation. Even the sound of that voice made the girl shudder. "I told him to stay out of the cellar. Tripped on the top step all the way down head-first –"

"What'll we do about it?" Briggs questioned grimly. "We can't leave him there, with his head smashed against that concrete wall."

"Wait a while," returned Bob. "We can get rid of his body later on –"

"In the room where the girl –"

"No!" Bob spluttered an oath. "That place is forgotten, Briggs. Forgotten you understand? Are you a fool, too?"

Their voices dwindled as they walked along the hall back to the study. As the footsteps died away, The Shadow was again beside Betty.

The girl's spirit weakened at last. Her rescue the encounter on the stairs the fact that Clink was dead all these were more than she could stand, now that they were past. She fainted as The Shadow lifted her in his arms.

Betty regained consciousness a few minutes later, when a cool, fresh wind swept over her. They were outside the house. The Shadow was carrying her through a darkened alleyway that led to a side street. A closed car was waiting.

Betty, still bundled in the black cloak, was placed in the rear seat of the limousine. The door of the car closed. She could see the back of the chauffeur at the wheel.

The car moved along the street, and for one instant, as they passed a bright light, Betty saw the silhouette of The Shadow beside her. Then faintness again swept over her and her dazed mind became a blank.

CHAPTER XI. AN APPOINTMENT IS MADE

"HARKNESS murder solved!"

A man paused at the newsboy's cry. He purchased a copy of the Evening Classic and stared at the headlines. He hailed a passing taxi.

Within the vehicle, he turned on the light and read the news account as he rode along. A smile of cunning satisfaction spread over his face as he perused the details.

The cab stopped at the gloomy mansion that had been the home of Theodore Galvin. The man entered the building. Although it was not yet dark outside, the interior of the old house was dusky. The man walked through the hallway and came to the door of the lighted study.

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"Hello, Briggs," he said, as he entered.

The big man, staring idly from the window, turned to answer the greeting.

"Hello, Bob," were the man's words. "What's new?"

"The gag worked all right," replied Bob. "Take a look at the Classic. The Chief scored a ten–strike when he arranged this stunt!"

Briggs seized the paper and his eyes lighted as he scanned the headlines.

"Great stuff!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "Inspector Herbert Zull identifies murdered gangster as the slayer of Richard Harkness. Gee! That's hot!"

"The morning papers tell of finding Clink's body in an auto junk yard. By afternoon, Zull has doped it out. Clink killed Harkness. New clews finger prints on the table that corresponds with Clink's. Finding of the death gun on the dead gangster.

"Jake Grimble alias Clink small–time racketeer. They've got all the dope here, haven't they, Bob?"

"Right," was the reply, "and it fixes things all right for us. There's no connection between Clink and us. That's where we're safe.

"Clink was just a hanger–on with Moose Shargin's mob. The kind of a guy that would try to stick up Harkness for whatever might be in the place."

"He was around with us, though and I was there with him," said Briggs, doubtfully.

"What of it?" demanded Bob. "You don't get the lay, Briggs. While the murderer was unknown, Zull was in a tough spot.

"That's his business to track down murderers. Some rookie dick might have come along and found some evidence that would have made Zull look cheap.

"You know how he works he won't stop at anything, that guy. He'd hang a murder on his own brother if he could fake it.

"Now he's hung this one on Clink and he's got the guy that really killed Harkness. That closes it. Zull has other work to do. This is a big find for him, and he's not going to waste time trying to locate an accomplice that nobody even suspects.

"There won't be any one else on the case, either. Read that stuff about the motive. Look at what Zull found out about Clink a small–time racketeer, working on his own all that sort of stuff."

"Guess you're right, Bob," admitted Briggs. "I guess it's just as well Clink did fall down the stairs and break his neck.

"You've got to hand it to Shargin, too. He and those gorillas of his sneaked the body out of here in first–class style.

"Loaded old Clink full of lead out in the junk yard. There's been other gang killings there before. This was a

soft one with a guy already dead."

BOB did not reply. He was opening the newspaper. He stopped at a page near the back and pointed out an item to Briggs. It stated that Miss Betty Mandell, well-known society girl, had left for a trip to Florida and the West Indies.

"Well-known," laughed Bob. "She's got about four friends in New York. Her uncle threw a big coming-out party for her a few years ago and she's good for the society page any day, on account of family history.

"But she never got around much. Told me so herself. That paragraph takes care of her for the next six weeks. We'll be through by then!"

Briggs nodded. He reached over to the desk and picked up a sheet of paper upon which he had written a telephone number. Bob looked at it.

"Westcott!" he exclaimed. "When did he get back?"

"To-day."

"What did he say?"

"Wanted to talk to you. Said it was very urgent."

Bob still stared at the sheet of paper in his hands.

"Maybe I ought to talk to the Chief first," he said, "but he won't be around until after six o'clock. It isn't five yet. Well, here goes."

He picked up the telephone and called the number. Briggs listened intently while the conversation followed.

"Mr. Westcott?" said Bob. "This is Robert Galvin. Yes... Nephew of Theodore Galvin... Yes, I knew you were a friend of his... Tonight? Yes... At the Cobalt Club, for dinner? Very well, I'll be glad to join you there, sir..."

His comments ended as he listened intently. The man at the other end was speaking at considerable length. Briggs wondered what it was about.

"Well," cut in Bob, "I've met very few of my uncle's friends... Wait... How about Hiram Mallory? That's fine... Yes, I believe I can arrange for him to join us... Seven o'clock then, at the Cobalt Club."

Bob hung up the receiver and grinned as he faced Briggs.

"Thaddeus Westcott," he said. "One of the three. We were figuring on him for last. Now, he'll come second. Tonight.

"He may be just the one, Briggs. He says that he has important information for me but that he must be sure of my identity. So I told him that I would be there with Hiram Mallory."

The gigantic Briggs cleared his throat and looked apprehensive.

"You should have waited to hear from the Chief –"

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"Not a bit of it. This is a break in the right direction. We'd figured on laying low for a few days more it's only three nights since Clink bumped off Harkness.

"But this lets us move without any risk, and maybe we'll find out just what we want to know!"

Bob picked up the telephone and called a number. He asked for Hiram Mallory. He was informed that the latter would not be in until after six o'clock.

"Tell him that Mr. Galvin called," said Bob. "Robert Galvin. I would like him to meet me at the Cobalt Club at seven o'clock. We are to dine with Mr. Westcott Thaddeus Westcott."

"That fixes it," declared Bob. "I'm going upstairs to dress for dinner. You stick around here in the evening, Briggs. Keep your eye out. We don't know what may crop up."

"You mean The Shadow?"

"Yes!"

"I don't figure him in on this, Bob."

"Listen, Briggs." Bob's voice was serious. "We've got to play the game without taking any chances! I agree with you there's been no sign of The Shadow, so far as we're concerned. At the same time, he's a guy that doesn't leave any traces. Never forget that!"

Briggs nodded.

"First," declared Bob, "the girl saw somebody in here. That put me on the lookout. Then the Chief wised me up to something else.

"The Shadow or somebody a lot like him had a run-in with Zull the night after the Harkness murder. Zull kept pretty mum about it, but the news got to the Chief.

"It means that The Shadow was looking in on that affair."

"I thought he was looking in here," admitted Briggs, "two nights ago, when Clink did that nose dive down the cellar stairs."

"So did I," agreed Bob. "I figured Clink imagined he saw something down there. But when I looked the place over, it was okay. No sign of anybody having been there.

"At the same time, it's hard to figure how Clink slipped the way he did. He must have been pretty sure something was happening to miss his step and take a fall like that one.

"That's why I say look out!"

"What if The Shadow does prowl around here?" Briggs insisted. "He can't find out what we found out. Only two people got the dope on this place Clink and I. Clink's out now, and so is the guy that talked to us. I'm not blabbing to any one!"

"We're safe enough," agreed Bob. "At the same time, don't forget that four people have found this place unhealthy" his voice became an undertone "and only one of them is still alive!"

"It would be better if he was rubbed out, too!"

"No. The Chief may have use for him later on. By the way, Briggs, did any mail come in?"

The big man nodded. He opened a desk drawer and produced a letter which bore a South African stamp. Bob tore it open and read the contents. He put the letter back in the envelope and thrust it in his pocket.

"The Chief will want this," he said, shortly.

He left the room, Briggs remained alone, reading the newspaper.

It was half an hour later when Bob reappeared. He was attired in a dinner jacket. Over his arm was an overcoat, and he carried a hat and cane.

"Remember, Briggs," he said. "Keep on the lookout!"

WITH that final admonition, Bob was gone. He stepped from the front door, alone, and stood looking shrewdly up and down the street. No taxis were in sight, so he strolled leisurely along to the nearest avenue, swinging his cane as he walked.

He reached a cab stand. There, he glanced behind him. Satisfied, he entered a taxi and ordered the driver to take him to the Cobalt Club.

But with all his alertness, Bob did not observe the shadowy form that had flitted along the street behind him. He had not seen it in the obscurity of the side street; it had been invisible to his eyes even in the brighter light of the avenue.

Nor did he pause when he reached the door of the Cobalt Club. He entered that imposing edifice with an air of self-assurance.

His confidence might have disappeared had he noticed another cab rolling by as he alighted from his own.

It was several minutes after Bob had entered the club before another man walked through the portals. Like Bob, this visitor was faultlessly attired. His face was solemn and impassive. The doorman bowed.

"Good evening, Mr. Clarendon," he said.

CHAPTER XII. AT THE COBALT CLUB

THREE men were finishing dinner in a quiet corner of the grillroom at the Cobalt Club. Except for them, the room was virtually deserted.

They formed an unusual trio. Until now, their conversation had been rather trivial. But when the solemn-faced waiter had cleared the table, it was evident that the three men were prepared to take up a discussion of matters of grave importance.

The man who sat in the corner was white-haired and stoop-shouldered. He was very slow and cautious in his actions.

The others had finished their meal before him and he had ignored his dessert. Now, his companions were waiting for him to speak.

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With slightly trembling fingers, the elderly man drew a pair of spectacles from their case and carefully adjusted them upon his nose. He cleared his throat and began to speak in a quavering voice.

"I have a very important matter to discuss with you," he said. "It is important because I do not know just what it signifies. That is why I felt it necessary to ascertain that you were actually Robert Galvin."

He looked at a younger man beside him as he spoke. The latter pointed across the table to the third member of the party.

"Mr. Mallory can answer for me," he said.

Hiram Mallory bowed in quiet dignity and smiled in a kindly manner.

"This is Robert Galvin," he said. "I called to see him the first day that he arrived. I have seen him several times since then. He is living at his uncle's home. I can vouch for him, Thaddeus –"

"Ah, yes," returned Thaddeus Westcott. "I called there this afternoon and received a call in return. Nevertheless, I felt that I must be absolutely sure of myself.

"I am sorry, Mr. Galvin, that I was not in town when you arrived. Had I been here, I would have been one of the first to welcome you.

"It seemed very strange to call up your uncle's home and to hear a new voice there. The telephone was always answered by that servant your uncle had for so many years. Now what is his name?" Westcott concluded.

"Hodgson."

"Ah, yes. Hodgson. Is he no longer there?"

"I felt he needed a vacation," replied Bob, indulgently. "He felt my uncle's death very severely. So I told him to enjoy a rest."

"Very considerate indeed," assented Thaddeus Westcott, approvingly.

"Betty Mandell has also gone away," added Bob. "The old house seemed to worry her, without my uncle there. She has taken a trip to Florida."

"I expect to go to Florida to-morrow," observed Westcott. "Perhaps I shall meet her there."

"Perhaps," said Bob, in a peculiar tone which the old man did not notice.

"Let me explain what I have to tell you," said Thaddeus Westcott. "Before I begin, I must mention that it is for your ears alone.

"I did not wish Mr. Mallory to be here to learn what I have to say; I simply wanted to be sure of your identity, Mr. Galvin. So if Mr. Mallory will –"

Hiram Mallory started to rise from the table. Bob stopped him with a wave of his hand.

"Stay right here," he said.

"No, no, Robert," returned Mallory. "This may be a private matter –"

"Stay here," insisted Bob. He turned to Thaddeus Westcott. "You have no objections to Mr. Mallory's presence if I am satisfied?"

"Not in the least," declared Westcott. "That is for you to decide. I can only say that I have something important to tell you pertaining to your uncle –"

"In which case," interrupted Bob, "I think that Mr. Mallory should remain with us."

"Very well," said Westcott.

He drew an envelope from his pocket and held it between his hands.

"When Theodore Galvin left the country he gave this envelope to me," Westcott began. "He showed me the paper it contains, and then he sealed the envelope. He did not, however, explain the significance of the paper.

"He stated that if he needed my assistance in a certain matter which he did not specify he would communicate with me, so that I might understand what the paper meant.

"I did not hear from him before he died. So I have felt it my duty to turn over this paper to Theodore Galvin's heir namely, his nephew, Robert Galvin."

The old man tore open the end of the envelope and drew forth the paper. He unfolded it and scanned it as though to make sure that it was the same sheet that had been intrusted to him. He then laid the paper on the table.

Both his companions stared at it curiously.

In the center of the sheet of paper appeared the same row of cryptic characters that had been inscribed on the slip which Reynold Barker had gained and lost that night when he had searched so eagerly.

It was an exact duplication of Theodore Galvin's one mysterious message. It contained no other mark.

THADDEUS WESTCOTT looked at his companions and nodded his head at their perplexity. Bob examined the paper and gave it to Hiram Mallory, who studied it with curious interest.

Suddenly Mallory raised his head and folded the paper as he did so. The other men looked up.

A waiter was standing by, holding a tray which contained cups of coffee. The man's approach had not been noticed by the diners.

Mallory was annoyed. He was sure that the waiter had glimpsed the message on the sheet of paper. But a glance at the man's dull, expressionless face reassured him.

The waiter could scarcely have overheard more than a few snatches of the conversation. Mallory held the paper folded while the waiter placed the coffee on the table.

"Bring me the check," ordered Westcott, in a querulous tone.

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, in a thick, foreign accent.

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He drew a pad from his pocket and moved a few paces away while he tried to figure out the total of the dinners.

Both Bob and Mallory watched him intently. They smiled as they observed the man's stupidity. It was obvious that he could scarcely add up figures.

The waiter completed his task. He laid three slips in front of Thaddeus Westcott, who signed them. He handed the man a dollar bill as a tip.

"Don't disturb us again," he ordered.

"Yes, sir."

The waiter shambled away. Bob grinned as Hiram Mallory reopened the paper. The three men began to study the cryptic characters once more.

In the kitchen, the stupid-looking waiter retired to a corner. There, he looked at the pad which he held in his hand.

He smiled. On the pad was a duplication of the characters which appeared on the paper held by Hiram Mallory. The man had quickly drawn them from memory while he had been pretending to add up the amounts on the dinner checks.

The waiter removed his coat. In the obscure corner, he rubbed his hands over his face and surveyed the result in a small mirror that hung on the wall. From a locker, he produced another coat and vest.

He pocketed the paper with its duplicate inscription. He walked unobserved from the kitchen. When he reappeared, in the lobby, he was none other than George Clarendon, wealthy member of the Cobalt Club.

It was nearly ten minutes later when Bob appeared in the lobby. He looked about him, as one unfamiliar with the place, and spied a telephone booth in a corner. He entered the booth and put in a call.

While he was there, Clarendon arose leisurely, passed by the booth, and descended the stairs toward the billiard room. He paused on the deserted steps and leaned close against the rail. To his keen ear came the low voice of the man at the telephone.

"Hello... I'm at the Cobalt Club... With Thaddeus Westcott. He's leaving shortly. He expects to go home... You understand? He lives out on Long Island... His car is here in town... Goes over Queensboro Bridge... Yes, I'm staying in town... All right, see you later."

Bob left the booth and returned to the grillroom. Soon he came into the lobby again, accompanied by Hiram Mallory and Thaddeus Westcott. The latter was speaking.

"I have wondered about it, gentlemen," he said, "but I cannot understand its purpose. The information is undoubtedly important –"

Hiram Mallory tapped him significantly upon the arm. Westcott understood. There were other persons here in the lobby. He nodded and ended his conversation.

"Good evening," he said, as he shook hands with his companions.

"A good trip South," replied Mallory.

Thaddeus Westcott turned toward the door. He happened to notice George Clarendon who was standing near by.

"Hello, Thad," greeted Clarendon.

"Hello, George!"

"Going home?"

"Yes."

"Why not drop me at my apartment? You go by it."

"I'll be glad to, George. Come along, come along. My car is outside."

The two men walked out together. Bob watched them as they passed through the revolving door. His eyes were keen and a shrewd smile appeared upon his lips as he gazed at the departing form of Thaddeus Westcott.

CHAPTER XIII. THE SHADOW'S BATTLE

THADDEUS WESTCOTT rubbed his forehead uneasily. The motion of the limousine seemed to disturb him. He reached for the speaking tube that communicated with the chauffeur.

"Drive more slowly, Craig," he said.

It was the second time that he had given the order. The speed of the car dwindled to a snail's pace. Westcott leaned back in the cushions of the seat.

"Not feeling so well?" questioned George Clarendon.

"No," replied Westcott. "I'm a bit dizzy, George. Perhaps it was a cup of coffee that I drank after dinner. It tasted a bit unusual. I seem to be feeling worse every minute."

"It would be absurd for you to go out to Long Island," declared Clarendon. "Why don't you stop at the Thermon Hotel overnight? Doctor Geoffrey is house physician there. I'll tell him to take care of you."

"I am leaving for the South to-morrow," objected Westcott. "All my bags are packed. Out at the house –"

"That's fine," said Clarendon. "The chauffeur can bring them in to-morrow morning, before train time."

Westcott closed his eyes and nodded weakly.

"I guess you're right, George," he said. "I'm I'm not feeling well. You do whatever is best."

"Stop at the Thermon Hotel," said Clarendon, through the speaking tube.

The limousine drew up before the hotel. Craig stared in surprise as he saw Clarendon helping Thaddeus Westcott from the car. The chauffeur clambered from the front seat to give aid.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"He's all right," assured Clarendon. "Wait here. I'll take care of him."

The two men went into the hotel. Clarendon reappeared about ten minutes later.

"Mr. Westcott is feeling better," he said to the chauffeur. "He had a slight attack of indigestion. The doctor is with him now. He is going to stay here overnight.

"He wants you to take the car back to Long Island. Bring his bags and tickets in before eight thirty in the morning."

"Very well, sir."

A taxicab had pulled up in front of the limousine. Craig angled the big car backward and forward and swung into the street.

He glanced behind him as he departed. He could see no sign of George Clarendon. The man had disappeared.

THE limousine traveled over the Queensboro Bridge and whirled along a broad highway. The car reached a road that turned off from the highway.

The chauffeur lighted a match and applied it to a cigarette. The car sped along until it approached another road bordered by thick woods.

Far ahead, Craig saw a figure in the glare of the headlights. A man was standing with outstretched arms. He appeared to be wearing a uniform.

Craig grinned. This part of Long Island was used as a landing place for cargoes from ships. Coast guards, prohibition agents, and local police were constantly on the lookout for bootleggers in large, powerful automobiles.

Craig had been stopped before, but never on this road. He applied the brakes and the big car coasted to a halt.

The waiting man stepped up to the car. His badge glimmered, but his face was lost in darkness. He spoke gruffly as he accosted the chauffeur.

"What you got there?" he demanded.

"Nothing," replied Craig. "This car belongs to Mr. Westcott, who lives farther up the road."

"Yeah? Well, we'll look and see."

Two forms emerged from the side of the road. The chauffeur could make out the dim shape of an automobile drawn up in a small clearing that extended to one side.

The man with the badge drew an automatic from his coat and held it loosely as he eyed the chauffeur. Craig heard the door of the limousine open behind him.

"Nobody in here," came a voice through the darkness.

"No?" The man with the automatic spoke incredulously. "Take a look in there. Make sure there's nothing in back."

HANDS IN THE DARK

A man started to enter the car. He turned on his flashlight to illuminate the interior. A sudden exclamation came from his lips.

"Looks like something!" he said. "Something black, on the back seat – Look out! Look out!"

WITH his warning cry came a sharp revolver shot. It startled the chauffeur as well as the man who had stopped him.

Craig turned his head and saw the glint of a revolver. Another shot burst the silence.

The man at the door of the limousine fell into the road.

The leader he with the badge uttered an enraged command. Instantly a group of men appeared from beside the road. Craig saw the leader level his automatic. The chauffeur realized that he was the helpless target for the man's gun.

But before the trigger was drawn, another shot came from the opened door in the back of the car. The leader's arm dropped; his gun fell to the ground.

The attackers were shooting into the back of the limousine. Craig flung himself flat on the front seat.

He was more amazed than the attackers. They had fancied that they were dealing with an elderly, unarmed man; but Craig thought that the car was empty. He could not imagine who was returning the gunfire.

The firing ceased as the two men staggered forward into the glare of the headlights. They did not realize that they were making targets of their bodies; they were only hoping to escape that deadly trap in the rear of the car.

Then a voice spoke from the darkness, beside the car.

"Craig," it said, in a low whisper.

The chauffeur arose, startled by the mention of his name.

"Drive ahead," said the voice.

As the chauffeur obeyed, one of the men lying on the ground raised his arm to fire. There was a spurt of flame two feet away from the chauffeur. The rising man fell.

Craig threw the car in gear and the huge limousine shot ahead. Craig could not understand what had happened; he only knew that he had been saved from a mass attack of armed men.

He heard wild parting shots as he sped away; then above them, the sound of a long, wild laugh a laugh that was filled with eerie mockery as it seemed to come from the blackness of the surrounding woods.

The weird laugh was chilling. Craig shuddered at the echoes of its gibing tones. He drove madly ahead, so rapidly that he had no fear of pursuit.

He fancied that his mysterious deliverer was safely in the car; that he was carrying the man with him.

The limousine shot in between the gates of Thaddeus Westcott's estate.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Craig did not pause until he had reached the door of the garage. Then he turned and looked into the back seat.

It was empty! The dome light of the car revealed only the marks of bullets. There was no sign of the unknown passenger.

Craig wondered what had become of the man, and the thought made him uncomfortable. Had he abandoned his rescuer to the thugs, back on the road?

Craig could only ease his mind with the recollection that he had followed orders. It would be folly, now, to return to that scene.

BACK on the road through the woods, a group of crippled men were entering their car. Two of them were badly shot. All but one had suffered wounds.

The unscathed man growled as he stood beside the car, throwing the rays of a searchlight in all directions.

"Got away, all right," he mumbled, between clenched teeth. "Got away in the car, with the chauffeur! There's no use waiting around here any longer. Come on, gang, we're moving before some of these hick cops show up!"

He climbed into the car and took the wheel. The searchlight was off now; but the glare of the headlights threw a long range of whiteness down the road.

Across the path of the car lay a blot of blackness, a long, oddly-shaped shadow. The driver of the car did not give it a second thought. He took it for the shadow of a tree.

The car moved slowly forward. As it passed the spot where the shadow had been, a long, agile form leaped forward. It would have been invisible in the darkness, except for the fact that it momentarily obscured the rear light of the car.

The vague form attached itself to the back of the vehicle, and remained there while the automobile jolted along the dirt road.

The man in the front seat was muttering incoherent oaths as he drove along. His low voice was drowned by the groans of wounded gangsters. But he did not hear those sounds.

Still ringing in his ears was the peal of a taunting laugh a laugh that no hardened denizen of New York's underworld could fail to recognize.

For the laugh that had sounded when the limousine had fled to safety was the triumphant cry of The Shadow. Single-handed, the invisible man of the darkness had won the fight, against tremendous odds!

CHAPTER XIV. THE MENACE OF THE SHADOW

IT was after midnight. A coupe turned from Broadway, above Seventy-second, and stopped before a house on a side street.

Two men alighted. They ascended a pair of steps. One of them unlocked the door to the house. They entered.

One of the men was tall, pasty-faced and stoop-shouldered; but his features wore a look of cold brutality that marked him as a dangerous character. He was "Moose" Shargin, a dominating figure in the affairs of

gangland.

Wary, cunning and close-mouthed, Moose Shargin was one who avoided useless feuds. His name was seldom mixed in gang wars. He preyed on the unprotected, and avoided enterprises that would lead to conflict with others of his ilk.

At the same time, Shargin was noted for his determination. Other czars of the badlands never interfered with him.

His companion, Garry Elvers, was his official bodyguard. Garry was a hard-faced gangster, who aped his commander's custom of saying little, and keeping his business to himself. He traveled with Moose only when the gang leader was abroad without his gorillas.

The two were frequently seen at Brindle's Cafe, a favorite Broadway spot for big shots. They had come to this house together, on some unknown mission.

Moose Shargin nudged his thumb in the direction of a room off the hall. Elvers understood. He was to wait there while Shargin went upstairs. Even with his trusted lieutenant, Moose was mute regarding certain enterprises.

Elvers had been here before, and he had obeyed instructions on previous occasions. He did not know what purpose Moose had in mind, and he did not care. It was this quality of indifference that had gained Garry his position of second-in-command of Moose Shargin's forces.

Garry locked the door while Moose went upstairs. Then the hard-faced bodyguard shrugged his broad shoulders and entered the side room. He turned on a light and pulled a tabloid newspaper from his pocket.

MEANWHILE, Moose Shargin had ascended in darkness. He did not turn on a second-floor light. Instead, he found his way to a closet at the side of the hall. He entered the door of the closet and found a coat peg. He drew it downward.

The wall swung open, and the draft of a narrow passage greeted the gang leader.

It was only a few steps to the end of the passage. There, Shargin encountered a closed barrier. He tapped, rattling his finger nails against a metallic substance. A panel opened. Shargin stepped into a lighted room.

From the blankness of bare stone walls, Moose Shargin had emerged into a small but sumptuous apartment, dark-paneled, carpeted by a thick Oriental rug, furnished with fine mahogany chairs.

The panel closed behind the pasty-faced gangster. Moose stood facing a large easy-chair in the corner. A man was seated there, reading a book.

The man laid the volume aside and glanced toward his visitor. The reading lamp revealed the good-natured features of Hiram Mallory.

"Hello, Chief," said Moose, in a low, growling voice that was his habitual tone.

"Hello, Moose. How did it go tonight?"

The gangster pulled a chair toward the corner and sat down facing Mallory. A sullen look came over his countenance.

"It didn't go at all," he said, grimly. "We got the works. My gorillas are crippled. Maybe you can guess who did it."

"The Shadow," said Mallory, quietly.

"That's the guy!" returned Moose.

Hiram Mallory leaned his head back and smiled. He laughed gently, as though pleased. Moose Shargin had heard that laugh before. It was something that he could not understand.

Hiram Mallory had an air of habitual pleasantry. When it was most evident, the man was most dangerous. This was an enigma that had long puzzled his associates.

"What are we going to do about it?" demanded Moose.

"Make use of it," replied Mallory, his face beaming as though he experienced great amusement. "I have been looking forward to trouble with The Shadow. I had not anticipated his interference in a simple matter, such as the killing of Thaddeus Westcott.

"Until now, The Shadow has been well, just a shadow. This expression of interest on his part creates a new situation."

"It means we've got to fight him!" declared Moose.

"Exactly!" agreed Mallory.

"Other guys have tried it –" Moose began.

"– And have failed," completed Mallory. "Just as others have tried to cross me, and have failed."

Moose nodded. The pleasant assurance of Hiram Mallory stifled the qualms that were besieging the pasty-faced gangster. Mallory made no further comment, so Shargin broke into his story.

"THERE isn't much to it," he said. "When I got the tip-off from Bob Maddox, I took the gang out to Long Island and laid for Westcott's car. Picked a great spot, too.

"The chauffeur fell for the phony cop idea. He stopped. The boys yanked open the door. Westcott wasn't there, but The Shadow was. He gave 'em the works.

"The chauffeur got away, and The Shadow with him."

"Where were you?" queried Mallory.

"In my car. Laying back. I couldn't shoot while the boys were in the way. I fired after the limousine when it started down the road, but I was too late to stop it."

"The Shadow," mused Hiram Mallory. "I told you he was likely to appear.

"He was in the game early, but he didn't find anything. Killing Harkness brought him back. He did something unusual then. Ran in with the police."

"He did? How?"

Mallory smiled cryptically. It was his sign that a question was unwise. But as an afterthought, he became indulgent.

"The Shadow," he said, "made an attack upon Inspector Zull, hoping, evidently, to obtain some evidence of who killed Richard Harkness."

"Whew!" exclaimed Moose Shargin. "He picked the wrong guy there! That's the one guy on the force that has my nanny."

"How you manage to get around him is a wonder to me, Chief. Yes, The Shadow picked the wrong guy there!"

"On the contrary," declared Mallory, calmly, "he picked the right man."

"How do you figure that?"

"Because Zull was the one who eventually discovered the identity of the actual murderer Clink."

"Yes," agreed the gangster. "You're right, there. But it didn't do Zull much good, finding Clink full of lead. That ended matters right there. Covering up everything."

"Exactly as intended," said Mallory. "I complimented you upon your job, Moose. I compliment you again."

"Thanks."

"Now regarding The Shadow." Mallory became suddenly speculative. "I have an idea that he knows a great deal more than we suppose. He certainly put Thaddeus Westcott out of harm's way."

"In view of what happened to-night, I feel quite positive of who The Shadow is at least, who he pretended to be tonight."

"Who?" Moose Shargin's question was eager.

"A gentleman who rode uptown with Westcott to-night," answered Mallory in his cryptic tone. "He must have prevailed upon Westcott to remain in the city overnight, knowing that danger threatened."

"What's his name?" demanded Shargin. "I've got a settlement to make with that guy –"

"Useless," declared Mallory. "You could never find him now, Moose."

"What about Westcott?"

"Also useless. We can be sure that The Shadow has placed him in safety. The best thing now is to let him leave town."

"I don't get you," Chief," admitted Shargin. "You say we've got to knock off The Shadow. Yet you won't go after him, and you intend to leave Westcott alone. What's the idea?"

"FINESSE, Moose," said Mallory, smiling, "finesse which in English means subtle strategy. We must never

lose sight of our main issue. If The Shadow has no bearing upon our principal task, we can ignore him.

"But I feel certain that he is about to interfere with our important plan. Therefore, we must give him immediate consideration.

"Westcott was to have been Number Three. Chance decreed that he should have been Number Two. We have found out all he knows which is very little.

"His death is not necessary, although it would have been desirable, under the circumstances which I planned. So we must first consider our dealings with the man who is now Number Three."

"Work quick," suggested Moose.

"No," said Mallory, shaking his head thoughtfully. "Not too quickly, Moose. For then The Shadow would meet us on the ground."

"You think he knows –"

"He knows enough to watch Bob; and Bob is the man for the job. I am positive that there are certain facts that The Shadow does not know facts pertaining to Theodore Galvin –"

"The double-crossing snake!" growled Moose.

"But," continued Mallory, ignoring the interruption, "there are also facts which he may have discovered.

"For instance, he may know that Bob Maddox is not Bob Galvin!"

"Do you think he has found that out?" quizzed Moose.

"If he has not," declared Mallory, "I intend to have him learn the fact."

MOOSE SHARGIN stared as though he thought his chief had gone crazy. He was too surprised to speak. Mallory continued now, with no interruption from his subordinate.

"Let us sum up what The Shadow knows," declared Mallory. "First, he knows that a man was killed in Theodore Galvin's study."

"You mean Barker."

"Correct. Next, he knows that Richard Harkness was killed by Clink. Third, he knows that a plan was made to eliminate Thaddeus Westcott, shortly after Westcott had dined with Bob Maddox presumably Bob Galvin and myself."

Mallory paused thoughtfully; then resumed his discourse.

"The Shadow may suspect other things," he said. "But, uppermost of all, he must wonder why Bob Galvin is mixed up in shady business.

"After all, Maddox was a makeshift. He passes fairly well as a man from South Africa, but not too well.

"It is probable that The Shadow believes Bob to be an impostor. Therefore, he is wondering what has become

of the real Bob Galvin."

"I've got him safe," grinned Shargin.

"Correct," said Mallory, "and I want you to keep him safe! Because The Shadow is going to try to get him!"

Shargin's mouth opened wide. A sudden understanding began to dawn upon him.

"Why attack The Shadow?" questioned Mallory. "You tried it to-night. You found out what happened. When you have a dangerous enemy, don't go after him. Bring him to you. Trap him! That's what I intend to do with The Shadow!"

"Will he fall for it?"

"Will he fall?" smiled Mallory. "Why ask me that question, Moose? He went into trouble to-night, didn't he? He will go into it again. But this time we will be prepared. That will be your job, Moose."

"I'll take care of it," said the gang leader grimly.

"I expect you to do so," said Mallory. "The Shadow's attack will serve a double purpose. Not only will it bring him into our trap. It will also leave us free to deal with Number Three while The Shadow is otherwise engaged."

"I get you, Chief. You'll have Bob do his job while The Shadow is trying to pull young Galvin out of the stew."

"Exactly! Therefore, our plan is to play a waiting game for the present. Do nothing until you hear from me. My instructions to the others will be the same.

"The Shadow knowing that something important is at stake will have to act on his own initiative. Until now, he has watched our moves. It is our turn to watch his."

"I get you, Chief."

MOOSE SHARGIN arose. He knew the interview was ended. In Hiram Mallory, he recognized a superior mind. This kindly faced old gentleman, known to his social friends as a retired business man, was a supercrook who kept his name free from all criminal enterprises.

Moose cast a last look about the room, with its elegant furnishings. The handsome, well-stocked bookcases; the expensive curtains and paintings that adorned the wall; the tall, decorated screen in the corner all these were signs of the luxury that went with wealth acquired by legitimate methods.

There was nothing in this room that revealed the true nature of Hiram Mallory.

The panel opened in the wall. Moose Shargin entered. He went through the passage, back to the old house that stood adjacent to Hiram Mallory's home.

Moose knew only part of his chief's schemes and connections. Similarly, Shargin's own underling Garry Elvers would be waiting for him, unknowing of his own chief's dealings.

Hiram Mallory continued to smile after Moose Shargin had left. He picked up a French telephone and called

a number. The voice of Bob Maddox answered.

"Await instructions," said Mallory quietly. "There are new developments which require a delay. No action whatever. Be ready."

After he had concluded his telephone call, Mallory spoke softly, his voice scarcely audible.

"Each knows but part," he said. "Shargin wonders how the others get away with their killings. Maddox wonders why Shargin stays in line. Briggs wonders about everything.

"Theodore Galvin knew too much. I trusted him too far. Reynold Barker knew too little otherwise he would not have been so foolish. Until now, no menace has arisen except within our own forces.

"Now we must meet The Shadow!"

He drew an envelope from his pocket. It was a letter that had come to South Africa, addressed to Robert Galvin. Mallory had received it from Bob, after they had left Thaddeus Westcott.

"This," declared Mallory, softly, "must go to young Galvin. He must be forced to answer it.

"We have weeks to work there will be no question about Hodgson or the girl. But we cannot afford troublesome inquiries from South Africa.

"This letter must go to Robert Galvin and when it goes" Mallory's smile became benign "it will be the bait for The Shadow!"

The kindly-faced old man sat speculative, holding the letter in his hands, beaming and chuckling in a pleased manner. Moose Shargin was right. When Hiram Mallory seemed jovial, he was most dangerous.

The master of crime was plotting. He knew the menace of The Shadow, and he was ready to meet it!

CHAPTER XV. THE SHADOW PLANS

WHEN Moose Shargin again joined Garry Elvers in the house adjacent to the residence of Hiram Mallory, the gang leader merely uttered a grunt that caused his bodyguard to follow him.

The two men left the house and entered their coupe. They drove along the street, turned a corner and doubled back to Broadway.

At the same time, a man stepped from the obscurity of a house front across the narrow street. Although he made no apparent effort to conceal himself, he was virtually invisible in the darkness.

He walked rapidly toward Broadway. There he hailed a passing cab and told the driver to travel leisurely up the bright thoroughfare.

This man was wearing a black cloak and a dark, broad-brimmed hat. He seemed to have perfectly anticipated the direction which the coupe would take, for it shot out from a side street before the cab had reached the corner.

The taxi moved behind the coupe as it rolled up Broadway. The smaller car turned eastward a few blocks later. The taxi followed, the driver responding to a quiet order from the man in back.

HANDS IN THE DARK

The coupe reached a garage and entered. The taxi passenger discharged his vehicle half a block farther on.

When Moose Shargin and his bodyguard came from the garage and walked to an apartment hotel not far distant, they were followed by a long, shadowy shape that flitted mysteriously along the sidewalk.

The gangsters went into the hotel building. This was their abode. After they were gone, a soft laugh echoed in the gloom of the street. The shadowy form was again manifest. It moved away.

No one could have traced the course of that mysterious splotch of blackness. It vanished completely, as though it had no destination more real than just thin air.

It was the shadow of a man a man so shadowlike that he was called The Shadow. It was not until half an hour that this being of the night again manifested himself.

Then his whereabouts were known only to himself, in the obscurity of a pitch-black room, the sanctum of The Shadow.

A LIGHT clicked, under the touch of an unseen hand. The rays of a hanging lamp spread themselves upon the surface of a polished table. Two long, slender hands came into view beneath the lamp.

They were white hands, adorned with a solitary ring that bore a strange gem. From the depths of a perfect fire opal glowed mysterious, shimmering colors, that changed from crimson to purple.

This was The Shadow's only jewel a girasol. Collectors of rare gems would have coveted that stone.

The hands were at work. Upon the table they spread a detail map of Manhattan, backed by a base of thick cardboard.

The fingers inserted glass-headed pins into the map. The pins indicated important spots.

One pin located the old house that had belonged to Theodore Galvin. Another showed the building in which Richard Harkness had died. Beside it, a third pin touched the spot where Acting Inspector Herbert Zull had been surprised by an attack in the dark.

These pins were placed rapidly in position. Now came new ones: a pin for the Cobalt Club, a pin for the Hotel Thermon. The fingers, bringing up new pins, set two markers side by side, one indicating the house where Moose Shargin had gone, the other the residence of Hiram Mallory, which stood adjacent.

A pin indicated the apartment hotel where Shargin and Elvers lived.

The fingers produced a white pin and placed it in a block far uptown. They produced a black pin and laid it on the map. That completed the preliminary work.

Eyes in the dark surveyed the chart, as a general would plan his campaign.

The right hand became busy. On a sheet of paper it wrote the names of the places indicated by the pins. Beside the word "white," it inscribed the name "Betty Mandell." After the word "black," it wrote "Robert Galvin,"

These names were self-explanatory. The first meant the refuge where Betty Mandell was now abiding. The second was intended for the place where Bob Galvin might be a captive. Only, the black pin had no location.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Thus The Shadow visualized the scene of operations and provided for the objective which lay before him.

Hiram Mallory would have smiled, had he seen that map. For it bore out his belief that The Shadow knew the real Bob Galvin was missing.

The hand crumpled the sheet of paper, but left the pins in position. Now it drew forth another paper and placed it on the table.

This was a waiter's slip from the Cobalt Club. Upon it were inscribed the cryptic characters of the peculiar message left by Theodore Galvin. A slender finger rested upon the pin that indicated the old mansion. A slight chuckle came from the darkness.

The Shadow had divined one fact: namely, that this same peculiar code had been sought in the old house, or had been found there.

AN ENVELOPE was brought beneath the lamp. It bore a Paraguayan stamp, and was postmarked Asuncion.

The fingers drew a letter from the envelope. They spread the paper, and written lines were in view. These lines were in code, with spaces between them. The right hand took a pen and wrote the translation:

When Theodore Galvin died he was in the company of a man named Reynold Barker. He answers the description of the man found in Galvin's study. Barker left Asuncion by airplane immediately after Galvin's death.

Supposed cause of Galvin's demise, yellow fever. Investigation indicates poisoning. Have obtained this information by investigation of attending physician.

Have also learned that Galvin talked with Barker. His last words in English were addressed to Barker. They were incoherent and only partly understood by those who were present.

The word "desk" was heard also another word, thought to be "studio." It might well be "study."

This completes investigation. Have cabled to that effect and will return by next boat unless contrary reply is received.

Underneath the coded letter, the hand wrote a name, thus giving the message its only signature. The name the hand wrote was Harry Vincent. This was the name of one of The Shadow's trusted agents.

Hardly had the hand written, before the translation of the letter began to fade. It went word by word, as though erased by an invisible brush. The signature which had been supplied was the last to go.

This strange effect was due to the disappearing ink in which the letter was written ink prepared by a chemical formula known only to The Shadow.

The hands now busied themselves with the slip from the Cobalt Club – that important sheet of paper which carried the copy of Theodore Galvin's cryptic marks.

The slip lay upon the large map, close to the pin which showed the old mansion's location. Invisible eyes were poring over it, pondering upon each mysterious character, seeking to learn the message which it bore.

Ten minutes went by, and not once did the hands move. Then came a sudden action.

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The slip was laid to one side. A slender finger tip moved from one pin to another. It stopped on the pin that showed the mansion.

The left hand appeared, carrying a gold-headed pin. The fingers of this hand carefully inserted the pin in a spot on the map.

A laugh sounded in the darkness a hollow, mirthless laugh that carried a strange significance. The laugh dwindled to a whisper, and its eerie echoes reverberated from the walls of the dark room, so low and soft that one could not have known when the laugh ended and only echoes followed.

The right hand wrote new words on a piece of paper. They formed a column as follows:

Green Vincent.

Blues Burbank.

Gold Burke.

White and Black.

That was all. Yet those brief statements formulated The Shadow's plan; they were the outline of his campaign.

Three of his trusted agents were named. Vincent was connected with the green pin, and such a pin marked the old homestead of Theodore Galvin.

Burbank was designated to two blue pins, for blue was the color of the twin pins that showed Hiram Mallory's home and the house which adjoined it.

Burke's name, with the gold, indicated that the newspaperman was delegated to the spot most recently marked on the map.

White and black, with no name following, could mean but one thing: that The Shadow, himself, had chosen to watch over the refuge where he had put Betty Mandell in safety, and that he was to find the place to which Bob Galvin had been taken.

The fingers toyed with the brown pin that marked the abode of Moose Shargin. The mind in the dark was speculating. At last, it must have come to a satisfactory solution, for the movement of the fingers stopped. Finally, the hand picked up the black pin and placed it with the brown.

Here, again, was a significant action. It meant that The Shadow had decided that Moose Shargin was the key to Bob Galvin. It would be his duty to watch the gang leader who was so closely identified with Hiram Mallory's schemes.

The map was removed from the table, the pins still in place. The light went out. A low laugh sounded through the room. The Shadow was gone.

NOT long afterward, George Clarendon appeared at the Hotel Thermon. He inquired for the key to Room 1128 the room next to the one occupied by Thaddeus Westcott, which was 1124.

Clarendon did not go upstairs immediately. He stopped to glance at the shipping page of a morning

newspaper. His keen eyes noted that the steamship Balvaro was due from South America at noon.

Clarendon tossed the newspaper in a wastebasket and went to the elevator.

Five minutes afterward, the telephone buzzed in Room 1122. A quiet-faced man arose from a desk and answered it. He recognized the voice that came over the wire.

"Hello, Burbank," it said. "All right?"

"Yes," replied the quiet-faced man.

"I just came in," said the voice in a low tone. "I thought I'd call to see if you were still up."

"I'm going to bed now," replied Burbank.

"All right, I'll call you to-morrow."

Burbank laid down the telephone and turned out the light. He had been on watch, in this room reserved for him, while The Shadow had been engaged on other enterprises. His brief comment had indicated that no one had disturbed the repose of Thaddeus Westcott.

Burbank's vigil was ended. Another man had assumed the duty.

Burbank held no doubts regarding the safety of the elderly man in the next room. Thaddeus Westcott would leave for his Southern trip to-morrow, even though the hordes of gangland might attempt to prevent him. For The Shadow was now on the watch.

CHAPTER XVI. THE TRAP IS LAID

BOB MADDUX falsely known as Bob Galvin was sitting at the big, flat-topped desk which had become his accustomed place.

Bob's brow was furrowed, and his lips were twitching impatiently. He looked up as Briggs entered. The big man appeared none too pleasant.

"It's getting on my nerves, Briggs," growled Bob.

Briggs shrugged his shoulders.

"I've always stood by the Chief," added Bob, "but this time I think he's making a mistake. Here we are, ready for final action, and he's holding up the works. I know he's got good reasons. But we can't wait forever."

"There hasn't been any trouble yet," said Briggs. "This is a gloomy old joint, but I've seen worse. But I don't blame you for being tired of it. You haven't been out for four days."

"That's just it," declared Bob. "I know what the Chief is after. He's not worried about the cops, and so far there's been no trouble with any inquiries for the girl."

"He's up against The Shadow at least he thinks he is and he's waiting to pull one over on that guy."

"Why doesn't he do it then?"

HANDS IN THE DARK

"It's all arranged," said Bob. "But the Chief doesn't want a slip-up. He wants to be sure or nearly sure that The Shadow is on the job. So far, he's had no indication. That's why he's waiting.

"I wish something would happen to make him spring the trap. I'm tired of waiting. Getting nervous, for the first time. Itching to get going."

Briggs nodded. He had not talked with Bob about the contemplated plans. Briggs was content to wait for orders. Theoretically, he held a position equal to Bob's; but his value lay in the fact that he could follow instructions.

Briggs never cared to know too much. He had found it profitable to attend only to details that were set for him. He knew that he was to play a part in the coming enterprise, and he was ready.

Bob stared about the gloomy room and became thoughtful. Briggs sat down and began to read a newspaper.

It was late in the afternoon. Darkness had fallen outside. Briggs expected another long evening of waiting.

Ten minutes passed. Bob began to drum restlessly upon the flat-topped desk. He picked up a sheet of paper and began to trace cryptic characters upon it.

He was marking the symbols of the strange code which only he and Hiram Mallory had seen unless Thaddeus Westcott could be counted. It was improbable that Westcott had kept a copy of the paper which had been given to him by Theodore Galvin.

THE thought of Thaddeus Westcott bothered Bob. Only two others had known of the paper. Theodore Galvin and Reynold Barker. Both were dead.

It would be better if Westcott were dead, too. Then it would be only Mallory and Bob. No he was wrong there. Briggs had seen it; but, of course, Briggs was all right. Bob spoke to the man.

"Say, Briggs," he questioned, "you remember that the article you took from R. B.?"

"Who?"

"Barker," said Bob impatiently.

"Oh, yes," replied Briggs, indifferently. "The hunk of paper. I gave it to you for the Chief. What about it?"

"Do you remember what was on it?"

"No. Some funny-looking signs was all I saw. I knew it was what Barker was after, so I got it."

Bob looked at Briggs half wondering, half admiring. The big fellow was dense in some ways; in others, he was clever. He was a man of action.

Bob half closed his eyes and tried to picture Briggs entering this very room, catlike in stealth, approaching the unsuspecting man who had found the object which he had traveled far to obtain.

Briggs had taken it by force. He had covered his tracks. He had left a sign, which even Bob did not understand the turned-down corner of a rug and the matter had been ended. So far as Briggs was concerned, it was forgotten entirely.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Bob looked at the characters which he had traced. He was not sure that he had them correct except the last two, which were alike.

He wrote the letter "s" upon the sheet of paper and repeated it. He crossed out the letters. He wrote "t" twice, and again crossed out the marks. He wrote the letter "l" two times.

He picked up the sheet of paper and tore it. He ignited the pieces and watched them burn in an ash tray. He even destroyed the ashes, as though piqued at his own folly in considering those cryptic signs.

HE opened a drawer in the desk. From it he removed an address book which had belonged to Theodore Galvin. The book contained more than one hundred names.

Bob ran through the list mechanically. He paused a moment at the letter "M." He continued to the end of the book.

Not a single name in the little volume bore even a check mark. Yet Bob seemed satisfied.

"One more," he said thoughtfully. "Only one more unless our guess is altogether wrong. This is something The Shadow missed if he really was here that night the girl came in. But then how could he know?"

Bob smiled. He looked toward Briggs indulgently. The big man was still reading the newspaper, his lips moving as he perused the words.

Bob put the address book back into the drawer. At that moment, the deep tone of the doorbell was heard. Briggs looked up. Bob nodded. The big man went out.

When Briggs returned, he had a puzzled look upon his face. Bob detected it and raised his eyebrows quizzically.

"A man named Vincent," said Briggs, handing Bob a card. "Comes from South Africa."

"Is he supposed to know me?"

"No. He was sort of apologetic about disturbing you. He knows a friend of yours in a place called Durban. A diamond dealer named Young –"

"Hm–m–m," observed Bob. "I know who he means. Those papers in young Galvin's trunk are coming in handy. Glad I read them."

"Show this fellow in, Briggs. Do it right. Understand?"

The big man nodded as he left the room. He returned with a young man who was well dressed and who wore a pleasant smile. Bob arose to greet the newcomer.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Galvin," said the stranger. "My name is Harry Vincent. I just arrived in New York. Our mutual friend, Mr. Young, suggested that I call upon you. I live in Durban, you know –"

"Oh, yes," replied Bob. "How's everything there? Was Mr. Young in good health when you left?"

"Quite." Harry Vincent smiled. "In fact, he intends to come to America himself. With another friend of yours, Ronald Stokes son of Sir Hubert Stokes –"

HANDS IN THE DARK

"How soon?" inquired Bob, trying to feign enthusiasm.

"I fancy they are on the ocean now," declared Vincent. "I have no knowledge of their sailing, but they may arrive within the next fortnight."

Bob Maddox was thinking quickly. Both names mentioned by Vincent were familiar to him, not only through papers belonging to Bob Galvin, but also through letters which now rested in Theodore Galvin's desk letters which the nephew had written to his American uncle during the past year.

It was this latter fact that gave him a sudden suspicion. The Shadow had been at that desk when he had been seen by Betty Mandell!

"Six o'clock," observed Bob, glancing at his watch. "By Jove, I didn't know it was so late. I say, old fellow, where are you stopping?"

"At the Astorbilt."

"Suppose I stop there for you in about an hour? I should like to have you dine with me. We shall have more time to talk. I have a few important phone calls to make; I must dress –"

"Certainly," said Harry, rising. "I shall return to the hotel, to expect you between seven and half after –"

"Between half after seven and eight," suggested Bob.

AS his visitor waited, Bob turned to the desk. Two letters were there, addressed to Robert Galvin.

Bob noted that Harry Vincent was observing them. He sidled over and picked up the letters quickly, turning them so his visitor could not see the addresses. He called for Briggs. The man entered and Bob gave him the letters.

"Take care of these right away," he said in an undertone. "When you go out. Understand?"

Briggs nodded. Bob turned to shake hands with Harry Vincent. Briggs ushered the visitor to the door. When he returned, Bob was at the telephone.

"Keep on the lookout, Briggs," he said, in a low voice, as he covered the mouthpiece of the instrument. "Be sure that bird has gone."

"He's left, all right," said Briggs, moving toward the door.

Bob was talking to some one now. He was discussing the man who had just left. Briggs divined from the conversation, that the Chief was on the other end of the wire.

"If this guy Vincent is O.K.," said Bob, "we've got to get busy before these birds show up from South Africa. But he may be a phony sent by The Shadow to work in with me.

"If that's the case, I've planted the idea with him. He saw those fake letters addressed to Bob Galvin. He saw me give them to Briggs –"

His voice cut off as he listened. Briggs knew that he was getting instructions. Bob uttered the word "yes" at intervals as he kept the receiver close against his ear. His face bore a smile when he laid aside the telephone.

HANDS IN THE DARK

"It's all set, Briggs," Bob said. "You go down to Brindle's. Keep your eye out for Moose Shargin. Hand him the letters and give him this note."

Bob seized a sheet of paper and scrawled a few lines in pencil. He folded the message and handed it to Briggs.

"Tell Moose to tear it up," he added, "but drop the pieces. Say it low just make sure that Moose is wise. He'll probably know what to do, anyway. Don't act suspicious, whatever you do."

"Wait, now don't say a word to Moose unless he doesn't tear the note. Get me? You'll probably be watched while you're there; but don't let on."

BRIGGS put the note in his pocket, with the letters. He left the house and walked leisurely to the nearest elevated station.

Some twenty minutes afterward, he arrived at Brindle's. He took a table in a corner and waited. Moose Shargin appeared, accompanied by Garry Elvers. They sat near by.

Briggs moved over and spoke to Shargin as one would address an acquaintance. He laid the letters and the note on the table as he spoke.

The gang leader did not refer to the note until Briggs had stepped away. He opened it rather slyly and noted its contents.

Shargin's hands dropped beneath the edge of the table as he tore the paper and let the pieces flutter to the floor. He glanced at his watch.

"Kind of early, Garry," Shargin said. "Let's drop down the street and kill an hour at the News Reel Theater. They're showing some shots of Jake Bernie being quizzed on that kidnapping he pulled."

The men left the restaurant and strolled to the theater. It had one entrance and one exit, that led back to Broadway.

Back in Brindle's, Briggs was finishing a sandwich. He left the cafe shortly afterward.

Following his departure, a middle-aged man entered the restaurant and chanced to take the table where Moose and Garry had been. The man ate slowly and thoughtfully, apparently paying no attention to the people about him.

When he left the restaurant, the torn pieces of paper were no longer on the floor. When they came to light, they showed beneath the dash lamp of an automobile, which was parked on a side street near Broadway. Two long, white hands deftly united the fragments so the message could be read.

Leave with your friend at nine o'clock. Will wait until I hear from you at destination. Will join you then.

The dash lamp was extinguished. A soft laugh sounded within the car as this man slipped out into the darkness.

Only a shadow moved along the sidewalk. It reached Broadway and its shape was lost. It reappeared, a motionless blotch, outside the exit of the News Reel Theater. It was still there when Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers came from the movie house.

As the gangsters walked up Broadway, the patch of darkness followed them.

Hiram Mallory's theory had worked. He had counted on The Shadow to follow any trail that might lead to the imprisoned Bob Galvin.

Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers were the two redoubtable personages who were leading Mallory's enemy into the trap!

CHAPTER XVII. INTO THE TRAP

MOOSE SHARGIN and Garry Elvers stopped by a pair of steps that led to a basement door. They were in the heart of New York's Chinatown. They were standing outside a spot well known to those members of the underworld who knew the ways of the Chinese. This was the lair of Wing Toy.

The gang leader and his bodyguard held a muffled conversation. They looked around them suspiciously; then, as though satisfied that no one was watching, they descended the steps.

They did not glance behind them as they tapped upon the door at the foot of the steps. Even when the barrier opened mechanically, they glanced only straight before them as they entered.

Hence, they did not see a shadowy form that almost floated across the narrow street to merge with the darkness of the cracked stone steps.

Shargin and his underling were in a long, dilapidated passage. The wall on the right was blank, save for a single door some twenty feet ahead. On the left were various doors all closed. These indicated that the place had once been a hop joint. Now it showed signs of disuse.

The only person in the passage was a tall, solemn-faced Mongolian. He had pressed the button to admit the gangsters. Now he was standing by what appeared to be his accustomed post the single door on the right of the passage.

The corridor terminated in a heavy metal door, which evidently led to a large room at the end of the passage.

Moose, with the air of one familiar with his surroundings, approached the Mongolian guard and muttered a few words.

The big Chinaman scanned the speaker's face in the gloom and grunted an expression of assent. He pressed a button beside the door.

A minute passed; then came a buzzing sound. The door pushed open as Moose pressed against it. The gang leader entered, with Garry at his heels.

Here was a strange passageway. Gloomier than the other corridor and narrower, it led to a short flight of steps.

The men went up to a landing, with a door at the left. Then they descended the same number of steps. The passage turned to the right at a right angle.

Along this they walked; then arrived at another turn to the right. This portion of the passage brought them to an abrupt ending, with a closed door at the right.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Shargin knocked. There was another buzz. The door opened. The gangsters stepped into a strange, dimly lighted den.

THIS room, square in shape, was situated completely within the four passages which the visitors had followed. That, in itself, was an oddity; but the appearance of the room was even more remarkable.

It was a peculiar medley of Oriental lavishness and Occidental practicability.

The main furnishings of the room were Chinese. The paneled walls were decorated with painted dragons. The chairs, the single couch, and all the trappings, were bizarre. Taborets, splendid in color, served as stools.

Yet, in the midst of this Pekinese setting was a roll-topped desk with swivel chair and a dial telephone of French style.

The single occupant of the room was himself a mingling of West and East. He was a Chinaman whose parchmentlike face would have befitted a Tibetan lama.

He was garbed in American clothing, but his garments were a somber black, save for his white shirt and collar, and the stiff, white cuffs that showed at his wrists.

He was Wing Toy, the modernesque Tong leader, under whose regime the devastating wars of Chinatown had come to an abrupt ending.

Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers stood in the presence of the Celestial big shot.

Wing Toy waved them to seats. Moose chose a curved Chinese chair. Garry rested himself upon a taboret.

The Chinaman looked peacefully at Moose, as though waiting for the gangster to state his errand. Moose responded.

"How's the guy making out?" questioned the gang leader, inclining his head toward the opposite wall.

"As usual," responded Wing Toy.

"That's good," commented Moose. "We'd figured on getting him out of here before this, but –"

"There is no hurry," declared Wing Toy.

"I know that," declared Moose. "But we're up against a tough situation, Wing Toy. You remember what you told me when I brought him here that if any one else came for him, there would be trouble –"

"I remember."

"Well, we figure that some one is coming for him; and we want the trouble to land."

Wing Toy placidly awaited an explanation.

"There's one guy," stated Moose, "just one, who is wise to the fact that we took this fellow Galvin away."

"A policeman?"

"No."

WING TOY shrugged his shoulders. He was indifferent to any forces other than those of the law. Not because he feared them, but because it was his policy to keep in their good graces.

Wing Toy, as a power, had brought peace to Chinatown. He took his tributes from the leaders of small tongs. He engaged in the opium business only indirectly.

Detectives found him useful and helpful. They never bothered him. He was applying the racket idea to the Americanized Chinese.

This was known to Moose Shargin; hence the gangster understood the Chinaman's shrug. Nevertheless, he was anxious to convince Wing Toy that a real menace existed.

"Did you ever hear of The Shadow?" asked Moose.

"The Shadow?"

"Yes; the bird that tries to crimp anything he thinks is crooked, but doesn't need the cops to help him –"

Wing Toy nodded suddenly.

"Yes," he declared, "I have heard of him. Once a long time ago this Shadow made trouble with some Chinese. He is the one that seeks your prisoner?"

"Yes. We've been watching for him, but so far, he has laid low. So we're trying the decoy stuff. We've played it so he knows where we have gone. He may be on our trail now."

"That was not wise," observed Wing Toy. "It would have been better to have led him to some other place."

"You don't know The Shadow. He's uncanny, that bird. Even now, it's a safe bet that he knows we're giving him some leads. But he won't stop at any danger.

"If he knows where Galvin is, he'll come there. So we figured it was best to bring him here. There's another reason, too, Wing Toy. We knew that if anybody could trap him, you could."

The Chinaman showed no notice of the compliment.

"I have no quarrel with The Shadow," he said.

"That doesn't make any difference," declared Moose. "We have! You're watching Galvin, aren't you? If The Shadow comes here, it's your job –"

"It is my job to take care of those who come here. Not those who are brought –" Wing Toy hesitated thoughtfully, and raised his hand for silence as Moose began an objection. "But there is a certain justice in your request. You are bringing The Shadow here yet he is coming of his own free will. Is that correct?"

Moose nodded.

"Therefore," said Wing Toy, in his slow, careful English, "while you yourselves would like to trap him, you feel that only I am capable."

HANDS IN THE DARK

"That's it," said Moose, in a complimentary tone.

"Then," declared the Chinaman, "it shall be what you call fifty-fifty."

"How's that?"

"I shall show you how to catch The Shadow. You shall do the catching."

"Great!" exclaimed Moose, with a sidelong glance toward the silent Garry.

"You say that The Shadow does not fear danger?" questioned Wing Toy.

"He'll go anywhere," declared Moose. "But they say he is as clever as a fox."

"The fox is clever," said Wing Toy, "but it is man who has declared him clever. So man is clever as the fox. So we say in China, where man traps the fox, but the fox never traps man. Look."

He arose and walked to the far wall. He pressed a hidden spot. A panel slid to one side, revealing a low, narrow opening.

This explained the landing in the passage. Ostensibly giving access to a side room, the landing also allowed for this short tunnel. Wing Toy pointed to a dim door at the end of the cavity.

"There is the prisoner," he said. "Behind that door. Could you find this opening? Would you care to enter?"

The panel closed as Moose Shargin answered.

"I couldn't find it," he declared. "You remember how I tried? I've seen you open it half a dozen times yet it beats me."

"Answer my other question. Would you care to enter it, if you did find it?"

"No, I don't think I would."

"Very good. People are not supposed to find that place. They are not supposed to enter it. Come here."

Moose advanced to a spot slightly to the left of the mechanical panel.

"Try to find an opening here," suggested Wing Toy.

The gangster ran his hand up and down the wall. Suddenly he touched a secret spring even though his touch was blundering.

A duplicate panel opened. It revealed another short tunnel, with a door at the other end. A light shone through a tiny round window, like through a porthole.

With an exclamation of surprise, Moose entered the short passage and put his eyes to the window. He came back with a questioning look on his face.

"I can see into Galvin's room from there," he said. "He's asleep —"

HANDS IN THE DARK

"That is not important," said Wing Toy. "You found the spring, did you not?"

"Sure. It was easy."

"You went through the opening, did you not?"

"Sure. I wanted to see through that little window in the door."

"There is no door," declared Wing Toy. "That is a wall, at the other end. A wall, made to look like a door. The window is of glass that cannot be broken."

"What's the idea?"

The Chinaman walked across the room, opened a closet to reveal an electric switch on a panel.

He pulled the switch. A sheet of steel dropped like a curtain, closing the panel. Both Shargin and Elvers uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"That little tunnel," explained Wing Toy, "goes also under the landing. But it is made easy to find. It is made to coax people to enter.

"When one person enters it, another person, in this closet, can make that person stay."

"A trap!" exclaimed Moose.

"The Chinese look for secret places," said Wing Toy solemnly. "Some of them have found this. They have gone in, because that little window has coaxed them. Never has one failed to go in. Never has one come out – by himself."

"Why?"

The Chinaman pointed to a cord beside the switch. "When this is drawn," he explained, "a gas will enter that closed tunnel. That gas will kill."

"I get you!" exclaimed Moose. "You figure we can let The Shadow come in here, find the tunnel and go in then some one in this closet –"

Wing Toy nodded. He indicated an opening in the carved door of the closet. It made a perfect peephole, so that a man hidden there could see what happened in the room.

"Who will be there?" asked Moose.

The Chinaman pointed to Garry Elvers.

"But if The Shadow knows we came in here," objected Moose, "he'll wonder why Garry hasn't come out –"

"I shall take care of that," said Wing Toy. He picked up a hat and overcoat from a taboret in the corner. Donning the garments, he pointed to the door.

The three men went through the right-angled passages until they came to the outer door. There, Wing Toy pressed a latch. They stepped out into the corridor.

HANDS IN THE DARK

The Mongolian guard, his hands nestled in his bosom, leaned forward to scan the faces of Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers, as though to make sure that they were the two men who had entered.

Moose had not noticed the man's face before. Even now, it was obscure in the dimness. But he detected an odd sparkle in the eyes. They seemed to glow like beads of light in the hollows of that yellow face.

The big Chinaman appeared to be staring at the visitor through a mask.

During this scrutiny, the Mongolian's back was toward Wing Toy. Having finished his inspection of Shargin, the big man studied Elvers. He then turned to the door to make sure that it was tightly closed.

He did not face Wing Toy at all. The Tong leader spoke while the big man's back was turned. Wing Toy's words were in Chinese; the Mongolian uttered a low reply in the same language. Wing Toy spoke again, the man grunted a reply.

Wing Toy motioned to Moose and Garry to follow as he went toward the street door.

The three stood within the door, Wing Toy speaking in a low undertone while he glanced back at the guardian of the door.

"When we get out of here," he said, "make it plain that we are separating to rejoin later. Then if we are overheard –"

Moose and Garry nodded.

"You" Wing Toy indicated Garry "go to the Manchu Restaurant, in the next street." He drew a card from his coat pocket and slipped it into Garry's hand. "Ask for Looey Look. Give him this. He will take you back to the room.

"You" Wing Toy turned to Moose "go in there a little later. Also ask for Looey Look. You will find me there."

"What about the guy by the door?" Moose indicated the big Mongolian with his thumb.

"He will follow directly after us."

Wing Toy threw a last look toward the big guard. Wing Toy's brow furrowed slightly. He watched. The man made no movement whatever.

The Tong leader seemed satisfied. He opened the door to the street.

GARRY ELVERS separated from his companions while Moose was talking rather loudly to Wing Toy. Glancing back over his shoulder, Garry saw the two men walk away in the opposite direction.

Garry strolled around the block, spied the door of the Manchu Restaurant, and entered. He asked for Looey Look.

Garry was taken to a Chinaman who wore a perfect-fitting Tuxedo. Looey Look received the card.

"Come in the office," said Look.

HANDS IN THE DARK

He led the way up a flight of steps, turned abruptly, and went into a little room. He closed the door and opened a full-length mirror from the wall. This revealed a passage.

Garry followed him to the end; there Looey Look pushed open a barrier and they entered another room. This opening also proved to be a mirror. The Chinaman unlocked a door.

Garry found himself on the little landing in the labyrinth of passages that surrounded Wing Toy's sanctum.

"Go on," said Looey Look. "Pull the knob. The door will open."

Garry obeyed. He reached Wing Toy's room, closed the door behind him, and bestowed himself in the closet.

Garry was no schemer, yet he understood Wing Toy's cleverness. The door to the room was tricky; so was the panel on the opposite wall, although now that Garry knew of it, he could almost see its edges from the peephole.

These tricks were not too apparent; nor were they too easy to discover.

Garry saw the door of the room tremble. He held his hand against the switch. The door opened.

Garry had expected to see a black-clad form come into the dim light. Instead, it was a Chinaman who entered.

Garry recognized the man as the Mongolian guard, not by the face, which Garry had not noticed closely, but by the man's posture.

The big Chinaman stood in the center of the room and looked about him. Garry wondered what he was doing here. The man was disobeying orders. Wing Toy had told him to leave at least, so Wing Toy had said.

The Chinaman was scrutinizing every part of the room. Garry could see his eyes gleam. The gangster sensed danger from this man.

With his left hand still on the switch, Garry drew an automatic with his right. No use to let this fellow spoil the game. Garry decided to step out of the closet and order the man to depart.

At that instant, something made the gangster delay.

The Chinaman was looking at the secret panel that led to the blind tunnel. He strode across the room and placed his hand upon it. The panel opened suddenly. The man walked in.

Acting instinctively, Garry pulled the switch. The steel curtain dropped.

Garry laughed gleefully, like a child with a new plaything. He had trapped the intruder the man who had disobeyed!

Still chuckling mercilessly, Garry reached for the cord to release the flow of gas.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE TRAP IS SPRUNG

GARRY ELVERS smiled as his fingers felt the smooth rope. His murderous instinct was at its highest pitch. He had shot men down in gang wars; but never before had he known the elation of tricking a victim to his

unexpected doom.

Garry's killings had usually been followed by flight. Here was his first chance to gloat over a helpless foe. He paused to wonder whether the gas would poison or simply overpower.

In that moment of hesitation, Garry realized that he was making a mistake. He had been placed here to trap The Shadow not to capture and dispose of a prying Chinaman.

Suppose he should overpower or kill the man. What would Wing Toy say? Garry had no desire to incur the disfavor of the Tong leader.

But there was another thought more restraining than the first one. That was the thought of Moose Shargin. A mental picture formed in Garry's mind. Moose, indignant at his stupidity for wasting the trap that had been laid for The Shadow!

Garry was worrying as he let go the cord and pushed open the door of the closet.

Suppose The Shadow should arrive now!

The gangster realized that there was only one course: to release the Chinaman and send him away before The Shadow came.

Garry strode across the room and listened by the steel curtain. He heard a methodical tapping. Had it been hurried or violent, Garry would have been tempted to ignore it. But there was no sign of terror or excitement on the part of the man within. The tapping convinced Garry that he was in error.

Perhaps the Mongolian had misunderstood Wing Toy's orders delivered in Chinese. At any rate, the slow, methodical raps indicated that the prisoner was simply signaling for his release, and appeared to be in no great haste.

Cautiously retreating, Garry pulled the switch. The steel curtain rose.

Covering the tunnel with his automatic, Garry approached. The Chinaman came blandly forth, his shoulders stooped, his hands crossed upon his breast. He grinned at Garry.

The gangster still held his revolver leveled.

"What did you come here for?" Garry demanded.

"Wing Toy, he say comee here," replied the Chinaman, in pidgin English. "He say lookee to see if man all rightee in there. He say comee soon lookee then go away. I comee too late."

"You're lucky," declared Garry, pointing over his left shoulder with his thumb. "I was going to pull that rope. Then it would have been curtains for you. But when I heard you tapping, I let you out."

"Veele good. You wanee me go now?"

"Yeah," growled Garry. He was staring at the Chinaman's hands. There seemed to be a slight bulge in the gown beneath them, as though something was hidden there. "You go fast and don't come back. Savvy?"

The Chinaman nodded. Garry glanced into his face. Now, like Moose Shargin, Garry noticed the singular,

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masklike appearance of those features, with the sparkling eyes that stared from deep hollows.

Their effect was almost hypnotic. The gangster's watchfulness dwindled momentarily; then, seized by a vague suspicion, he started to raise the gun that he had lowered unthinkingly, while his left hand shot out to seize the Chinaman's wrist.

But Garry was too late. Before his finger could press the trigger of the automatic, the yellow-faced man was upon him.

The man's left hand wrested the automatic from Garry's grasp. His right arm warded aside the gangster's clutch and, continuing upward, dealt a solid blow to Garry's chin. The gangster staggered. Before he could recover, the Chinaman clutched him in a jujutsu hold.

Garry, struggling, was hoisted upward; his body revolved in mid-air and landed flat on the floor. The gangster lay stunned.

The victor did not hesitate. His robe slipped from his body. A folded mass of black cloth fell upon the floor beside the unconscious gangster.

The ex-Chinaman leaned over the form of Garry Elvers, scrutinizing the victim's features. There, in that weird, dim room, an amazing transformation was taking place.

Moose Shargin, at that precise moment, was sitting in a little office on the balcony at the rear of the Manchu Restaurant. He had been ushered there by Looey Look, for whom he had inquired. The restaurant manager had just returned from his trip with Garry Elvers when Shargin arrived.

Wing Toy had not yet appeared. Hence Moose was alone with his thoughts, in the plainly furnished office. He sat in a chair and stared at a metal plate on the wall, above the telephone.

There were several small electric bulbs on the plate; One of them was lighted. Moose wondered what it meant. He waited several minutes. Then he heard a noise at the door, and Wing Toy entered.

"We shall wait here," said the Tong leader, seating himself opposite Moose.

The gang leader was about to speak when Wing Toy suddenly noticed the light on the wall plate. For once the placid Chinaman registered surprise.

"That light!" he exclaimed. "When did it turn on?"

"It's been on," replied Moose.

"Since you came in?"

"Yes."

"Come!"

Moose followed Wing Toy. He was conducted through the mirrored room, following the route which Garry had traversed with Looey Look. Wing Toy explained as they went.

"That light," he said, "connects with the door where my guard stands. It means that the door has been

opened."

"You opened it when we went out."

"I mean it has been opened since then. I fixed the switch. Some one has come in!"

"The Shadow!"

"Hush!" warned Wing Toy.

They were on the landing of the angled passage. The Tong leader moved with feline stealth. Moose duplicated the action. The door of Wing Toy's sanctum was open.

An automatic gleamed in the Chinaman's hand. Moose brought his own gat into view. Cautiously, the two peered into the door. Garry Elvers was seated at the desk, his head turned toward the steel curtain, which was lowered.

"Garry!" The exclamation came from Shargin.

The man at the desk faced the door and grinned.

"Did you get him?" Shargin queried.

Garry nodded.

Wing Toy was staring at the open door of the closet. He went there, but did not touch the switch. He noted that the cord had been pulled.

"He's out," he said to Shargin.

"Dead?" queried Moose.

"No. The gas does not kill. That follows."

Wing Toy clicked a switch lower on the wall. A humming sound followed the Tong leader's action.

"What's that?" asked Moose.

"A fan," explained Wing Toy. "An electric fan. It will clear the gas from the tunnel. Then we can enter."

THE businesslike Chinaman studied a watch on his wrist, while the other men looked on curiously. After three minutes, Wing Toy turned the upper switch. The steel curtain rose.

All three moved forward to peer into the tunnel. At first it seemed empty; then the glare of Wing Toy's flashlight revealed a huddled form in black, at the far end of the tunnel.

Moose Shargin paused gingerly on the threshold. Garry stood by, holding his automatic.

"Go in," observed Wing Toy. "Do not worry. The gas cannot fail. The man is unconscious."

Moose entered. He clutched the black cloak and found it loose upon the man's shoulders. He lifted it, with the

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slouch hat that adorned the victim's head. He turned and tossed the objects into the room, grinning in the light of Wing Toy's flash.

"Is it The Shadow?" questioned the Chinaman calmly.

"It's him, all right," chuckled Moose. "I'll drag him out. Stay there with your gat, Garry, just to be on the safe side. We can't be too careful with this bird!"

He entered the tunnel as he spoke, and turned back to speak to Wing Toy. "Let's have that light in here, so I can spot this guy's mug."

The Tong leader stepped into the tunnel and held his light over Moose Shargin's shoulder. The huddled man lay face downward.

Moose raised the head and turned it upward. An exclamation of utter dumfoundedness shot from his parted lips.

The light revealed the face of Garry Elvers!

Even as the cry came from Moose, there was a sharp clang at the mouth of the tunnel. The man in the room the one they had taken for Garry had pressed the switch. The trappers were trapped!

"The Shadow!" blurted Moose. "In the room! It's him! The gas he's got us –"

There was only a slight twinge of grimness in Wing Toy's reply. Even in this predicament, the Tong leader was unruffled.

"The gas container is empty," he said. "We must wait here until Looney comes. He will release us. But it may be long before he comes."

While Moose Shargin fumed as he crouched above the helpless form of the real Garry Elvers, Wing Toy silently approached the little porthole window and stared into the room where the prisoner was. The room had only one dim light, hence the glow through the little window was extremely weak.

"Look," said Wing Toy.

Moose came to the window. What he saw brought new imprecations from him.

Bob Galvin, haggard even in the obscure light, was rising from a couch in the corner. The prisoner was staring in wonderment.

Before him stood a man clad in black The Shadow, wearing the very garments that Moose had thrown from the tunnel!

"He is very clever," declared Wing Toy, from the darkness behind Moose. "He has done what no man ever did before. He has found the secret lock to the panel of the real tunnel."

"He's taking Galvin away!" snarled Shargin. "Making a clean get-away. Can't you stop him?"

"There is no way to stop him," replied Wing Toy, in the tone of a fatalist.

"He'll get us for this!" groaned Moose. "You and me both, Wing Toy – like he trapped Garry, here how, nobody knows."

"I have no quarrel with The Shadow," said Wing Toy calmly. "He is a wise man. That I can see. He is dangerous to those who oppose him. He will know that this is your work not mine."

Another snarl from Moose Shargin told what was happening more effectively than if the gang leader had spoken words.

In obedience to The Shadow's command, the prisoner was leaving the room where he had been so long confined. He seemed weak and unsteady. The Shadow was aiding him.

As the two men disappeared from Shargin's view, the one in black turned momentarily toward the little window. Moose saw the glimmer of his eyes. Then he began to understand.

They were the eyes of the Chinese guard the man who had looked at him and Garry, but who had avoided the gaze of Wing Toy!

"He knocked out your guard!" exclaimed Moose, to Wing Toy. "The guy outside the door while we were planning in here. It was him you told to go away and he answered you in your own lingo!"

"You'll find your man lying cold in one of those old hop rooms. Then The Shadow must have come in here and fooled Garry knocked him unconscious, too fixed himself up to look like Garry laying for us –"

The remainder of Moose Shargin's disjointed explanation became incoherent. Rage was overcoming the thwarted gang leader.

Unaided, The Shadow had deceived watchful eyes, had overpowered two men and had captured the others in their own snare; had found the secret of Wing Toy's panel!

Bob Galvin had escaped and The Shadow was gone!

As he waited in the gloom, fuming while Wing Toy quietly looked forward to the arrival of assistance, Moose Shargin fancied that he heard a sinister sound.

Even in the depths of that steel-walled trap, his ears seemed to catch the mocking laugh of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XIX. THE SHADOW'S DISCOVERY

BRIGGS opened the front door of the Galvin mansion. He recognized the man who was standing on the steps. It was Harry Vincent.

"Hello," said Harry. "Is Mr. Galvin at home?"

"Yes, sir," replied Briggs, promptly, "but he is not feeling well, sir. Didn't you get my master's message at the Astorbilt?"

"No."

Briggs feigned surprise.

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"It was a little while after you left," he said. "Mr. er Mr. Galvin had a sudden attack of dizziness. He called in a doctor, who told him to go to bed and rest. So he called up the Astorbilt and left word for you to er to call him to-morrow."

"I didn't receive the message," said Harry, quietly.

He knew that Briggs was lying; at the same time, Harry was making a pretense. He was giving the impression that he had been waiting a long while at the Astorbilt.

As a matter of fact, he had been watching this very front door for the past three hours. He had returned to his post after having cleverly trailed Briggs to Brindle's Cafe, and had remained outside the restaurant until Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers had appeared.

Harry had not recognized the gangsters. They had not known him. But a man walking close behind them had given Harry a quick signal which meant he was no longer needed.

Harry had departed, and had arrived near the old Galvin mansion before Briggs had returned. He had seen Briggs go in; but the false Bob Galvin had not come out.

So Harry had not been to the Astorbilt at all. He had phoned to a special number, and had heard Burbank answer. He had been told that the Astorbilt would be informed that Mr. Vincent would not be there if any one inquired. Burbank, Harry knew, had attended to that.

So Harry had waited, in the darkness of a parked coupe on the other side of the narrow street, ready to follow the false Bob Galvin, should the man appear.

Harry lingered hesitatingly on the front steps; then he bade Briggs good night and started to the street. The big man watched him. He stepped out from the shelter of the front door in order to keep Harry in view for a few seconds longer.

So intent was Briggs that he did not notice a vague shadowy form that crept upward beside him. Like an apparition, it slipped through the open front door. Briggs turned and reentered the house.

As the door closed behind him, Briggs felt himself seized in an overpowering grasp. His assailant worked quickly and with telling effect. A strong forearm pressed so firmly against the big man's throat that not even a gurgle came from his lips.

Briggs crumpled upon the floor. In a few seconds, he was gagged and securely bound. A hand from the darkness reopened the front door. There was a low, indistinguishable hiss.

Two men came from a car across the street, one leaning unsteadily upon the other. They entered the darkened hallway and moved quietly across the room into gloomy light. Their faces were revealed.

One was Harry Vincent, grim and purposeful. The other was the real Bob Galvin, pale and tired-looking.

Again that hiss a soft sibilant sound. Harry stopped beside a large comfortable chair. He placed Bob Galvin in it.

Then came a low whisper from the man in the darkness. His black, shadowy form moved into the gloom and stood close beside Harry.

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"Look for Maddox," came the soft words. "He may be in the study."

Harry nodded. He saw the black form glide across the hallway and merge with the darkened stairs. The Shadow was gone on a search of the second floor. He had left the ground floor to Harry.

The young man drew an automatic and moved uncertainly in the direction of the study. He saw a gleam of light around a corner. He advanced and reached the study door. With revolver leveled, ready for instant use, he peered into the lighted room.

It was empty. The false Bob Galvin was not there.

Harry returned to the foot of the stairs. He then went over and sat beside Bob Galvin. There was another sibilant sound through the gloom.

"He's not in the study," Harry reported, in a low voice.

"Take Galvin in," came a whisper.

Harry helped Bob Galvin into the study. Hardly had they seated themselves, before a huge form appeared in the doorway. It was Briggs, bound and gagged, being carried by invisible arms.

Lifted from the floor, the big man appeared tremendous. His body swung forward and was laid in the center of the room. Above it stood a man clad in black, his face hidden beneath the broad-brim of a dark hat, his chin obscured by the upturned collar of his sable cloak.

Briggs opened his frightened eyes and stared at the grim form above him. The Shadow leaned forward and slipped the gag from the man's mouth.

"Where is Maddox?" came the sibilant question.

"I don't know," replied Briggs, weakly. He could see two glaring eyes staring into his face.

"When did he leave here?" was the next question.

"While I was out."

"While you were at Brindle's?"

"Yes."

THE SHADOW knew that Briggs was speaking the truth. Whatever mission Bob Maddox had gone upon to-night, Briggs was in ignorance of it. The man gained his tongue and tried to explain, for he feared The Shadow.

"Bob must have got a call while I was out," he said. "He was figuring on something that's all I know. He's gone. Where I don't know."

The gag was replaced. The Shadow carried Briggs from the room. When he returned, he spoke to Harry Vincent, while Bob Galvin, weak and wondering, looked on and listened.

"Briggs is in the side vestibule," spoke The Shadow. "Knocked out. Do not worry about him. He is yellow."

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Stay here with Galvin.

"Call in Perkins, the chauffeur. Tell him enough to let him know that there is danger. Burke will come here later.

"Keep on watch. Surprise Maddox if he returns but he may not return."

There was a significant emphasis in The Shadow's final words. Harry understood. He knew that this man of the night intended to find the man who had posed as Bob Galvin, and he knew that the pretender would not fare well in the encounter.

"Take him upstairs," continued The Shadow, indicating Bob Galvin with a sweep of his black-gloved hand.

Harry arose and helped Bob from the room. The rescued man was regaining his steadiness now. His confinement in Wing Toy's dungeon had been only temporarily weakening.

After the two were gone, The Shadow seated himself before the flat-topped desk. He made two phone calls. One was to Burbank, comfortably ensconced in a room across the street from Hiram Mallory's home. The other was to Clyde Burke.

After receiving short reports, The Shadow sat in deep thought. For a few minutes, there was no motion of his black-clad form. Then came a low, soft laugh.

THE SHADOW stepped back from the desk. Quickly, he began to search its contents, looking for some clew that might be of value to him.

He had searched here before but that had been some time ago. The Shadow laid a few articles upon the desk, among them the old address book used by Theodore Galvin.

A black glove slipped away from a long white hand. Off came the other glove. The fire-opal gleamed upon its slender, tapered finger a finger that combined shapeliness with strength.

The hands began to write, inscribing short, terse statements.

They do not yet know the purpose of the paper which they have found.

The hands carefully traced the eight mysterious symbols. A soft laugh came from the man in black as he wrote again:

They have sought to learn of it through friends of Theodore Galvin. There have been two interviews.
Tonight a third

There was a pause. Then the hand wrote two names:

Harkness.

Westcott.

A laugh followed instantly. Then the hand inscribed one name above the eight cryptic characters, and another name below. The top name was Harkness, the bottom name Westcott.

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The Shadow laughed mirthlessly. Here was evidence of the plotters' efforts to decipher the cryptic symbols.

They had figured that a name was indicated. They had gone over the list of Theodore Galvin's friends. They had found two whose names were spelled with eight letters, ending in a double letter.

The white hands were now running through the pages of the address book. Keen eyes were scanning the names registered there.

After one quick search, the hands turned back the pages to the letter M. Under that letter appeared the only other name that fitted with the idea upon which the plotters had been working. The name was Mitchell Zachary Mitchell.

The address book was cast aside. The Shadow had the telephone book. He found the name of Zachary Mitchell. It was listed twice as attorney, Bridgeton Building; residence, an address on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street.

The Shadow spoke into the telephone. He was calling Burbank. He gave quick, short instructions.

Then he arose, whirled toward the door and left the room. A low laugh sounded as the man in black strode toward the front door.

It was not a laugh of pleasure. It was a laugh of grim determination.

CHAPTER XX. THE SHADOW ARRIVES

"So you are Theodore Galvin's nephew," said Zachary Mitchell.

Bob Maddox nodded.

"I remember you as a boy," declared the old, gray-haired lawyer. "You have changed greatly according to my recollections. Ah, well we all change."

"You were a close friend of my uncle's, were you not?"

Zachary Mitchell smiled cannily.

"Scarcely more than an acquaintance," he said. "Yet in reality, his best friend."

Bob Maddox seemed perplexed by this paradoxical statement. But he made no immediate reply.

"I have been quite anxious to meet you," he said. "In fact, I have been waiting here quite a while."

"You should have called me."

"I did call they said you would be back shortly."

"Which meant a couple of hours," smiled Mitchell. "Well, that is one of my peculiar traits. I have never valued time."

"But tell me, have you any special purpose in this visit, other than a friendly call?"

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"Yes," was Bob's answer. "I came, hoping to find some information regarding my uncle. I thought that perhaps you might give it to me."

Zachary Mitchell eyed Bob closely.

"Why do you think that I might have some information?" he asked.

"From what Hodgson said."

"Hodgson?"

"Yes. My uncle's old trusted servant. You know" Bob's voice broke as he pretended sudden sorrow "Uncle Theodore died in Paraguay. I am sure that he would like to have talked to me or to some friend. But he was unable even to write.

"Old Hodgson I sent him away on a vacation, a few days ago spoke to me confidentially and mentioned your name. Until now, I have not had the opportunity to call to see you."

"Ah, yes. What did Hodgson say?"

"Nothing specific. Simply that my uncle had told him I should communicate with you. Evidently my uncle had forebodings when he went away."

"Hm—m—m." Mitchell was thoughtful. "Do you know much about your uncle, Robert?"

Maddox shook his head.

"Then I am going to tell you something about him; something that you must never repeat.

"Theodore Galvin had dealings with certain men I have no knowledge of their identity who were dangerous!"

Bob Maddox raised his eyebrows in well-feigned surprise.

"FOR some reason your uncle feared those men. Perhaps I say this impartially, reviewing the hints that your uncle made privately his own affairs were a trifle er unusual. Perhaps he had definite reasons for going so far away as Paraguay.

"But of one thing I am certain. Your uncle desired to protect something which he possessed namely, wealth."

"His estate is quite small," declared Bob.

"That is on the surface," declared Zachary Mitchell. "I speak now of hidden wealth."

Bob Maddox kept control of himself. Only a gleam in his eye betrayed his restrained interest.

"The fact that you have come to me," said Mitchell, "is proof in itself that you are following instructions from your uncle.

"I was not his attorney. I had no business dealings with him. That is, none, except one which was secret.

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"He knew that I could be trusted. He told me of his possessions, and arranged that I should turn over their key to the right person."

"His heir?"

"Presumably. But the key would be useless to you unless you possess other information.

"I have an envelope that tells specifically of a hiding place somewhere in New York. It describes a room, but finding that room would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack."

"Do you know where it is?"

"No."

Bob Maddox appeared puzzled. Of all his evil adventures, this was the strangest.

Here, in an apartment high above the roaring street, in the quiet sitting-room of an old attorney's suite, he was trying to gain the clew to a mystery that savored of medieval castles and buried treasure that lay beneath moated walls.

"How then can I obtain it?" he asked.

"It may not be intended for you," smiled Mitchell, wanly.

"Why are you telling me about it?" asked Bob.

"Because it will do no harm," was the answer. "I am telling you only because you are Theodore Galvin's heir.

"He left you residuary legatee of his entire estate. I have seen his will and therefore his secret possessions belong to you, if you can find them.

"I have definite instructions. I am to wait for the person who brings me a special paper which your uncle possessed. It gives the clew to the hiding place."

"What is the paper like?"

"I have never seen it. Theodore Galvin told me that I would understand it when I saw it. Without it, I am helpless to aid."

Bob Maddox fumbled in his pocket.

"Is this it?"

He passed over the sheet of paper which he had received at the Cobalt Club. Zachary Mitchell's eyes lighted.

"Where did you get this?" he exclaimed.

"From Thaddeus Westcott."

"Ah, yes. Your uncle must have left it with him."

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"He did leave it with him. To keep until he returned. Or" Bob felt that a lie would help the story "to give to his heir if he did not return."

THE explanation suited Zachary Mitchell. He did not know that Westcott had simply given the paper to Bob because he did not know what else to do with it.

Bob maintained his silence. He made no mention of the fact that this paper was a duplicate of the one which Reynold Barker had found in Theodore Galvin's secret drawer.

Zachary Mitchell was chuckling. His eyes beamed as he studied the paper before him.

"Your uncle was right," he declared. "He said that I would understand. I do understand. Simple, now but I would never have guessed."

"You can solve the code?" questioned Bob, eagerly.

"What code?"

"The code on that paper."

The old man laughed. "This is not a code," he declared.

"Not a code? What –"

"It is a map," said Zachary Mitchell, quietly. "A map of New York streets, with your uncle's house as the starting point.

"Look" Bob leaned forward, intently as Mitchell explained "and observe those double lines. Your uncle's house faces south. You go one square east, then one south.

"Connect the next symbol. Another square south, another east. Connect the next one more east. Then a single square on a diagonal street, running southeast –"

Bob clutched the paper as the old lawyer paused. Here was the clew – the map of New York streets that led to a spot some eleven squares away from the old mansion where Theodore Galvin had lived.

"But what then?" he questioned. "Where will the hiding place be?"

"I have read the instructions in the envelope," declared Mitchell, calmly, now convinced that Bob was fully entitled to all information. "It gives a number and describes a room, telling how the key can be used. That makes it obvious.

"At the end of your trail you will, in all probability, come to one of the many buildings which your uncle erected."

The old man opened a table drawer and drew out an envelope. Bob tore it open and began to read. Mitchell also handed him a key, which Bob took without looking.

"There, in the proper room," said Mitchell, "you will find the hiding place specified. It was probably known to one man only beside your uncle. That is the architect who designed it undoubtedly Richard Harkness –"

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Bob looked up startled at the name. He remembered now that Harkness had been on the point of making a statement when Clink had fired the fatal shot. So that was it! Harkness, to save his life, had intended to speak.

THERE was some sign in Bob's face that startled Zachary Mitchell. The old attorney stared narrowly at the young man.

Bob did not notice the look. He was again reading the contents of the envelope. The telephone rang. Bob looked up again; then resumed his reading as Mitchell answered the phone in a quiet voice.

The lawyer's conversation consisted entirely of short replies. Some one was giving him information, yet the shrewd old attorney did not betray the fact.

He was listening to a quiet voice the voice of Burbank and it was carrying both a warning and an explanation. The Shadow's agent was thwarting the schemes of Bob Maddox and his fellow plotters.

Mitchell hung up the receiver and turned quietly toward his visitor.

"There is something else," he said, calmly. "I had almost forgotten it. Read the letter again."

As Bob Maddox obeyed, the old lawyer reopened the table drawer. He turned.

Bob looked up, to find himself staring in the muzzle of a revolver!

"You filthy crook!" declared Mitchell firmly. "You are not Robert Galvin. You are an impostor! Your name is Maddox. You are one of the crooks whom Theodore Galvin feared!"

Maddox did not deny the impeachment. He cowered momentarily before the threat of the revolver; then regained his bearing. He looked shrewdly at Zachary Mitchell.

"What of it?" he asked. "Old Galvin was crooked, too. He double-crossed the Chief. We're only after what belongs to us."

"Part of it may be yours," declared Mitchell. "But as it now stands, possession has priority."

"Robert Galvin is entitled to whatever wealth may be in that hiding place. You have tried to rob him. Where is he? Murdered?"

"No," replied Maddox, calmly. "He is tucked away somewhere. We didn't want him to make trouble."

"Look here. There's enough of a haul for all of us. If you want a split, we'll give it to you."

"Very considerate," commented Mitchell, sarcastically. "I shall end that little game, right now."

He reached for the telephone with his free hand.

"Wait!" blurted Maddox. "What are you going to do?"

"Turn you over to the police," replied Mitchell, his hand on the receiver. "You will be charged with the abduction of Robert Galvin!"

A CHAOS of thoughts swept through Bob Maddox's brain. The abduction of Robert Galvin! What of the

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murders of Hodgson and Betty Mandell? He was responsible for both!

Desperation seized him. It would be better to die now than later.

As Zachary Mitchell lifted the receiver, Maddox threw himself frantically upon the old lawyer. The gun barked. The shot came too late. Maddox thrust Mitchell's arm aside just as the lawyer pulled the trigger.

They grappled now, and all the advantage lay with the younger man. He held Mitchell's wrist in a powerful clutch.

He was sure that the shot had been fired before the downstairs operator had answered the telephone, for he heard a clicking begin while they were struggling.

They were grimly silent, for Maddox had driven his hand into Mitchell's mouth and had thus prevented an outcry. Now the old man began to weaken. Maddox flung him violently across the room.

Mitchell tumbled as he struck the wall. The revolver clattered on the floor. Maddox leaped to the telephone and placed the receiver on its hook.

He turned, just in time to see Mitchell crawling for the gun. It was almost within the old man's grasp.

Maddox reached in his pocket to pull out his automatic. The gun caught as he hurried.

The old lawyer picked up his revolver. He was on his knees, steadying himself with one hand as he fired hastily with the other. Had his aim been sure, he would have ended the fray. But the old man's strength had gone; his hand wavered and the shot went wide.

Then came an answering report as Maddox loosed a bullet into the lawyer's body. Zachary Mitchell collapsed upon the floor.

Excitedly, Maddox picked up Mitchell's revolver. He gathered the sheet of paper with its mapped symbols, the letter and the key. He stood uncertainly in the center of the room; then spied a small rug near the door.

He stooped forward and turned down one corner of the rug. Then, he hurriedly left the apartment.

Scarcely had the door closed before the man on the floor began to move. Bob Maddox, fearful of further shots, with their attendant noise, had taken it for granted that Zachary Mitchell was dead.

In that he was not far wrong. The old man was dying. But he groped forward along the floor to the chair where Maddox had been sitting.

There his hand encountered the pencil with which the young man had been tracing the plan of the map. With an effort, Mitchell raised himself to the table. On a sheet of paper, he wrote the name of the killer the name he had learned in the telephone warning.

Maddox shot me.

Mitchell's hand faltered. The pencil dropped from nerveless fingers.

With a final effort, Zachary Mitchell reached for the telephone. He could do no more than push the instrument from the table. The receiver came off the hook as the telephone fell to the floor.

The old man lay prone, gurgling incoherently into the mouthpiece of the telephone. Then, he lay still.

The door of the room opened an instant later. Into the apartment strode a tall man in a black cloak, his features hidden by the brim of a slouch hat.

The keen eyes, peering from their shelter, saw everything. The man in black leaned over the body of Zachary Mitchell. The old lawyer was dead.

The Shadow had arrived too late!

CHAPTER XXI. SPOILS TO THE VICTORS

IT was twenty minutes past five o'clock the following afternoon. The day was gloomy; overhanging clouds had brought on a premature evening. Lights were twinkling in the busy streets.

The upper stories of the mammoth Royal Building showed glimmering windows, which were steadily diminishing in number.

From the portals of the mighty skyscraper, the home-going throng of workers was pouring into the traffic-jammed thoroughfare.

High up, as far as the eye could see, were the rows of irregularly lighted windows. Thirty-four stories from the street, the building tapered to a single, monolithic tower.

Where the side portion of the building joined with the central edifice, a keen eye could detect a blank wall atop the thirty-fourth floor. It seemed a trivial bit of space, viewed from the street below. Actually it was eight feet high.

From the street, on this gloomy afternoon, that portion of the building was practically invisible in the gathering gloom and swirling fog.

A man sidled through the throng that was emerging from the building. His overcoat was muffled about his neck. In his hand he carried a large suitcase.

He was not the first who had thus entered the Royal Building during the past quarter hour. Like those who had gone before him, the man was inconspicuous in the crowd.

"Three four two eight," the man muttered.

He entered an express elevator, which had just discharged a load of living freight. In a few seconds, the man was whisking upward, to leave the elevator on the thirty-fourth floor, nearly four hundred feet above the street below.

He walked along a corridor, reached its end, and paused before a door which bore the number 3428. He tapped lightly. The door opened.

The man joined a group in the unlighted room. He threw aside his overcoat. The face of Bob Maddox showed dimly in the dusk.

THE men talked in low whispers. There were five in the room, now; five arch-plotters men of evil deeds and brutal methods.

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Hiram Mallory stood in a corner, a quiet, deceiving smile registered upon his face. Beside him was Briggs, expressionless. The others were Moose Shargin and Garry Elvers.

The gang leader was hard-faced. His bodyguard appeared pale.

"Easy, now," came Hiram Mallory's whisper. He looked approvingly at the suitcases which the men had brought. "This is the clean-up, to-night. After this we go our own ways."

A low buzz of approval greeted his words.

"We have tricked The Shadow," declared the evil old man. "I shall report for myself and Briggs. Then let me hear your statements.

"Last night, Briggs was captured by The Shadow. He was bound in a vestibule of the old Galvin house. He escaped and came to me.

"I had heard, by that time, of Robert Galvin's escape. I decided that young Galvin had been taken back to his uncle's home and was protected there. That proved to be correct.

"Briggs and I slipped away from my home. We have baffled all pursuit. We came here a few minutes ago, confident that we have not been followed."

Mallory turned questioningly toward Moose Shargin.

"Garry and I have been hiding out," declared the gang leader, in a low, gruff voice. "We got pulled out of that tunnel in Wing Toy's place. I phoned you about it.

"You told us to lay low. We did. Nobody, The Shadow included, could know where we've been. We got here tonight, O.K. We've slipped it over on that wise guy!"

Hiram Mallory looked at Maddox.

"Don't worry about me," said Maddox. "I hit out for my hideout as soon as I got away from Mitchell's joint. I dodged plenty, too. Maybe I left something for the bulls to find, but I don't think so.

"I tipped you off, Chief. I've laid low, like you said, after I left the key where you told me."

"You left no bit of evidence concerning this place?" Mallory ascertained.

"Not one bit!"

"You saw no sign of The Shadow?"

"None. Only a call that made Mitchell suspicious a phone call. Maybe it was The Shadow."

"That would mean he was a long way off," commented Mallory, in approval. "You acted wisely, Bob. Do not worry about the police. Have you seen the evening newspapers?"

"No."

"Robert Galvin has been arrested for the murder of Zachary Mitchell."

"What!" exclaimed Bob.

"Certainly. The Shadow has played into our hands," Mallory went on. "It is well that we let Galvin live."

"How did they come to get him?"

"Robert Galvin announced his name when he entered Mitchell's apartment house. He was also seen to leave hurriedly."

"That was me!" Bob informed.

"Certainly," Mallory continued, "but the police don't know that. Inspector Zull made the arrest. Galvin is in jail. Getting the third degree now, in all probability."

Bob Maddox chuckled. This was the final touch!

THE gloom had thickened in the room; Mallory could scarcely see the faces of his companions now.

"Raise that shade higher," he ordered. "We need more light, but we don't want to turn on the electricity."

Briggs obeyed.

"To work," ordered Hiram Mallory.

Bob Maddox took one side of a desk and signed to Moose Shargin to do likewise. They moved the piece of furniture to a spot indicated by Bob, who mounted upon the desk.

The room had a low ceiling. It was fitted with panels. Maddox pressed his hands against a spot above. As he pressed, a panel budged upward and slid to one side. A dark hole was revealed.

Briggs was on the table now, hoisting Maddox into the opening. Hiram Mallory, displaying remarkable agility, came next.

"Leave Garry at the door," he said, as Briggs helped him upward.

Then came Shargin, and finally, Briggs was drawn upward. The panel closed.

Garry Elvers shrugged his shoulders. He drew an automatic from his pocket and stood on guard beside the door.

This afternoon, the gangster was determined to leave nothing to chance. Any intruder would meet his doom.

Garry half hoped The Shadow would appear.

A flashlight clicked above the closed ceiling panel. Exclamations of triumph came simultaneously from the four men above.

They were in a small, square room. Each corner had a short, angled wall. But these corners did not interest them. Before them, on the floor, lay two locked boxes.

Moose Shargin dropped on his knees and pried away the lock from one of the containers. Bob Maddox did

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the same with the other. Hiram Mallory held the flashlight and looked on with Briggs.

The lids of the boxes came open. The light revealed piles of paper, masses of bank notes, and a hoard of glittering gold coins!

"Galvin's pile the old hound!" exclaimed Maddox.

The spoils came out upon the floor. Briggs was with the others, now, helping them stack up piles of twenty-dollar gold pieces, and sheaves of bank notes of large denominations.

"Divvy now?" questioned Shargin, looking toward Mallory.

"Go ahead," said the Chief. "Six piles. Two for me; one for each of you and one for Theodore Galvin, to be divided equally among us."

Bob Maddox was examining the pile of papers. He handed them over to Hiram Mallory.

"Bad stuff, these," he declared. "Evidence that could be used against us if —"

"I'll take care of them," declared Hiram Mallory.

Maddox crept over to the trapdoor and slid it open. He peered into the darkness below; hissed and received a response from Garry Elvers.

"O.K.?" whispered Bob.

"O.K.," came the reply.

"Hoist up those suitcases."

THE bags came up. Garry returned to his post. Maddox closed the trap. The suitcases were opened. The work went on.

Briggs, usually taciturn, grunted with satisfaction as he began to count off a handful of thousand-dollar bills. Maddox rejoined the workers.

"Eighty grand in each pile," declared Moose Shargin, in a pleased growl. "Pretty close to half a million bucks."

Moose began to place the various piles in the suitcases. He stopped to note which one belonged to Hiram Mallory. He put two portions in that one. He laughed as the gold coins jingled.

"Those yeller boys sound nice," was his comment. "But I'm glad there aren't too many of them. They weigh too much."

Bob Maddox divided the sixth portion into four groups and handed them, one by one, to Moose Shargin, to deposit in the different suitcases.

Briggs watched with gleaming eyes. He was slowly calculating amounts. Eighty thousand dollars in each heap twenty thousand from the dead man's share one hundred thousand dollars for each underling, and one hundred and eighty thousand for the Chief!

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The suitcases were closed now. But one thought was in each mind the getaway. Hiram Mallory motioned to the trapdoor. Bob Maddox placed his hand upon it. The old man turned out the flashlight as a precaution.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Moose Shargin, in a greedy tone. "Let's look around some more those corners –"

Before he could complete his statement, a ray of light swept into the room. The four men were blinded by the glare of a powerful electric torch. They held their positions as though petrified.

Instinctively, their hands rose above their heads. The light shone from a corner. In the fringe of its illumination, they could see that the tiny nook had been opened like a door.

They could not see the man behind the light; but a low, weird chuckle reached their ears a chuckle that became a mirthless laugh which brought shudders to their quaking bodies.

"The Shadow!" gasped Hiram Mallory.

"You fools!" came a sinister voice. "Fools, to think that you could elude me! You thought that I did not know what you had learned instead, I was waiting for you to find out what I already knew!

"The paper which you thought was a code, I recognized as a map the same night I saw it. I traced this building and found this place. How? By looking up at the building and observing this very spot a windowless space.

"I have been watching it since then through the eyes of a trusted agent. I have been here. I have discovered the secret of the ceiling.

"I have examined this wealth; and have left it as a snare for thieves.

"Last night, you added another to your list of murders. First, Theodore Galvin a member of your gang.

"Second, Reynold Barker, the man you hired to win his confidence, but who learned his secret after poisoning Galvin by your orders.

"Third, Hodgson.

"Fourth, Richard Harkness.

"Fifth, Zachary Mitchell.

"The last three all innocent of any wrongdoing."

The voice paused while the trapped men trembled.

"You failed in two crimes," declared The Shadow. "You did not kill Thaddeus Westcott. You did not kill Betty Mandell although you thought you succeeded in that cold-blooded murder.

"I saved both of them!"

NOT a single one of the four had made a move. All were dominated by their terrible enemy, the man whose face they could not see, and whose voice came like tones of doom.

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"I need not dwell upon your former crimes," said The Shadow. "I know them all thanks to those papers which Theodore Galvin left with his ill-gotten gains.

"Some of the wealth was rightfully his. It will go to his heirs. The rest will be returned to its owners; those who were robbed by your crimes and schemes Hiram Mallory and Theodore Galvin.

"You were master minds of crime, aided by such lesser crooks as Maddox and Briggs, eliminating enemies with the aid of Shargin and his gang. Covering clews with the help of –"

The sentence was never finished. One of the four had acted. Strangely enough, Briggs was the one to combat The Shadow's strategy.

The big man had been kneeling beside a bag when the blinding light had come. Moose Shargin was beside him. Briggs, with upraised hand, had nudged the gang leader's hip pocket. He had struck the butt of a gun.

Briggs had been waiting. Then, realizing that his hand was virtually out of sight, he had suddenly snatched the gun.

Luck played a great part. Briggs was not only a remarkable shot; he was also left-handed. Shargin's gun was on his right hip. Briggs, seizing it, instantly found the trigger.

As his hand came into view, he fired directly at the light. The cannonlike roar of the automatic ushered in darkness. Briggs had hit the light that The Shadow held!

There was confusion while the roar of the automatic reverberated through the square-walled room. Hiram Mallory's light flashed on, to reveal a black-clad figure prone upon the floor in the corner.

Moose Shargin, weaponless, leaped forward with a snarl. As he did so, two black-clad hands came up from that form. Shargin's leap ended in mid-air as two automatics spurted their flame.

The Shadow had been holding the light away from his body! The shot fired by Briggs had done him no harm!

The Shadow's new strategy had saved him. Briggs had been about to fire when Moose had leaped. Now, as he pressed the trigger with deadly aim, the bullets found a mark, not in The Shadow, but in Moose Shargin, for the gangster's body lay as a protection to the man in black.

Another shot came from the corner. It struck Briggs in the wrist. The big man uttered a cry as the blue gun fell from his hand.

Hiram Mallory, cold and determined, was entering the fray. He had drawn an automatic. So had Bob Maddox.

As Mallory came forward, shooting, The Shadow's bullets smashed the light which he held, and the leaden harbingers of death spelled the old man's doom.

It was more than a battle for possession; it was a fight for self-preservation. Briggs knew it. Clutching his gun in his right hand, he snarled to Bob Maddox, "Come on!"

MORE shots followed. Groans and cries were uttered in the smoke-filled chamber of death.

In the midst of all the furor, a slight grating noise was scarcely audible. Bob Maddox, still crouching, slid

open the trapdoor, and pulled the two nearest suitcases with him as he dropped to safety. He shoved the trap behind him.

Garry Elvers leaped beside him.

"What's happened?" demanded the gangster.

"The Shadow!" exclaimed Maddox, staggering toward the door with the suitcases. "He's up there! Get him!"

Garry leaped upon the table. As he did, a black form seemed to envelop him.

The trapdoor had opened. Garry was wrapped in the folds of The Shadow's cloak.

To the startled eyes of Bob Maddox, staring through the dusk, the man himself had come from above. Maddox held his automatic in readiness.

The Shadow came down with his cloak. He was struggling with Garry, and Maddox could hear the gangster grunting like an enraged beast.

The fighting men were by the window. Maddox could discern the flapping cloak. Simultaneously he heard two sounds a choking, and a cry from Garry. He knew that the gangster was throttling The Shadow.

Then, as though propelled by a desperate effort, the black-cloaked form was uplifted. The cloak fell free, but the man crashed, head-foremost, through the pane of the window off on a four-hundred foot fall to the street!

Garry had finished The Shadow!

But Maddox did not wait to extend congratulations. He had realized that one of the suitcases which he held contained because of its weight the share of the swag that belonged to Hiram Mallory. In his hands, Maddox held no less than two hundred and eighty thousand dollars!

The shots above had been muffled. Yet some one might have heard them. Maddox did not know who might be alive in that room above. Why should he wait to share, when every instant might bring discovery closer?

Even as the form in the black cloak was crashing through the glass toward its terrible doom, Bob Maddox turned the knob of the door.

In another instant, he was gone, with a fortune in his grasp!

CHAPTER XXII. AT HEADQUARTERS

BOB GALVIN nodded wearily as he faced Acting Inspector Herbert Zull. He was undergoing the third degree, weakening before the brutal tactics of the police officer. Zull bore a reputation for two things: brutality and results.

Another man was present, taking notes. This was Crowell, the young detective. It was one of his first experiences in watching Zull's methods. He sighed in relief when Zull finally paused and leaned back in his chair.

"What have you got, Crowell?" demanded Zull.

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Crowell began to read off the unintelligible replies that Bob Galvin had made. Zull grunted disdainfully.

"We'll get it out of him," he declared. He glanced at a sheet of paper and handed it over to Crowell. "I've got all the dope there, haven't I?"

"Nearly everything," replied Crowell.

"What do you mean, nearly everything?"

"Well" Crowell spoke hesitatingly "it may not be important, but when I got there last night, I found a corner of a rug turned under –"

"Forget that foolishness!" roared Zull.

"It's the third time," objected Crowell. "First, with that man who was dead in old Galvin's study. Then Harkness, who knew old Galvin. Now it's Galvin's nephew –"

"Talk sense!" ordered Zull. "Go out and take a walk. Call me up in ten minutes. I'll tell you then when I want you back.

"I'm going to let this smart guy rest a while. He'll be bewildered when he wakes up."

Crowell left the room, while Zull's keen eyes were still watching the nodding form of Bob Galvin.

The Acting Inspector sat with folded arms. He intended to break this man's resistance; to force a confession.

The door opened. Zull thought it was Crowell returning.

"I told you to stay out a while," he said, gruffly.

There was no reply. Zull looked up. He was staring into the muzzle of an automatic.

It was held by a man in a black cloak a man whose face was hidden by a low-turned slouch hat.

"The Shadow!"

A WHISPERED laugh came in response to Zull's exclamation. The acting inspector had heard that laugh before. Sullenly, he raised his hands.

"To-night," came The Shadow's whisper, "you pay the penalty."

"For what?"

"For your crimes."

Zull stared, brutally sullen.

"A big man on the force!" said The Shadow, contemptuously. "Tipped off to certain crimes by crooks, to add to your prestige. In return you have protected them when they needed it and have been paid for that protection.

"Cover-up man for a group of criminals! That is ended now. Your pals are dead all but one who escaped."

"Hiram Mallory!" blurted Zull, forgetting himself.

"Hiram Mallory is dead," came the reply.

Zull still stared, now bewildered.

"As for this man," declared The Shadow, signifying Bob Galvin, "he is innocent, despite your trumped-up charges.

"You were ordered to get him as the slayer of Zachary Mitchell another feather for your rogue's cap. I can tell you the name of the real killer. Bob Maddox!"

"No one can prove it," growled Zull.

"I can prove it. Where you destroy evidence, I can replace evidence, of which you know nothing.

"When Crowell began his examination in Mitchell's apartment, you arrived. He was about to look for finger prints on the receiver of the telephone. You put him on another task. You destroyed the evidence.

"Crowell thought you took the record. It was taken not by you, but by myself before you arrived. It is here."

From beneath his cloak, The Shadow drew forth a photographic impression.

"The finger prints of Bob Maddox," he declared. "That young man did time, some years ago. You will find that these prints compare exactly with police records."

The telephone bell rang.

"Who is it?" questioned The Shadow.

"Crowell," replied Zull.

"Answer it. Say what I tell you."

Zull obeyed.

"Oh, hello, Crowell," he said.

The black form of The Shadow was bending over his captive, whispering instructions into his ear.

Zull grimaced fiercely. He knew that a single word could bring Crowell to his aid, but he feared the threat of that automatic. He knew from experience that The Shadow would not hesitate in an attack.

"Listen, Crowell," said Zull, tensely, "I've just figured that we've made a mistake... Yes... We've got the wrong guy... Remember those finger prints? They don't correspond.

"Yes, I found prints there; thought I told you about them... Tell you what... Run up to Mitchell's place and give another search... See what you can find... No, I don't think I've got all the evidence."

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He hung up the telephone.

"A clever idea," commented The Shadow, stepping back. "A turned-down corner of a rug. I was in that room while you were there, Zull.

"The door opened inward. I stood behind it. The door was never once closed all during the inspection.

"When your pals commit crimes, they leave their sign. You come along and kill the evidence. Like you did with Harkness. You still had that precious pad when I finished with you. But one sheet was gone –"

REALIZATION crept upon Herbert Zull. He knew that he was at the mercy of this amazing man The Shadow. He felt that The Shadow was merciless.

"When Crowell reaches Mitchell's," declared The Shadow, "he will find a scrap of paper that was overlooked. It was written by Zachary Mitchell, just before he died.

"It bears three words above his weakened signature. Those words are: 'Maddox shot me.'

"He will also find the hallman staring at a picture of Bob Maddox. I left it there to-night. The hallman identified Bob Galvin's picture – uncertainly when you showed it to him. He will know, now, that he is wrong!"

Consternation was overcoming Zull. He knew that his crooked work would be exposed. Not only this last exploit in Mallory's service, but those that had gone before.

He wondered how much The Shadow knew. He was soon to be enlightened. The man in black seemed to read his thoughts.

From beneath the black cloak came a package of papers, held in a black-gloved hand.

"Hiram Mallory had these when he died," whispered The Shadow. "They once belonged to Theodore Galvin. They contain many references to you."

A groan came from Zull. Bob Galvin half awoke at the sound, and stared in bewilderment at the sight of his oppressor cowering before The Shadow.

But the effort was too great a strain on Bob's tired physique. He slumped back in his chair.

"Write," ordered The Shadow, pointing to the table. Following his command, Herbert Zull prepared a statement referring to certain crimes in which he had participated.

He also added that the dead members of his gang would be found in the secret room above the office in the Royal Building. He signed his name when he had finished.

The telephone rang. Inspired by the presence of The Shadow's automatic, Zull answered it. Crowell was on the wire. Zull responded, following The Shadow's instruction.

"A guy named Maddox, eh?" he said. "Yeah I've suspected him of being crooked... All right, Crowell, get hold of Devlin... Tell him to come down here right away... Fix it to release Galvin... I'm going out... See what I can get on this case."

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"Call Devlin yourself," ordered The Shadow, when Zull had hung up the receiver.

Zull obeyed. He located Devlin and told the man to report.

Here, Zull resorted to trickery. Devlin replied that he would arrive in fifteen minutes. Zull pretended to hear him say half an hour.

The ruse failed. As soon as the telephone was laid aside, The Shadow thrust the muzzle of his automatic against the detective's ribs.

"I have been watching you a long while, Zull," he said, in his low, sinister voice. "I knew you were engaged in crime; but you concealed your motives artfully.

"To-night you may do penance. Your career on the force is ended. Its smirches are not known.

"We shall let it stand and so reflect no discredit upon the force. More than that, we shall add to your ill-gotten prestige. I have need of you to-night.

"Come. Learn how The Shadow deals in justice!"

A few moments afterward, Acting Inspector Zull was walking down the deserted corridor accompanied by a man in black, the muzzle of an automatic reminding Zull that he was virtually a prisoner.

When Detective Devlin arrived at headquarters, he found Bob Galvin sound asleep in his chair, unguarded.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

A MAN sat in the luxurious lounge car of the Canadian Limited. He was alone; all of the other passengers had retired.

The man's face bore signs of mingled worry and elation. He was restless, but he managed to feign an appearance of calm.

Bob Maddox was fleeing northward with his ill-gotten wealth. He had left the Royal Building without interference.

He had been tempted to go back for the other bags, after he had descended in the elevator. For there were no signs that any one in the building had heard the shots.

But in the street, he had hurried on to escape the attention of a group that had surrounded a spot on the sidewalk. The crowd had evidently gathered about The Shadow's body.

Bob had decided then that to return would be disastrous, especially as some of his pals might still be alive. He feared their wrath, and reminded himself that Garry Elvers remained as a witness to his perfidy.

He had chosen this train because it was the first that would take him from the country. In Canada, he would have a breathing spell.

Maddox doubted that he would be followed; nevertheless, he wanted to place himself safely beyond the immediate reach of either his confederates or the law.

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Each succeeding hour had given him new confidence. The fleeing man knew that he had chosen the obvious direction for flight. That did not worry him. After all, he might have gone West, or taken a steamship for a foreign port.

To-morrow, he would be safe, and worth a quarter of a million dollars with no one to dispute his possession.

He hoped that his pals had lost their lives in their attack on The Shadow. For with The Shadow gone, there remained only Garry Elvers a mere bodyguard of a slain gang leader.

Maddox arose restlessly and went into the next car. He opened the door of the drawing-room and entered. There, he inspected his bags which he had placed in the upper berth. They were heavy, for they contained the greater portion of the swag.

The man laughed moodily. Greedy to the core, he still thought of those thousands that remained back in Theodore Galvin's cache. Then another thought struck him. Suppose one or two of his pals were still alive? After all, their share would satisfy them sufficiently to keep them off his trail.

The thought eased his disappointment at having left part of the booty.

Maddox began to feel tired. He had smoked innumerable cigarettes in the lounge car, between his many journeys to the drawing-room to see that the cash was safe.

He was glad that he had taken the drawing-room. Here, he could be undisturbed, behind a locked door. His restlessness was leaving him; his fatigue was increasing. He kicked off his shoes and removed his coat and vest. He laid down in the berth.

Then a thought disturbed him. The customs officials!

Well, that could be managed, he decided. The train would still be in the United States when he awoke. He could leave it, buy a car and cross the border.

Canadian customs officers were not so strict as those of the United States. He could stow the money safely out of sight in an automobile. It would never do to have the customs officers see it.

Between the motion of the train and this new worry, the fleeing man found slumber difficult. When Maddox finally dropped off to sleep, he passed into a state of deep oblivion. His hand lay flat upon the automatic at his side.

The train sped northward, and the man slept on.

THE LIMITED was speeding rapidly across an open stretch of country. It seemed like a flashing sweep of light amidst a pitch-black waste.

But a new sound mingled with the roaring of the train to disturb the sleeping countryside. Overhead, a plane was purring, rapidly passing the Limited with swift, birdlike flight.

The plane soon outstripped the train, making the locomotive slow in comparison.

Twenty miles farther on, the engineer of the Limited applied the brakes in response to a signal which he saw. The train came to a slow stop. The door of a vestibule was opened; the platform was raised and the conductor

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descended the steps.

Out of the darkness came two men, muffled in heavy overcoats. One stood close beside the other, as though his hand was pressed against his companion's body.

The man with both hands free drew back his coat and showed a badge.

"Acting Inspector Zull," he said. "New York City detective headquarters."

The conductor nodded. He had expected this. Orders had been awaiting him at the last city.

"All right," he said, gruffly. "Work it quick, if you can. I'll show you where he is in a drawing-room. I think he's the man you want."

He led the way softly between rows of curtained berths. They stopped at the door of the drawing-room in which Bob Maddox slept. The conductor softly inserted a key and turned it. He stepped back.

Zull entered, followed by the other man, a tall individual whose face was wrapped within a muffler.

The door closed behind the two men, the second shutting it with his left hand, while his right still pressed against the back of the inspector.

Zull turned on a flashlight. It revealed Bob Maddox, sound asleep.

Calmly, the second man passed an automatic to Zull. He spoke in a low whisper as he did so.

"It is loaded," were his words. "But remember; I have mine."

Zull was amazed at the calmness of this warning. He had traveled, bound, in the back of a closed plane, which The Shadow had piloted. Now he was released; added to that, he had been supplied with a loaded gun!

But he knew The Shadow too well by this time. A single false move would spell his doom!

Keeping the automatic in view, pointed toward Maddox, Zull nudged the sleeping man. Maddox opened his eyes.

The light of the drawing-room clicked. The Shadow, standing by the door, had turned it on. Zull's flashlight went out.

He, alone, was visible to Bob Maddox. The Shadow was out of view, a muffled figure backed against the door.

"Come on, Maddox!" growled Zull. "We want you!"

Maddox recognized Acting Inspector Zull. He grinned at the inspector, even though his face was worried.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "What's the idea? You were paid to fix everything. You hung it on to young Galvin –"

"You've double-crossed the Chief," replied Zull. "That's why I've come to get you!"

THE explanation startled Maddox. He had never thought of this situation. He realized that Hiram Mallory

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could command the action of the law as well as protection from it through the efforts of Zull.

Maddox, alone of the gang, knew of this connection. Briggs had known that if he left the sign, he would be free from arrest; but the big man had never figured out the details. Moose Shargin had been kept in ignorance.

But now came a surprising thought to Maddox. The Shadow was dead but Hiram Mallory was still alive; and Zull was working with him!

"You want me?" questioned Maddox, sleepily.

"Yes. Hurry up!"

Maddox started to rise in his berth. As he reached a sitting position, his hand came from his side. He fired twice with his automatic.

Acting Inspector Zull fell dead, without a groan. Maddox sprang from the berth. He turned toward the door. He stopped as he saw the silent witness of his crime.

With a fiendish cry, he raised his gun to fire. The Shadow's automatic spoke twice. One bullet clipped the murderer's wrist; the other lodged in his shoulder.

Maddox fell writhing to the floor. To his ears came a mocking laugh. He realized that The Shadow lived!

The conductor was rattling at the door of the drawing-room. The Shadow did not hurry. He lifted Maddox and placed him in the berth, where the man lay, helpless and gasping, his left hand gripping his right shoulder.

Two guns lay on the floor. One belonged to Maddox; the other to Zull. The Shadow pocketed the dead detective's automatic and laid his own revolver in its place.

With head lowered and face muffled, he opened the door. He thrust the two suitcases out into the aisle.

"Help me with these," he ordered, in a whispered voice. "We've gotten our man. Don't worry about him."

As the conductor took one of the bags, The Shadow closed the door of the drawing-room. The conductor led the way along the aisle, between the rows of curtains through which startled heads were appearing.

"This is far enough," came the word, when they reached the vestibule. "You can go back."

THE conductor turned and reentered the car. Quickly, the man with the muffled face opened the door. He dropped the bags to the ground; then ascended the steps to rejoin the conductor. Suddenly, he stopped.

The door of the next car was opening; the white-coated form of a Pullman porter came into view. Unseen, The Shadow dropped from the steps and swung beneath the car, drawing the suitcases after him. Voices sounded from above.

Two men had followed the Pullman porter and the three had stopped in the vestibule.

"Who opened this platform?" came the demand.

"Ah, don't know, sah," answered the Pullman porter. "Two men went back into the cah, sah."

"Where's the conductor?"

"Back in the cah, ah reckon."

"Well, we're State police. Got orders to meet the train here to take over a prisoner. Got here sooner than we expected. Where's the prisoner?"

"Ah don't know, sah."

"Come on," growled one of the State policemen. "Let's find the conductor."

"No," objected the other. "I don't like the looks of this open platform. I'm going to drop off and see if any one is around."

The man suited the words with the action. He dropped to the ground and flashed the rays of an electric torch in all directions. He inspected under the car, but to no avail. The Shadow had slipped away to the other side of the train.

Back by the drawing-room door, the conductor was waiting.

Where was the man with the muffled face? When would he return?

Precious minutes ticked by. The conductor, hesitant, feared to enter the drawing-room. At last his patience was rewarded. Two men came along the aisle State policemen. They had given up their useless inspection.

"They're in there," said the conductor, pointing to the drawing-room.

"Who's in there?"

"The New York police inspector and the man he captured."

A State policeman placed his hand upon the drawing-room door. At that instant, the lock clicked. The door would not open. The conductor produced a key. A muffled blow was heard from within the drawing-room. The lock was rendered useless!

For the delay had been a long one. The return of The Shadow had been averted. Nearly fifteen minutes had elapsed since he had left the drawing-room.

Now, the deadened senses of Bob Maddox had been suddenly reawakened. Using his left arm, he had locked the door just in time to prevent the entry of the State police.

"Open the door!"

Maddox replied with a curse.

THE siege began. Hastily dressed passengers scurried from the car. One State policeman remained guarding the door. The other went to the front of the train to summon two more who had been stationed there.

They crept along the side of the track. They spotted the window of the drawing-room that formed the murderer's stronghold. They opened fire. Bullets smashed the windows.

HANDS IN THE DARK

Maddox replied with shots. He had two guns his own and the one The Shadow had left with Zull. He had a supply of cartridges.

Although crippled, he was ambidextrous, and could shoot well left-handed. He forgot all pain in his maddened fury.

From the darkness of his beleaguered drawing-room, he poked his head toward the shattered windowpane and fired wild shots at the vague men in the darkness.

A wild, intermittent gun battle. Maddox aimed with uncanny intuition. One of the State policemen fell, wounded.

Every time the gun flashed from the window, shots responded from without; but Maddox always got away in time. One of the troopers crept along close to the car. Maddox suspected the ruse. He turned his automatic downward.

Two bullets struck the steel surface of the Pullman. One ricocheted and hit the State policeman. The injured man rolled beneath the car just in time to escape a fatal shot.

Maddox crouched beside the shattered window. The cold breeze served to revive him. Grim and determined, he awaited the next attack.

The troopers were retiring. Maddox could see them slinking away. He fired, but they were out of range. He suddenly sensed danger from beneath. He leaned cautiously from the window, sure that he would be unseen.

He fancied that he saw a form below. Down came his gun. Then a black shape seemed to rise. A long, black arm swung upward. It knocked the automatic from the murderer's hand. A backward blow from that same arm, and cold metal struck Maddox behind his ear. He managed to roll into the safety of the drawing-room, scarcely conscious.

Out of the night, The Shadow had returned to strike!

The retiring State policemen paused. They could not see what had occurred; yet they were sure something had happened to their enemy. The one uninjured trooper dashed boldly to the side of the car. Scrambling up to the window, automatic in hand, he leaned through.

Maddox had lost his loaded gun; now he swung weakly with the empty automatic that remained. The State trooper dropped away, firing point-blank as he escaped the blow.

All was still in the steel-walled stronghold after that.

When the State policeman entered through the window, he found Maddox lying dead, sprawled over the lifeless body of Acting Inspector Zull.

The train moved on its way, with the troopers in charge. The two wounded policemen were taken to a hospital at the next town.

Hardly had the Limited departed from that isolated spot before a roar came from a near-by field, the site of an old landing place for airplanes. A plane rose in the air and sped southward.

AT next morning's breakfast, New Yorkers read the news. Heroic Herbert Zull had gotten his last man!

HANDS IN THE DARK

Accompanied by one associate, he had boarded the Canadian Limited and had sought to capture Bob Maddox, now known as the escaping murderer who had slain Zachary Mitchell.

Zull had shot Maddox; but evidently the murderer had killed his captor after Zull's companion had left the train. State police had arrived and finished the criminal after an attack upon his improvised stronghold.

The conductor and the passengers told varied stories. So did the State policemen.

Zull's companion was unknown. It was probable that the inspector had told him to leave after the capture; that Zull intended to ride on with the prisoner.

It was simply known that Zull had called railway officials, and had arranged the stopping of the train; and that he had also notified State police to appear upon the scene to aid him.

To Bob Galvin, all was confused memory. He was free, back at his uncle's old home.

Harry Vincent, his temporary companion and friend, had left. But Betty Mandell was home happy and amazed to find that the real Bob Galvin fulfilled her expectations.

She was able to explain, in part. But both she and Bob were astounded when they received, from a mysterious source, the sum of three hundred thousand dollars, a legacy from the late Theodore Galvin.

Other persons in different parts of the country received sums that they had never expected. The Shadow, aided by the information gained from Theodore Galvin's papers, made retribution to persons who had been swindled or robbed; and to the relatives of some who had died.

The finding of the bodies in the secret room of the Royal Building was sensational news.

It was learned that Hiram Mallory had led a double life, dealing with crooks to gain wealth. The broken window showed that Garry Elvers had fallen from that spot.

But it did not explain the false impression that Bob Maddox had gained when he had seen the gangster enveloped in The Shadow's cloak. That had been deceiving in the gloomy room.

It was believed that the secret room was a hideout where the criminals had engaged in conflict among themselves. The two men who might have altered this opinion were dead Richard Harkness and Zachary Mitchell.

Had the confession of Herbert Zull been made public, it might have been a clew; but The Shadow did not bring it to light. The masquerading inspector had atoned for his misdeeds.

That confession reposed, with Theodore Galvin's cryptic map, along with other strange and remarkable documents, in the secret archives of The Shadow!

THE END