

THE LIVING SHADOW

Maxwell Grant

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THE LIVING SHADOW

Out of the darkness came a being of the night to give Harry Vincent another chance; a chance to live his life with enjoyment, danger and excitement; a chance to risk it for an honorable cause in the service of the mysterious character known only as The Shadow!

CHAPTER I. OUT OF THE MIST

THE fog was thick at the center of the bridge where the man stood leaning against the rail. Although the streets of New York were scarcely a hundred yards away, he might have been in a little world of his own. For the only light in the midst of that cloud of black night fog came from an arc light on the bridge.

A taxicab, carrying a late passenger home, shot through the mist.

The man stepped away from the rail and crouched beside a post. He saw a flash of the red tail light on the cab; a moment later it was lost in the fog.

As the noise of the motor died away, the man stood up again and placed his hands upon the rail.

He listened, afraid that another cab might be coming across the bridge; then, reassured, he leaned over the rail and stared downward.

Mist; thick, black mist – nothing but mist. It seemed to invite his plunge. Yet he hesitated – as many wait when they are upon the brink of death – until, with a mad impulse, he swung his body across the rail and loosened his hands.

Something clamped upon his shoulder. An iron grip held him – balanced between life and death. Then, as though his body possessed no weight whatever, the man felt himself pulled around in a sweeping circle. He staggered as his feet struck the sidewalk of the bridge.

He turned to confront the person who had interfered. He swung his fist angrily, but a hand caught his wrist and twisted it behind his back with irresistible power.

It was as though the man's strength had been wrested from him when he faced a tall, black-cloaked figure that might have represented death itself. For he could not have sworn that he was looking at a human being.

The stranger's face was entirely obscured by a broad-brimmed felt hat bent downward over his features; and the long, black cloak looked like part of the thickening fog.

The man who had attempted suicide was too startled to speak. Fear had come upon him, and his only desire was to shrink from this grim and eerie master of the night. But he felt himself pulled across the sidewalk, and at the curb he stumbled through the open door of a large limousine, which he had not seen until that moment. His arm was freed, and he shrank into the far corner of the car.

The door closed and the car moved onward. Fear still clutched the man whose life had been saved against his will. Rescued, he sensed that the grim stranger was in the seat beside him. He expected new evidence of that weird personage's presence. The evidence came.

A voice spoke through the darkness. It was a weird, chilling voice – scarcely more than a whisper, yet clear and penetrating.

"What is your name?"

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It was not a question. Rather, it was a command to speak.

"Harry Vincent," replied the man who had been deterred from self-destruction. The words had come to his lips automatically.

"Why did you try suicide?"

It was another command.

"Melancholy," said Vincent. He was speaking of his own accord now; somehow he wanted to talk.

"Go on," came the voice.

"It's not much of a story," replied Vincent. "Perhaps I was a fool. I'm all alone here in New York. No job, no friends, nothing to live for. My folks are all out in the Middle West, and I haven't seen them for years. I don't want to see them. I guess they think I'm a success here, but I'm not."

"You are well dressed," the stranger's voice remarked.

Vincent laughed nervously. "Yes," he said, "I'm wearing a light overcoat, and the weather hasn't scarcely begun to be chilly. But that's only appearance. Everything else is in hock. I have one dollar and thirteen cents in actual cash."

The mysterious stranger did not reply. The car was rolling along a side street; the bridge was now far behind. Vincent, his nerves somewhat settled, stared into the opposite corner of the limousine, vainly seeking to observe his companion's face. But the shade was drawn and he could not even detect a blotch amid the darkness.

"What about the girl?" came the voice.

The penetrating whisper startled Vincent. The single, and most important, item that he had omitted from his brief story had been fathomed by this stranger whose cunning was the equal of his strength.

"The girl?" questioned Vincent. "The girl? My – my girl out home?"

"Yes."

"She married another man," said Vincent. "That was the reason I was on the bridge to-night. I might have struggled on for a while if I hadn't been so hard up. But when the letter came that told me she was married – Well, that ended it."

He paused, and hearing no reply, added to his confession:

"The letter came two days ago," he said. "I haven't slept since. I was on the bridge all last night, but I didn't have nerve to jump – then. I guess it was the fog that helped me this time."

"Your life," said the stranger's voice slowly, "is no longer your own. It belongs to me now. But you are still free to destroy it. Shall we return to the bridge?"

"I don't know," blurted Vincent. "This is all like a dream; I don't understand it. Perhaps I did fall from the bridge, and this is death that I am now experiencing. Yet it seems real, after all. What good is my life to any

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one? What will you do with it?"

"I shall improve it," replied the voice from the darkness. "I shall make it useful. But I shall risk it, too. Perhaps I shall lose it, for I have lost lives, just as I have saved them. This is my promise: life, with enjoyment, with danger, with excitement, and – with money. Life, above all, with honor. If I give it, I demand obedience. Absolute obedience. You may accept my terms, or you may refuse. I shall wait for you to choose."

The car rolled on comfortably through the side streets of upper New York. The motor seemed noiseless; Harry Vincent began to understand how it had approached him unheard upon the bridge.

He was wondering about his strange companion; this being who had whirled him away from his fatal plunge as though his hundred and seventy pounds had been nothing; this personage who could read his thoughts and whose questions were commands.

Harry turned again toward the darkened corner, and hope returned to him. After all, he wanted life. He had come to New York because he had desired to live and to succeed. This was his opportunity. He pictured his lifeless body, beneath the bridge, and he realized that he could make but one choice.

"I accept," he said.

"Remember then, obedience," said the voice. "That must come always. I do not ask for cleverness, for strength or skill, although I want them, and will expect them to the best of your ability."

There was a pause. The whispered voice seemed to echo in Vincent's ears. He realized that there was neither approval nor surprise in the stranger's words. Simply calmness.

"You will be taken immediately to a hotel," resumed the voice. "You will find a room reserved in your name. There will be money there. Your requirements will be filled. You will obtain everything you want. Your bills will be paid."

The point of a cane swung from the rear seat and tapped twice against the windowpane behind the chauffeur. It seemed to be a signal, for the speed of the car increased as it sharply swung a corner.

"But, remember, Harry Vincent," said the voice from the corner, "I must have your promise. Shut your eyes for one full minute while you think on it. Then promise, if you wish. Promise your obedience."

Vincent closed his eyes and thought. His mind cleared and life seemed to brighten. There was but one course; that was acceptance of the stranger's terms.

He opened his eyes and again gazed at that blackened corner.

"I promise," he said. "I promise full obedience."

"Very well," came the stranger's whisper. "Go to your hotel. To-morrow you will receive a message. It will come from me; and my messages are meaningless to those who should not understand them. Listen well when you receive it. Remember only the words which are emphasized in pronouncing like this."

There was a stressing of the last word. It seemed almost a sentence in itself and the hiss of the stranger's whisper carried a weird, unearthly sound.

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The car swerved suddenly and stopped with a jolt against the curb on the left. An open car had forced it to the sidewalk; and the headlights of the other automobile were glaring through the window. A figure opened the door on the right and Vincent saw a man's head and shoulders jutting up.

"Stick 'em up!" came a rough voice. Vincent raised his hands as he saw the glint of a revolver barrel. It was a holdup – a daring crime on this side street of Manhattan!

Then something emerged from the darkened corner of the limousine. It spread like a huge monster of the night, a black shape that swept forward and enveloped the gangster in its folds. There was a muffled cry, then a pistol shot, and the car suddenly darted forward.

The door closed with a crash. Through the rear window of the limousine, Vincent saw a man sprawled in the street. Evidently it was the fellow who had attempted the holdup.

Then the car burst into the glare of the lights on Fifth Avenue. Vincent turned quickly to the corner where his strange companion sat. Now he would see his mysterious companion face to face!

But, except for himself, the car was empty. He was alone in the limousine. A dark splotch showed on the inside of the door; he touched it and found blood on his hand.

Who had been wounded – the shadowy stranger or the assailant who had tried to enter the limousine? Vincent could not guess; he only knew that in the brief struggle the man who had found him on the bridge had left the automobile – unseen and unheard – and the door had closed behind him.

The mysterious stranger had vanished – like a shadow!

CHAPTER II. THE FIRST MESSAGE

HARRY VINCENT was annoyed as the big limousine sped along Fifth Avenue. The promise he had made to the stranger was still uppermost in his mind, and he intended fully to keep his word. But his mind was busy ferreting out the strange things that had happened since the episode on the bridge.

Alone, now, with thoughts of suicide gone, he began to wonder what coincidence had brought the stranger out of the night, and by what strange trick he had managed to disappear so completely.

He found the light switch in the automobile and turned it on to examine the rich upholstery, which bore the stain of blood. The car was an imported Supra; that, at least, was tangible evidence. It would not be difficult to learn the name of the man who owned it.

The car turned from Fifth Avenue and pulled up in front of the Metrolite, one of New York's newest hotels. The attendant opened the door and Vincent stepped to the sidewalk. Then he opened the front door of the limousine and accosted the Negro chauffeur.

"Was this where you were told to bring me?" he asked.

"Yes, suh," replied the chauffeur. "Whah's de uddah man?"

"He left the car when the taxi nearly bumped us."

The chauffeur's eyes opened widely.

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"Lawdy, sah, Ah didn't even stop at dat time."

Vincent looked at the man intently. He could see that the chauffeur was actually astonished. He put another question.

"Whose car is this?"

"Don't say nuthin', boss," pleaded the chauffeur. "Dis am Mr. van Dyke's cah, an' Ah hadn't no right to take you men along."

"What do you mean?"

"It was dis way, boss. Ah was keepin' the cah in town to-night an' de man in de black hat come up to me when Ah was startin' for de g'rage. He come up jus' like a ghost. Yas, he did, sah.

"He says to me: 'Boy, Ah wants a ride. It's all right; Ah know who you is, an' Ah knows Mr. van Dyke, an' heah's one hundred dollahs. Ah must find a friend o' mine.

"So Ah drives him all ovah, an' as we crosses the bridge, he says, 'Stop,' an' the nex' Ah knows he has you—all in de cah with him. An' he had said befo' dat when he gets his friend, Ah was to drive aroun' little streets until he taps the window – den Ah was to come heah. Dat's all Ah knows, boss, 'deed it is."

Vincent could see the truth in the man's worried story, so he dismissed the car and watched the huge Supra as it moved down the foggy street. Even the license number would be no clew. He entered the hotel and strolled to the desk. Then he began to worry about identifying himself.

"Room reserved for Harry Vincent?" he asked.

He was in suspense as the clerk turned away for a moment; then came the reassuring reply:

"Fourteen–nineteen, Mr. Vincent," said the clerk. "That was the room you wanted? Funny, we didn't catch your name when you called up from Philadelphia this morning, but when you called again, ten minutes ago, we put everything right. Will you register, please?"

Vincent signed his name and supplied Philadelphia as his place of residence. The stranger must have called the hotel after leaving the car, he imagined.

Vincent wondered about that as he rode up in the elevator with the bell boy. The stranger must have imitated his voice; he certainly would not have talked in that weird whisper.

The room was a large one, equipped with the most modern hotel furnishings. The bell boy pointed to a valise, resting on a stand.

"That's your bag, isn't it, sir? It was marked for this room when it came in this evening."

Vincent acknowledged the bag. He was curious to know what it contained. He fumbled in his pocket. His total wealth consisted of two half dollars, a nickel, and eight pennies, so he gave the bell boy one of the larger coins and waited until the door closed behind the attendant.

Then he opened the suitcase. It held a pair of pajamas, comb, and brushes, neckties, and a few other articles. Also there was a black leather wallet. Vincent removed this and opened it, to find two hundred dollars in bills

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of various denominations.

He studied himself in the mirror. Here, in a comfortable hotel, with good surroundings and money, and with promise of future supplies, life seemed strangely new. He studied his reflection in the mirror: tall, and well featured. Here he was, a man under thirty, who had acknowledged himself beaten and who had tried suicide. Well, things were different now.

He took a drink of ice water, and decided to retire for the night. Despite the many things that puzzled him, he was sleepy. He needed rest. He draped his clothes over the chair, donned the pajamas, and got into bed. In ten minutes he was sound asleep.

A knock at the door awakened him. It was morning. A bell boy awaited him with a large package.

"Want your breakfast sent up, sir?" asked the boy. "It's after ten o'clock."

Vincent followed the boy's suggestion and phoned for the morning meal to be sent up. Then he opened the package.

It contained shirts, socks, and other apparel, with a new suit of clothes. He examined these articles and was amazed to find that all were his exact size. The stranger must have made a perfect estimate of Vincent's proportions in the dark of the automobile!

Breakfast arrived after Vincent had dressed and shaved, using a safety razor he had found in the valise. Then he sat by the window and stared speculatively at the sky line of Manhattan. What next? Well, he would wait and learn.

A half hour passed. Then the phone bell rang. He answered it eagerly; but was disappointed when he did not recognize the voice of the stranger of the preceding night's adventure. It was a man's voice speaking, however, calling him by name, and talking in an easy tone.

"Mr. Vincent?" the person said. "This is the jeweler. I have a message for you."

The word "message" made Vincent become suddenly alert. The voice was talking slowly now, and certain words came in a slight emphatic drawl.

"Your watch was sent to another man by mistake. We expect to have another in very soon; perhaps by next Tuesday. It will be delivered to your room."

The message was forming in Vincent's mind. He did not reply.

"Was my message clear?" came the question.

"Yes," Vincent replied.

He hung up the receiver and repeated the stressed words slowly and softly to himself:

"Watch – man – in – next – room."

Vincent chuckled. It was an order, and it was up to him to obey.

He had grandly ordered cigars with his breakfast, so he lighted a perfecto and smoked for a while.

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Then he began to wonder about the next room, the occupant of which he was to watch.

There should be two rooms next to his – one on each side. Vincent went into the hallway. No, the message left no doubt. His own room was a corner one; the only door near his – in fact, it was right alongside – was numbered 1417.

There was no one in the hallway. Vincent listened at the door of the next room, but heard no sound. That did not change the instructions, however.

It was up to him to locate the man who had Room 1417, and to watch that person's activities. The best thing to do was wait and listen.

He went back in his own room and left the door ajar; then stretched out on the bed and began to read the morning paper, listening for any sound that might come from the hall outside.

CHAPTER III. THE MAN IN THE NEXT ROOM

TIME was becoming rather boring to Harry Vincent. It was three o'clock in the afternoon; he knew this, because at noon a bell boy had arrived with a package from a famous jeweler that contained a fine gold watch and chain.

Vincent had smiled when he had opened the package, because the gift from his strange benefactor was, in a way, a confirmation and reminder of the message that had come over the telephone.

But now, when the minutes had begun to lag, he wondered if his plan of waiting was all that was expected of him. He had eaten a hearty breakfast but was beginning to think about having lunch sent up to the room.

Then he heard the footsteps.

The door to the hall was still ajar, and he had heard several persons go along the corridor. But there was something different in the walk of whoever was now approaching, for these footsteps seemed quick and nervous – and once they hesitated.

Vincent stepped to the door of his room. The door opened inward, and the end of it was away from the next room. By putting his eyes close to the opening, Vincent could see a short distance down the hall.

As he took this position he heard the footsteps hesitate again; a moment later he saw the form of a man of medium height, who stopped directly in front of Room 1417. The man was looking over his shoulder down the hallway, and in his hand he held a key. Apparently satisfied that no one was in sight, he quickly thrust the key into the door and fumbled with the lock.

Vincent was able to study his profile in the few seconds the man required to unlock the door. The face was rather paunchy and featureless, and Vincent figured the age of the man as close to fifty years.

When the door of the next room had closed, Vincent began to speculate. There was nothing about the man's appearance that could be classed as unusual. He seemed to be of the veteran salesman type, one who might have been on the road for many years.

But unquestionably the fellow was anxious not to be seen. He might be an intruder, entering the room while the occupant was away; but it was more probable that he was the man whom Vincent had been set to watch.

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Another hour went by; then the door of the next room was opened, and what seemed to be the same footsteps went down the hall. Vincent slipped into his hat and coat, and giving the man time to reach the turn that led to the elevator, he followed, rapidly and quietly. He was just quick enough to catch the elevator, and he found himself right beside his quarry.

The man walked hurriedly through the lobby, Vincent sauntering after him. But outside, the middle-aged chap showed surprising activity and dashed for the only cab that was in front of the hotel.

Vincent caught the instructions to the driver; the man called "Pennsylvania Station"; but it was two minutes before Vincent could hail a second cab with instructions to drive to the same destination. Urging his driver to hurry, he reached the terminal in such good time that he was positive he could not be far behind the man he was trailing.

Vincent had seen nothing of the other cab on the way; and now he spent a good half hour watching the various train gates, in futile hope of seeing his man. Finally he returned to the hotel and had the unexpected sensation of observing the missing man comfortably seated in an armchair reading an evening paper, as though he had been planted there all the time. Disgusted, Vincent very humanly gave up his fruitless watching, and went in the hotel restaurant to order dinner.

The meal was a good one – the best Vincent had eaten in months – but he did not enjoy it. He realized that he had been hoaxed; that the man he followed had either changed his destination or had slipped by in the crowded station. Worst of all, the fellow might have spotted him while he was watching the train gates.

Vincent was sure now that there must be some good reason for watching the man, but he argued that it would be foolish to follow him immediately after his hopeless failure. In fact, he began to forget his duty as his mind dwelt upon the stranger of the night before.

"Funny how that fellow disappeared," he mused. "He went like a shadow; just like a shadow. That's a good name for him – The Shadow! I'll remember that."

Vincent finished his dessert, still speculating on the strange personality who was now fixed in his mind. When he reentered the lobby, he realized that he had spent too much time in the dining room. The middle-aged man was no longer present.

Vincent mentally chided himself. Evidently it was his duty to be something of a detective. So far he had proven himself totally lacking in that ability. Then it occurred to him that he could at least discover the identity of the man he was supposed to watch. So he strolled to the desk, intending to open conversation with the clerk.

He began with a natural question, the while scanning the mail boxes attentively.

"Anything in 1419?" Vincent asked.

In reply, the clerk drew a letter from a pigeonhole and handed it to him.

This was a surprise. He had not expected mail. But the envelope explained away Vincent's surprise. It was addressed to R. J. Scanlon, and bore a return address and postmark which showed that the missive had come from San Francisco. Vincent motioned to the clerk.

"Not my letter," he said.

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The clerk looked at the address, then turned and shoved the envelope into another pigeonhole.

"My mistake," he said. "I gave you the mail for 1417. There's nothing in your box."

Vincent walked away with a smile. The clerk's error had given him the information he needed. On second thought, Vincent was glad he had not quizzed the clerk about the man in 1417, and thereby made himself unduly conspicuous.

He bought a few magazines and rode up on the elevator. There was no light showing through the partly opened transom of Room 1417.

"All right, Mr. Scanlon," Vincent mused, as he sat in his room and began to read. "I'll be up and waiting when you come in to-night. Have a good time while you're out."

The man in the next room came in before midnight. Vincent heard the transom slam shut after the door of Scanlon's room had been closed.

"I'll remember that," he thought. "This chap worries about his transom being open."

The next morning began another vigil. There was no communicating door between the two rooms, so Vincent was forced to reconnoiter in the hallway to make sure that the man had not gone out. He heard a few slight sounds, and, satisfied that Scanlon was still on hand, he waited patiently, leaving his own door slightly ajar.

Scanlon went out at half past ten. Vincent did not follow him immediately this time. He waited long enough to take another elevator downstairs. In the lobby, he went through the motions of busying himself at the magazine rack, while he kept on the lookout for his man. Vincent finally spotted him going through the revolving door, and followed a short distance behind.

Scanlon entered a building on Broadway. Vincent, noting that there was only one entrance, waited patiently on the street.

It was nearly noon when the middle-aged man reappeared. He went into a restaurant, and Vincent followed, seating himself at a distant table.

He trailed Scanlon through an uneventful afternoon – always at a distance. Vincent began to be surprised at the way he could identify the man. He could give Scanlon a full block lead, and spot him crossing a street.

It was not difficult to do this because of the peculiar characteristics the man displayed. His quick, nervous steps would stop at intervals, while he cast a furtive glance backward.

"This fellow is surely worried," thought Vincent. "My mysterious benefactor is not the only one who's in this game. Somebody else is after him, I'll bet a derby."

Late in the afternoon, Scanlon slipped into a motion-picture theater. Vincent, tired with the aimless chase, was tempted to do likewise; but he decided that the man might be playing some ruse. In this he was evidently wrong, for he waited more than two hours before Scanlon again appeared.

"No percentage in this," mumbled Vincent as his quarry turned up Broadway. "He's wandered everywhere with no purpose, and now we're back near the hotel. But I'll stick with him. He couldn't be so aimless without having some pur – Ah! That looks suspicious."

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A hard-faced man with a black mustache had popped suddenly from the obscurity of an orangeade stand. It was at the corner upon which the Metrolite Hotel was located, and Vincent realized that the fellow had held a commanding view of the entrance to the hotel.

The newcomer was short and stocky, and wore a mixed brown overcoat. Vincent's first suspicion was hardly more than a hunch, but after he watched the actions of the man for a few minutes, he was solidly convinced that he, too, was watching Scanlon.

To put his theory to the test, Vincent neglected Scanlon for the moment, and centered all his attention upon the man in the brown overcoat, who dodged artfully in and out of the crowd and was a difficult quarry, indeed.

After fifteen minutes of further wandering, Vincent became exultant when he again saw Scanlon, turning into a restaurant, half a block ahead. By following the man in the overcoat, he had kept Scanlon in range, also!

The stocky, mustached individual entered the restaurant. Vincent followed and found a table in the corner. He was within twenty feet of Scanlon, but was almost obscured from view by a rack which held overcoats.

He ordered dinner and waited. For a while he saw nothing of the man with the brown overcoat; then Vincent spotted him, walking across the floor. He had taken off his coat and now appeared in a dark-blue suit.

"By George!" exclaimed Vincent softly. "He's sitting down at the same table with Scanlon! I'll listen in on this."

Vincent moved his head toward the side of the coat rack, and caught the conversation.

"Well, well," began the man with the mustache, whose thick dark hair had become a noticeable characteristic, since he had removed his hat.

Scanlon half jumped from his chair. Vincent caught sight of the man's startled eyes. Plainly Scanlon did not relish the other's intrusion.

"You don't seem to remember me," continued the dark-haired man.

"I don't," replied Scanlon, somewhat gruffly. It was the first time Vincent had heard his voice, and it sounded harsh and grating.

"You're Bob Scanlon, aren't you?" asked the dark, haired man pleasantly. "Shoe salesman from Frisco?"

"That's right."

"You don't remember me, then?"

"No."

"Steve Cronin, from Boston," said the dark-haired man glibly. "Used to sell shoes myself. Met you at the convention in Chicago, five years ago. Out of the game now. Been here in New York four years. Remember you, though. Good time we had out there."

He held out his hand, which Scanlon shook rather reluctantly.

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"Don't mind my eating with you?" persisted the man who called himself Steve Cronin.

"Guess not," grunted Scanlon. "I suppose I met you in Chicago all right. Hard to remember all the shoe men I meet."

"I've got a good memory," answered Cronin. "I can tell just where I've met a fellow and just when. Funny, isn't it, that I should happen to see you come walking in a restaurant this way?"

Vincent smiled to himself. Cronin had seen Scanlon going in – not coming in.

The talk drifted to shoes. Cronin was glib and talkative, but evasive. Vincent noted that the man said very little that was definite. Scanlon grunted, and merely answered questions occasionally.

When the meal was finished, the man with the mustache rose first.

"I have an appointment," he said, looking at his watch. "See you later, old man."

With that he left the restaurant. Scanlon followed five minutes later and started up a side street. Vincent was not far behind, but he kept on the opposite sidewalk. He noted that Scanlon's actions were more nervous than ever.

When the San Francisco shoe salesman turned up one of the avenues, and increased his pace, Vincent had a hunch that proved to be a good one.

"This bird is doubling back to the hotel," he said to himself. "He's taking a long walk to do it because he wants to be sure that Cronin isn't after him. Furthermore, he doesn't want Cronin to know where he is staying. But Cronin does know, and he's too wise to trail Scanlon. So I'll be wise, too."

He waited until the shoe salesman was nearly a block ahead. Then he called a cab and rode to the Metrolite. He went up in the elevator, convinced that within twenty minutes the occupant of 1417 would be back in his room.

CHAPTER IV. A BOLD MURDER

IN the darkness of his room, Harry Vincent sat in a chair by the door. A thin crack enabled him to view the lighted hallway; a casual passer would not have noticed that his door was not entirely closed.

Five minutes had elapsed since his return, and those minutes had seemed like hours. For he knew that something was definitely in the wind.

Footsteps came softly down the corridor. It was not Scanlon; Vincent could tell that by the sound. Yet the steps were coming on, and unless they passed by and turned the short hallway to the left, it seemed logical that they were bound for the room next to his own.

Vincent suppressed a low whistle as the man came into his limited view. It was none other than Steve Cronin!

The man with the mustache threw a glance toward the darkened transom of Scanlon's room, and Vincent could see his lips curl in an ugly grin that showed a tusklike tooth. Cronin's coat was thrown back and his hands were thrust roughly in his vest pockets.

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"A fine specimen of humanity," thought Vincent. "Looks like a wolf – and probably acts like one. But at heart he's yellow; I can tell that."

Satisfied with his inspection of Scanlon's doorway, the stocky man walked along the hall and turned the corner. He was out of sight of 1417; but near enough to appear at an instant's notice.

Vincent breathed quietly as he waited. On no account must he betray his presence. Action was here, or would be, upon Scanlon's return. Perhaps the shoe salesman, with all his appearance of fear, would be a worthy match for the ill-visaged Cronin.

Ten more minutes went by; endless minutes that held Vincent on edge. Then came the quick tap–tap of Scanlon's footsteps with two or three of the familiar pauses; then the man was at the door of his room, the sound of his rapid breathing hissing in Vincent's ears.

The key turned in the lock, then Vincent's view was momentarily blocked as Cronin came by the crack of the doorway. He had moved noiselessly, and now his voice spoke low but sharply.

"Scanlon!"

Vincent could not see the shoe salesman, for the man had already started into his room. But he could hear the gasp that came from him.

"What do you want?"

The gruff voice, which quavered in a pitiful manner, came from Scanlon.

"I want to talk with you," said Steve Cronin in an amiable tone. "I came up here to see you."

"I thought you had an appointment."

"I kept it. The man was not there to meet me."

"How did you know I was stopping here?"

"You told me."

"I did not."

There was a pause. The two were close together in Scanlon's doorway, out of Vincent's view. Steve Cronin broke the silence.

"We're old friends, Scanlon," he said. "I'm glad to see you again. You told me you were staying here; but you probably forgot you mentioned it. I think I can help you make some sales. I'll only be with you a few minutes."

"I don't need your help," replied Scanlon. His voice was firm again.

Vincent smiled despite the tension. Steve Cronin, wolf though he might be, seemed due to meet a fighting lamb.

"Why argue here in the corridor?" said Cronin suavely.

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"I don't like you, that's why," answered Scanlon.

"You don't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I have my reasons. You can go along. I don't want to be bothered with you."

"That's just why I'll stay. I'll find out why you don't like me."

Vincent heard a hurried sound. Scanlon was trying to slam the door in Steve Cronin's face.

"Easy now, Scanlon," came the smooth words of Steve Cronin. "Easy now. I'm coming in."

The door slammed, and Vincent heard hurried, mumbled words. He stepped softly into the hallway.

Scanlon's transom was still partly opened. The men were talking excitedly, but in low voices. Vincent could not catch their words. Still he listened, one hand reaching toward the door of his own room, his eyes watching down the corridor

The voices became less excited. They were low and virtually inaudible. Something was being discussed between the two men, and Vincent – of all the persons in the great hotel – was the only one who knew of it.

The men must have approached the door, for Vincent could hear their voices despite the quiet tones. Scanlon was speaking.

"All right, Cronin – if that's your name – tell me what you want."

"You know what I want, Scanlon. I want the disk."

"What disk? Don't know what you're talking about."

"The Chinese disk. The coin. You have it."

"I don't understand you, Cronin." "You know what I'm asking for. Be reasonable. I'll buy it. Name your price."

Scanlon's reply was a mumble. The voices lessened, and Vincent could hear nothing. He tiptoed back into his own room; there he listened at the window. The night was not cold; the maid probably left the sash raised in Scanlon's room. Yet no sound came from the room next door.

Vincent slipped off his shoes and removed his coat, vest and collar. He lay on the bed a few moments, wondering what should be his next move. As he pondered on this question he fancied he heard a dull sound from the room next door. What was it – a table overturning – a falling body?

He peered through the crack of his own door, then crept into the corridor and listened. He looked at the door of the other room and his eyes were riveted there for an instant. The knob of the door was slowly turning!

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Three steps carried Vincent back into his own room. As he peered through the crack of the door, he saw Steve Cronin tiptoe into the hallway. With furtive glances in both directions, the mustached man stole along the corridor and disappeared through the exit to the fire tower.

With tingling nerves, Vincent placed his hand upon the knob of the door to Scanlon's room. It yielded to his touch. Cronin had closed the door silently and the latch could not have caught. It was Vincent's turn to glance up and down the hall; seeing no one, he entered the room that was Scanlon's.

Dim light, the reflection of Manhattan's glare, enabled him to find his way to the open window. As he looked to his right, he shuddered. A form lay sprawled on the floor, one hand stretched upward against the side of the telephone table.

It was the body of Scanlon. Vincent was sure that the man was dead. Something white was near him; without touching the object, Vincent recognized it as a pillowcase.

Instinctively he knew what had transpired. The dull sound had either been a shot or the fall of Scanlon's body. Steve Cronin had forced the man into the closet – Vincent could see the opened door behind the body – and had shot the shoe salesman, using the pillowcase to muffle the revolver's report.

It was murder – cold, brutal murder – and Vincent was alone in the room with the murdered man. He felt that he should leave at once, but the tragedy held a lure that kept him there.

He stepped toward the closet and something pressed into the sole of his stockinged foot. It was a dull, upright edge, and Vincent reached down mechanically to inspect it.

His fingers touched a flat, round object wedged in a crack at the entrance to the closet door. He had no idea what it might be – his nerves were too strained to take notice, for his thoughts were concerned with the body that lay near him.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he pulled the object from the crack and dropped it into his vest pocket.

It might be a clew – but what better clew could any one find than a man in the room with a murdered body? Terror came over Vincent as he thought of his precarious position, and what it might mean if some one were to come upon him at that moment.

He must get back to his own room at all cost – yet he must, prodded by his sense of duty as an American citizen, give some signal of Scanlon's murder.

An idea came to him. He reached out and pushed the telephone from the table. It clattered on the floor, and Vincent, now thoroughly alarmed, hurried from the room and slipped through his own door.

There was no one in the hallway to see him. He was safe!

How long would it be before anyone would come to investigate Scanlon's room? The telephone receiver, fallen from its hook, would give the alarm; the lack of an answering voice would surely arouse the suspicions of the girl down at the switchboard.

Vincent went to bed and lay there through endless moments. At last there was a noise in the hall. He could hear some one opening Scanlon's door. Some one was talking in the hallway; more voices joined in, and finally there came a thumping upon Vincent's door.

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Feigning sleepiness, Vincent opened his door, appearing in his pajamas. He could see that the door of Scanlon's room was open, and that the lights were on.

The man who stood before Vincent was evidently the house detective.

"What's going on?" inquired Vincent drowsily.

"Man killed in there," said the house detective. "Did you hear a revolver shot a while ago?"

Vincent shook his head.

"All I've heard was you banging on my door a minute ago. Been asleep."

The house detective nodded.

"It must have been muffled," the dick decided. "Fellow in 1415 didn't hear it, either. Well, we'll look into that part of it later. Want to change your room? There'll be a lot going on around here to disturb you."

"All right," said Vincent.

"Call a bell boy to move you then," said the detective.

Detectives had arrived from headquarters when Vincent went down the corridor to his new room, with the bell boy carrying his belongings. Vincent still appeared to be sleepy, but when he was alone in his new quarters, he suddenly looked very wide awake.

He was somewhat worried that he might be linked with the murder; but a more important thought had suddenly occurred to him. He went to his clothes that lay draped on a chair and fumbled in the pocket of his vest. He found the object that he wanted and brought the little article to view.

An exclamation came to his lips as he held his hand beneath the light. In his palm lay a disk of grayish metal, smaller and thinner than a half dollar, and its center was a dull red character of the Chinese language.

CHAPTER V. THE SHADOW ON THE WALL

A FEW hours after the murder of Robert Scanlon, a man in a brown overcoat strolled from a Broadway motion-picture theater. Except for the wariness of his gaze, this individual was not unlike the other patrons who were faring forth.

No one would have suspected the man to be a murderer; yet such he was. Steve Cronin, cold-blooded and disdainful of the law, had decided to take in a movie after delivering crime.

Strolling a space with the Broadway throng, Steve picked a street and turned westward. He walked along in a manner that excited no suspicion; in fact, at one corner, he passed a policeman without gaining a single glance from the man in uniform.

Steve had decided that unless his trail had been picked up outside the Hotel Metrolite, no one could possibly be following him at present. The murderer also reasoned that any follower – had there been one – would surely have evidenced himself before now.

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In the middle of a block, Steve slowed his pace and came almost to a stop near the doorway of a darkened cigar store. His head turned quickly as he glanced in both directions; then he moved quickly across the street and into the gloomy entrance of an old-fashioned apartment. He pushed a key into the lock of the main door, gave a hurried glance behind him, and entered.

Hardly had the door closed before a slight motion occurred in the dark doorway of the cigar store across the street. The gloomy blackness seemed to spread and project itself into the street.

Something flitted across the street and was absorbed by the entrance way of the old apartment house. It was as though a shadow had detached itself from one building and had passed over to the other.

All was silent in the entrance to the apartment. Then came a slight, almost imperceptible clicking in the lock. The door opened inward and cast a long, moving shadow down the dimly lighted hall.

The door swung shut, noiselessly; but its shadow remained, and then extended itself along the hall, to be lost in the darkness of the unlighted stairway. A man came down the steps, whistling; but he noticed nothing.

The strange, movable shadow reappeared in the hallway of the third floor, and formed an oddly shaped blot outside a doorway. It remained there, motionless, part of the many shadows that were there.

The door of the apartment swung suddenly open, and its shadow spread over the queer blotch of darkness, completely obscuring it.

Two men peered down the hallway. One was Steve Cronin, short and stocky, with a black mustache, and a tense, grim countenance. The other was somewhat taller – a slender man with a long, pointed nose, and shrewd, shifty eyes. The muscles of his face twitched nervously. He stepped into the hall, his thin lips forming a mirthless grin.

"There's no one here, Steve," growled the slender man, in an undertone.

"I just wanted to make certain sure, Croaker," replied the other, in a smooth, low voice.

"Don't worry, Steve," was the answer. "You're safe. The entry gives us two doors between us and the hall. You know me well enough, Steve. I'm no sap. There's no listeners-in on anything that goes on here."

"All right, Croaker. Let's get back inside. I've got a lot to spill."

The door closed. The shadowy blot reappeared on the floor. It remained there a full minute; then it twisted fantastically and moved back toward the stairs.

Within the room, the man called "Croaker" was reassuring his visitor.

"Look out that window, Steve," he said, "three stories down into the courtyard. Not a window below us. This floor is an extension, over a storehouse. You'd need a fire ladder to come up here. Shall I shut the window?"

"Leave it open," said Steve nervously. "We're safe right here, and we can hear any loud noise in the street – like police whistles, for instance."

He thrust his head from the window and satisfied himself of what his companion had said.

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The lower floors were solid brick masonry, dark almost to a point of blackness. He could see the white pavement of the courtyard below.

On the other side of the court was a low one-story building; evidently an old garage. Croaker was right; only a fire ladder could scale this height.

Steve slipped into a chair in the corner of the room, just away from the window, from which he could face the door. It was at the foot of the bed, and Croaker sat on that article of furniture while he looked at his visitor.

"Well, Steve, what's up?"

The stocky man pressed his knuckles against his mustache; then lowered his hand and spread it on his knee.

"I can trust you, Croaker?"

"Of course."

"You'll stick by me; even if you have to forget the rest of the gang?"

Croaker showed new nervousness. His facial twitch again became apparent. He considered the statement for a few moments; then questioned:

"You aren't figuring a double-cross, are you, Steve?"

"What if I am?"

"I won't go in on it."

"You won't? Why not?"

"Because I don't play that kind of a game."

"You don't, eh? Well, I know different."

The man on the bed leaned angrily toward his visitor. For several seconds the two men glared steadily at each other. Then Croaker's face began to twitch, and his eyes shifted from the stare of the other man.

Steve laughed.

"Why do you think I had you watch the hotels?" he asked. "Do you think that was for the crowd? I told you it was important, but I didn't say who wanted it done. I'll tell you why I picked you for it, Croaker. I picked you because I'm the only man who knows what you did when the gang pulled that job in Hoboken."

Croaker's face began to twitch again. His eyes showed their nervous fright as he looked toward Steve.

"You ain't saying nothing about it?" he pleaded.

"Not a word, Croaker – if you work with me now."

A long, distorted shadow appeared on the wall at the far side of the room. It might have come from something swinging in from the window, for the light was in the corner, close by Steve's chair. Neither of the

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men observed it. Both were intent in their conversation. The blackness remained motionless.

"Listen, Croaker," said Steve. "When we slipped you that cash and those stock certificates over in Hoboken, you thought that we hadn't had time to count them. But we had. I was the guy that did the counting. It was short when we got together to split."

"You ain't told anybody?"

"Nobody."

"You ain't going to tell?"

"Not if you stick with me this trip. I know why you keep in this room so much. You've still got some of those certificates here. Maybe you've got some swag you pinched from other jobs. But I don't tell people all I know."

The splotch on the wall moved away and disappeared completely. A moment later, Croaker rose from the bed and walked to the window, where he peered anxiously into the dark night. Then he returned and sat down.

"You've got the goods on me, Steve."

"Maybe I have, Croaker. You'll have the goods on me, before I'm through."

"How's that?"

"I'm going to tell you what I've done, and what I'm going to pull. I want you to go in on it."

"What does it mean?"

"Plenty. We can both light out when we finish this. I started it; it's up to you to put it through. It's soft, too."

Croaker regained his composure.

"Spill it, boy," he said.

"Well," said Steve, "you remember I had to keep watch on a couple of hotels for any guy that might be in from California? We talked about that when we were outside of Mickey's place."

"Yeah. I was afraid some guy was listening in on us."

"I remember that. It was all bunk. You saw a big shadow on the sidewalk and got scared. When we looked around, it was only some drunk leaning against a wall."

"Maybe he heard us."

"What if he did? He would have watched you – not me. You didn't get any dope on guys from California, did you?"

"No."

"Well, I did. I found the guy I wanted."

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"What was he?"

"Fellow named Scanlon. I bumped him off tonight, over at the Metrolite Hotel."

Croaker whistled.

"That's why I've got to scram," resumed Steve. "I made the mistake of telling him my name. But I don't think he spilled it, or had the chance to."

"You were a fool to do that, Steve."

"I didn't expect to have trouble with him. I offered him five grand for what I wanted, up in the hotel room. He wouldn't take it. I had to get it to-night. I shoved him into the closet and pulled the rod on him."

"How did you get away?"

"Luck. Down the fire tower. But the dicks may be after me now. I'm going West; I've got plenty of dough to get away."

"That's why I've got to finish the job, eh?"

Steve Cronin leaned forward in his chair.

"You'll finish it, Croaker, and you'll split fifty-fifty with me."

"That's right. Give me the dope."

"You know who old Wang Foo is, don't you?"

"Yeah, the Chinese guy."

"You know what he is? He's a fence."

"Yeah, I've heard that. He gets rid of plenty of stolen stuff, they say, but nobody knows how he does it."

"That's what I've found out," said Steve triumphantly. "I picked up the news in Frisco; not from one guy – just little pieces of it from different people, until I had the whole thing doped out, just as it is."

Croaker's face began to twitch excitedly. He leaned forward to listen more closely.

"Every six months," continued Steve, "a guy comes East from Frisco. Never the same guy – always a different one. Nobody knows who it's going to be. This guy comes to New York under the orders of an old Chinaman named Wu Sun, who is the big noise of a tong in Frisco. All the guy does is go to Wang Foo and get a sealed box that he takes back to Frisco. That box carries more than just stolen goods. It has thousands in bank notes – dough from Wang Foo to the big noise out West. To-morrow afternoon at three o'clock is the time the messenger is to appear."

"But how does he get the box?" asked Croaker doubtfully.

"Easy," answered Steve. "The messenger says nothing. He doesn't even know what it's all about. He walks in on Wang Foo, and shows the old boy a disk. It's sort of a Chinese coin. That's the sign. He gets the box and

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leaves."

"Where is the disk, Steve?"

"That's the trouble, Croaker. I'm sure Scanlon had it. I could see him reach in his pocket when he got nervous. We were over by the door, and he switched the light out. Then he began to sneak over toward the window. I was near the bed, and I whisked off a pillowcase and shoved it over my gun. When I came after him, he moved toward the closet. The door was open; and before he knew what was up I shoved him in, and pulled the door. Then I let him have it. Sounded loud in the closet; but I don't think they heard it outside."

"Why didn't you get the disk?"

"Couldn't find it. It wasn't on him. I let him drop when I opened the closet door, and I went through his clothes, but it wasn't there. It must have fallen somewhere. I didn't have time to stay all night."

"Then we're out of luck."

"Maybe not, Croaker. That's why I'm putting you wise. You're smart enough to figure some way on getting in there to look for it."

"Dangerous business, Steve."

"Well, it's the only chance. The disk must be in the room. If you can't get it before to-morrow, try later. I don't know that the messenger always gets to Wang Foo's on time."

"I'll do what I can, Steve."

"All right, Croaker. I'd do it myself, only they may be looking for me. I saw the house detective when I went in the hotel. I think he knows me, and he may have spotted me. I've got to get out of town."

"Why didn't you let Scanlon get the box, Steve, and then take it from him?"

"I was afraid the chinks might be watching him after he got it. They're a crazy bunch."

"Maybe they're watching him now. Maybe I'll get nabbed."

"Not a chance, Croaker. Your big job is to get into Room 1417 at the Metrolite, and find that disk. Wang Foo isn't supposed to know who the messenger is until he shows up. Even if he's a few days late, the disk will fix matters. So get on the job, and be sure to make a quick get-away after the old Chinaman gives you the box."

Croaker did not reply. Instead he seized Steve Cronin's wrist and pointed excitedly toward the wall, his face twitching in sudden terror.

"Look, Steve! That shadow!"

A black outline vanished suddenly as Cronin gazed in the direction indicated.

"What shadow?" asked Steve. "You're seeing things, Croaker."

Croaker went to the window and peered into the darkness, his eyes trying to penetrate the surrounding gloom.

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"I've got to scram, Croaker," said Steve.

The other man turned from the window and shrugged his shoulders. He was worried about the shadow he had seen on the wall. He was thinking that perhaps Steve's story was a bluff. He was anxious now to get rid of this visitor, who knew too much about him.

As Steve Cronin left the apartment, Croaker stood in the doorway. He waited until his visitor was out of sight. Then, as he turned to the room, he stood petrified with sudden fear, and his twitching face held a distorted position.

For from his room came a low, mocking peal of laughter; a weird, uncanny laugh that was chilling to his heart. As he staggered into the lighted room he saw a mammoth shadow swing across the wall and melt into the black night beyond the window.

He rushed into his room and looked out into darkness. He could see nothing; the courtyard below was silent in its gloom.

Croaker stumbled to a chair and sat there, with dread in his heart; for he foresaw an unrelenting doom.

A taxi driver, waiting in his cab in the street behind the apartment house, was quite as surprised as Croaker. As the driver's gaze chanced to fall on the wall of the building, he saw a shadow three stories up that suddenly moved downward.

But when the astonished man strained his eyes to examine the phenomenon, the moving shadow lost itself in the inkiness that obscured the lower stories of the edifice.

He had no time to leave his cab and make a closer inspection. For while he still gazed at the building across the street, a tall man with a large felt hat tapped at the window of the cab and demanded transportation.

Driving his fare to the address given, he still wondered about that mysterious shadow.

CHAPTER VI. THE SECOND MESSAGE

HARRY VINCENT awoke the next morning with a troubled mind. His sleep had been disturbed by unwelcome dreams, in which the frightened face of Scanlon and the sinister features of Steve Cronin had haunted him.

In the light of morning he chided himself because he had not anticipated and prevented the murder of the night before. His instructions had been to "watch the man in the next room," and perhaps that might have meant to see that no harm came to the man. If such had been his mission, he had failed.

The morning newspaper was at his door, and he scanned the front page for news of the murder. The story was there; but its details were very few. The police, ran the account, were rounding up suspicious characters, but so far no clues had been discovered in the room where the murder had taken place.

Vincent dressed slowly, while he was reading and re-reading the newspaper account. He was in a quandary. He knew that he possessed information that would be valuable to the police, yet he felt that he could say nothing until he received instructions from the sinister stranger who had become what amounted to his master, and whom he had promised to obey.

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Vincent thrust his hand in his trousers pocket, and brought out the strange, grayish disk that bore the dull-red Chinese character. Here was a tangible clew. So far as he could see, it was the only clew that existed. What should he do with it?

He shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing to do but wait, for he knew of no way in which he could reach his mysterious benefactor and give him this bit of important evidence.

Vincent speculated upon his own position with a vague feeling of insecurity. Suppose the police should decide to quiz him? What could he tell them?

If they should decide to cross-examine him on the chance that he might know more than he had told, what would be the result? Vincent might be forced to tell his whole story; and who would believe him if he related the strange adventure of the mysterious man on the bridge?

He felt nervous, and tried to calm his mind by reading other items in the paper. The principal story was another murder – a much more important one than that of Scanlon.

A masked man had entered the home of Geoffrey Laidlow, a millionaire who lived in a palatial residence on Long Island. While opening the Laidlow safe, the criminal had been surprised by the millionaire and his secretary.

There had been an exchange of shots; Laidlow had been killed and his secretary wounded. The man had escaped with thousands of dollars in loot – composed chiefly of valuable gems which the millionaire had collected.

There was another story of violent death on the same page, but it was scarcely more than a brief item. The residents of an uptown apartment house had been awakened by pistol shots on the third floor. The police had found a man murdered. They had identified him as a gangster, who was known by the name of Croaker. The police suspected that he had been killed by other denizens of the underworld for some undetermined reason.

"Three murders in one night," mused Vincent. "All on the front page. This Croaker case looks fairly obvious – a crook bumped off for double-crossing his gang. Geoffrey Laidlow murdered because he tried to thwart a robbery. Scanlon killed – and no one knows why. That is, except for the precious little I know."

Vincent looked at the Chinese disk, examining it carefully. The same mystic character appeared on both sides. He wondered wherein lay the value of the disk. It must certainly be important and greatly desired; for a daring murder had been committed for no other apparent motive.

The telephone bell broke in on his thoughts, and he trembled nervously. Who could be calling him? Vincent hesitated while the bell sounded a second time; then, steadying himself, he lifted the receiver and answered with a firm voice.

"Mr. Vincent?" came the voice of the operator.

"Yes."

"I wanted to make sure I had your new room number right. Fourteen fifty-two. That's correct, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Wait a moment, please. Some one is calling you."

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Vincent trembled nervously while he waited for the connection.

"Here's your party," came the operator's voice.

"Mr. Vincent?"

It was a man's voice, smooth and modulated. Vincent acknowledged it with a feeble "Yes."

"This is Detective Harrison, of headquarters."

Vincent's heart leaped to his throat.

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Vincent," continued the voice. "We are simply checking up on statements that were given last night by guests of the hotel. I am going to read the data that we have placed on the record concerning you. Will you please listen carefully?"

"Yes," said Vincent.

The voice over the telephone came very slowly. Despite his nervousness and alarm, Vincent detected an emphasis on certain words.

"You did not hear the report of a pistol. You were called to the corridor. There were three or four fellows there. The house detective was in the company."

The voice ceased speaking. Vincent did not reply. He was thinking of the message, in which four words stood out so prominently: "Report to fellows company."

"Is that correct, Mr. Vincent?" came the voice of the man who had called himself Detective Harrison.

"That's right," answered Vincent.

The receiver clicked at the other end.

"Just a moment," called Vincent. The message had suddenly seemed insufficient. He wanted to hear the statement again.

"Sorry," said the operator. "Your party has hung up."

Vincent placed the receiver on the hook and began to repeat the words he had just heard:

"Report to fellows company."

What could be the meaning of this terse, cryptic statement? Vincent wrote the words on a piece of hotel stationery, then tore the paper into tiny shreds and threw them in the wastebasket. The message was not clear; yet he was expected to understand it, and it must certainly be important. For it was a message from the man he called The Shadow.

Vincent paced up and down the room, mentally repeating the four words he had learned. "Report to" – that part of it was plain. He was to go somewhere and tell what he knew about the affair in Room 1417 that had led to the murder of Scanlon, the shoe salesman from San Francisco.

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But what was "fellows company"? What could the words mean? He was to report to "fellows company." He looked at the telephone, and his eye chanced to observe the gray-covered telephone directory.

Perhaps the clew lay there. He was to report to "fellows." What was "fellows"? A name perhaps. If it happened to be a name, it might be in the telephone book. That was it! Fellows! A man named Fellows!

He hurriedly thumbed the pages of the directory under the letter F. He found the name "Fellows." There were not many persons of that name. He read each listing carefully, and a cry of exultation escaped his lips, as he read this line:

"Fellows Co., Grandville Bldg."

He paid no attention to the telephone number that followed the name. He was to report, and that would mean a personal call. He knew the location of the Grandville Building, which was one of upper Manhattan's newest skyscrapers.

Vincent took out his watch. Five minutes after nine. That allowed time for breakfast, and by using a taxicab he could reach his destination before ten o'clock.

Vincent shaved quickly and finished dressing. He descended to the lobby and left the hotel. He stopped in a restaurant and ordered a quick breakfast.

As he ate, he thumbed the Chinese disk which now reposed in his vest pocket. Perhaps he would soon know something more about this baffling mystery.

CHAPTER VII. THE INSURANCE BROKER

AN amiable, round-faced gentleman was seated at a mahogany desk in an office on the fifteenth floor of the Grandville Building. It was the inner office of a suite; the door to the outer room was closed, so that not even the sound of the stenographer's typewriter reached the man's ears.

The gentleman glanced at his wristwatch and noted that it registered twenty minutes after nine o'clock.

"Time to start business", he murmured softly.

He placed a pair of large spectacles on his nose, and picked up a pile of letters that laid on the desk beside him. He began to sort the mail, slowly and methodically. In one heap went letters addressed: "Fellows Company." A few others bore the name, "Claude H. Fellows," and it was these letters that occupied the man's immediate attention.

Only four of the envelopes bore the personal address, one of which bore no return address. It was a long envelope, postmarked New York. Fellows opened it carefully with a paper cutter, and slowly unfolded the letter within.

So far his actions had been very leisurely, but as he spread the paper between his chubby hands, he began to read with great rapidity. The words had been printed by hand, and they would have been meaningless to the average reader, for they were composed of jumbled letters that were unpronounceable.

A cryptogram! The code to the cryptogram likely was simple, for Claude Fellows read it without difficulty. Evidently the letter was designed to perplex anyone for whom it was not intended, yet the make-up of the

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words was doubtless of the variety of cipher that would not be difficult to solve in an hour's time.

Fellows finished the document very quickly. At the bottom of it was a number – 58. He opened a drawer in the desk and brought out a card which bore numbers from 1 to 100. Every number had been crossed out, up to and including 57. He made a pencil mark through number 58, and replaced the card in the drawer.

Fellows drew a cigar from his pocket, and lighted it. While he puffed contentedly and gazed toward the ceiling, he softly repeated the information that he had received in the message.

While he was thus engaged, the letter lay spread on the desk before him. Slowly, as though eradicated by an invisible hand, the words of the cryptogram disappeared until nothing remained but a blank sheet of paper!

"Laidlow murder," mused Fellows. "This was not anticipated. Will require immediate attention. Scanlon murder at Metrolite Hotel. Important. May have been observed by Harry Vincent, our new operative. He will call today. Question him. Notify me if he has information. If he has, hold him for further instructions."

The chubby-faced man remained silent for several minutes as though pondering upon the message. Then, apparently satisfied that he would not forget its details, he picked up the blank sheet of paper, crumpled it in a ball, and tossed it to the wastebasket.

Having regained his leisurely composure, Fellows pressed a buzzer. His stenographer entered a moment later. Fellows opened the other letters that were on the desk, read them in an offhanded manner, and began to dictate replies, all of which obviously referred to matters having to do with his insurance business.

While Fellows was occupied in this work – which required considerable time because of his leisurely way – Harry Vincent entered the outer office. Finding no one there, he sat in a chair to wait. He could hear a man talking in the inner office, and he paid very little attention to the dull, monotonous voice speaking of insurance policies and kindred matters.

The stenographer came into the outer office a few minutes later. Finding Vincent there, she asked for his name. This she reported to Fellows in the inner office, and Vincent was ushered into the private sanctum.

"See that I am not disturbed, Miss Carrington," said the insurance broker. "Please close my door as you go out."

When the door had closed behind the stenographer, Fellows motioned Vincent to a chair at the opposite side of the desk. Then he removed his spectacles and studied Vincent with a calm gaze that was neither inquisitive nor too friendly.

Vincent, in turn, was interested in the man across the desk. He knew immediately that Fellows was not the shadowy stranger of the bridge and the imported limousine, but he realized that there was a definite connection between the two.

Fellows' face was impenetrable. It was the face of a staid, methodical business man. It revealed nothing else to the man who inspected it.

"You are Mr. Vincent," said Fellows slowly.

Vincent nodded.

"You were told to report to me," resumed Fellows.

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"Yes."

"Before you begin, Mr. Vincent, let me assure you that you are quite safe here. You were posted at the Metrolite Hotel to watch a man named Scanlon. He was murdered last night. You were in the hotel at the time. What do you know about it?"

Vincent hesitated. Was this a trap? Did the police suspect that he knew more than he had told in his meager testimony? Could this prosperous-looking insurance broker be a detective?

Fellows seemed to fathom his suspicions.

"Let me reassure you," he said. "I can tell you why you were at the Metrolite Hotel. Two nights ago, you were about to commit suicide, which a stranger saw fit to prevent. Following that, you agreed to perform whatever service this stranger required from you. I represent the one to whom you made that promise."

"You mean The Shadow?" blurted Vincent, without thinking of giving the name that had formed in his mind.

The faint trace of a smile spread over the chubby face of the insurance broker.

"The Shadow," he repeated. "That is what I call him. I see the name occurred to you, also."

"Yes," admitted Vincent. "I can only describe him as a shadow – that came from nowhere and vanished into nothingness."

The insurance broker nodded thoughtfully.

"That is all I know about him, too," he replied. "Like you, I have certain duties to perform. My duty is to learn what you have done. So tell me everything."

Convinced by the man's words, Vincent lost no time in giving the details of his recent adventures.

Fellows listened blandly. He evidenced no surprise whatever when he heard of the finding of the Chinese disk which Vincent handed to him.

When Vincent's story was completed, the insurance broker drew a sheet of paper from the desk drawer, and thrust a pen in a bottle of light-blue ink. He wrote a short note with calm deliberation, folded the paper and sealed it carefully in an envelope. He addressed the envelope and buzzed for the stenographer, to whom he gave the letter.

When the girl had gone, he spoke to Vincent again.

"There will be a reply before noon," said Fellows. "It may interest you to know that the letter I have just sent is to a man named Jonas, whom I have never seen. He has an office in an old building on Twenty-third Street.

"When I first began to receive instructions from this man we call The Shadow, I was curious – just as you are now. I used to investigate a bit, in the same way that you quizzed the chauffeur of the limousine which took you to the Metrolite.

"So when I was told to send letters to Jonas, I took the trouble to visit his office. I found it closed, with a letter chute in the doorway, bearing the sign, 'Leave Mail Here.' I questioned people in the building, and

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learned that no one there had ever seen the man named Jonas; that his office is always shut, and never lighted.

"What happens to the letters that go in that mail chute is a mystery to me. But I know that we will receive a reply within one hour."

Vincent stared wonderingly at the speaker, and Fellows added a further explanation.

"I have told you this with a purpose, Vincent. The methods of the man we call The Shadow are unfathomable. He is entirely unconcerned about any methods you, I, or any one else may use in an attempt to discover his identity. To him, we are no more than children. I discovered that some time ago; I am giving you the information to save you further useless effort."

Vincent stroked his chin in speculation.

"Do you mind if I ask you a few questions, Mr. Fellows?"

"Ask me any question you wish," replied the insurance broker.

"Have you ever seen The Shadow?" quizzed Vincent.

"I don't know."

"Does he live here in New York?"

"I don't know."

"What is his purpose in life?"

"I don't know."

"Is he a crook?"

"I don't know."

"Is he on the side of the law?"

"I don't know."

Vincent laughed, and even Fellows indulged in a serious smile.

"You see, Vincent," said the insurance broker, in an affable tone, "I know very little. I receive messages from The Shadow, and I reply to them. What he writes to me and what I write to him is all forgotten. Remember the answer I have given to your questions. Those three words, 'I don't know,' are often useful."

"You're right," admitted Vincent. "I'll remember them."

"You will excuse me for a while," requested Fellows. "Make yourself at home, while I attend to a few business matters."

Vincent stared from the window and watched the crowds on the streets below, while Fellows used the telephone to discuss insurance with various clients.

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This whole experience was a puzzle to Vincent, and he wondered what was next in store for him. He still felt that the Chinese disk which lay on Fellows' desk was a most important item in whatever was developing.

The minutes went by, and Vincent waited patiently. He was beginning to realize that the ability to be patient was one of the most important duties expected of him.

He glanced at his watch: it registered half past eleven, and he wondered if the reply to Fellows' message would come as soon as the chubby insurance broker expected it.

The stenographer had returned at least a half an hour before; and the door to the outer room was open.

A messenger boy entered the outer office, bearing an envelope. The stenographer signed for it and brought it in to Fellows's desk. The insurance man was busy at the phone, and paid no attention to the envelope for five minutes. Then he rose leisurely and closed the door to the outer office.

He picked up the envelope, unfolded a letter, and stood by the window reading, while Vincent watched him curiously. The chubby man had donned his spectacles, but when he had finished his perusal of the letter, he removed his glasses and looked at Vincent.

"I have an explanation for you," he said. "I am instructed to inform you regarding certain matters which have puzzled you. First, we will discuss the Chinese disk, and the man named Scanlon.

"Scanlon came from San Francisco. He was to take the disk to a Chinese named Wang Foo, to-day, at three o'clock. You are to go in Scanlon's place.

"You will say nothing to Wang Foo. Simply show him the disk, and he will give you a sealed package. You will bring that package here to me.

"Two men besides Scanlon knew the purpose of that disk. One of them was Steve Cronin. He has left New York. The other, a gangster called Croaker, was killed last night. Somehow, his associates learned that he had double-crossed them. They murdered him, and he had no opportunity to mention the matter of the Chinese disk, even if he had intended to do so.

"In order that your journey may be safe, you will enter a taxicab at the corner of Forty-fifth and Broadway at exactly two o'clock this afternoon. It will be a green cab, and you will recognize it by the chauffeur, who will be wearing a cap with a green band.

"The cab will carry you to a Chinese tea shop. Enter and pass through to the rear. Ask to see Wang Foo. Upon leaving the tea shop with the package, you will find the same cab awaiting you. It will bring you back to the corner of Forty-fifth Street and Broadway. From there, you must come here immediately."

"What instructions shall I give the cab driver?" questioned Vincent.

"Any that you please," replied Fellows. "He will simply follow the orders that he has already received."

The insurance broker picked up the disk and gave it to Vincent, who replaced it in his vest pocket. Fellows opened the door, conducted Vincent through the outer office.

"Sorry I can't have lunch with you, Vincent," said the insurance broker. "I'll see you later. Good-by, old chap."

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In his hand, Fellows still held the mysterious letter; but up to this moment, Vincent had had no opportunity to see its written side. Now, as the door was closing, something happened that caused Vincent to stand in the hallway, gaping in astonishment.

Fellows had carelessly turned his hand so that the written side of the letter was directly toward Vincent's eyes. And as the young man had unconsciously sought to scrutinize the writing, he had been amazed to observe that the letter was a blank sheet of paper!

CHAPTER VIII. THE TEA SHOP OF WANG TOO

THE taxicab was rolling through the side streets of Manhattan. Harry Vincent wondered where it was carrying him. For half an hour the driver had been following a circling, twisting course that seemed to lead nowhere.

Vincent had hailed the cab at the stroke of two o'clock. He had recognized the green band on the driver's hat. He had given instructions to be taken to the Grand Central Station, and the cab driver had not followed his orders. That was proof enough that Vincent was in the right cab.

He had looked for the familiar card that is in every New York cab, showing the driver's picture and his name. There was no such card in this cab. It had evidently been removed.

He had found himself wondering who the driver might be. Another agent of The Shadow? Perhaps it was The Shadow himself! The man was wearing a coat with a large collar, and the top of the coat had been turned up so that only the tip of his nose was in view.

Whoever the man might be, he was familiar with the city, for the cab had made so many turns and twists that Vincent had given up wondering where he might be.

He knew, though, that the driver was not trying to confuse him; for any street-corner sign might give the correct location. It was obvious that the man at the wheel was making sure that no car was following the cab.

The Chinese disk was still safely embedded in Vincent's pocket. He felt the tiny talisman and speculated upon its importance. By merely showing this, he was to receive a package – a package which he must bring back to Fellows, the insurance broker.

That would be easy. He could not see any danger impending. Yet the mysterious course of the cab indicated that the mission might not be a safe one.

Glancing at his watch, Vincent noted that it was nearly three o'clock. That was the hour of his appointment with Wang Foo – the appointment he was to keep in place of the murdered Scanlon. Evidently the dead shoe salesman was not known to the Chinese tea merchant. The disk alone would be accepted as his badge of identity.

Finally the cab pulled up in front of a squalid building on the edge of Chinatown. The driver opened the door, and presented Vincent with a ticket. Vincent paid the bill; this was evidently intended as a natural procedure to dismiss the suspicions of any watchers on the street.

The cab pulled away before Vincent had an opportunity to note the driver's face, which was still hidden by his coat collar.

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The building was three stories high. There were plate-glass windows in the front; and they were piled with tea boxes in disorderly arrangement. The windows were covered with Chinese characters, but over the door appeared in English letters the name "Wang Foo."

Vincent entered and found himself in a combination sales-and-storage room. There was a counter at the right, and piles of boxes at the left. The room was extremely narrow, but very long. It was dirty and uninviting, dimly lit by two gas jets hung from the ceiling.

A Chinaman behind the counter eyed Vincent curiously, but did not speak.

Vincent walked nonchalantly through the room. There was a solid wall at the back, but he paid no attention to that fact until he had arrived at the end of the room. Then he discovered a door, to the right, partly obscured by piles of tea boxes. He tried the door, but found it locked.

The Chinaman behind the counter had silently followed him through the room. Vincent was slightly startled as the Celestial plucked his sleeve and spoke in pidgin English.

"Who you wanee see?"

"Wang Foo."

"Not home."

"Oh, but he is."

The Chinaman shook his head.

Vincent became commanding.

"You tell Wang Foo I want to see him."

"Not home," replied the Chinaman. "I tellee you not home."

"I have come a long way – from California," said Vincent meaningly.

The Chinaman quickly nodded at Vincent's last words.

"Me lookee. Me see. Maybe Wang Foo comee home."

"All right," declared Vincent impatiently. "Make it snappy."

The Celestial tapped on the upper panel of the door. It opened inward. Vincent was startled for a moment, then he saw that it was a simple sort of trap opening that he had not noticed in the darkness.

The Chinaman spoke in his native tongue.

A mumbled reply came from within the door. The Chinaman answered, and there was a conversation of three or four minutes. The trap closed; the Chinaman stepped away, and the door opened to admit Vincent.

The visitor stepped into darkness and found himself at the foot of a flight of stairs. A large heavily built Chinaman was before him, scarcely visible in the darkness. The Mongol spoke in English.

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"Come."

Vincent went up the steps, which were almost pitch-dark. The guide was a few feet ahead, his light-colored robe enabling the American to follow. At the top of the steps there was a turn, and Vincent emerged with the Chinaman into an entryway that was lighted by a single, low-turned gas jet. A massive door of teakwood blocked the way.

The Chinese guide knocked four times.

The door opened and the big Chinaman motioned Vincent to enter. The door closed behind him.

After all the squalor he had seen downstairs, Vincent was amazed by the room in which he now stood. It was a square room, fairly large, and exquisitely furnished. The wall was draped with huge tapestries covered with golden dragons embroidered on black backgrounds.

The room was dimly lighted, but evidently electricity was used, the lamps being masked behind silken shades. Furniture of all descriptions was about the room; beautiful, thick Chinese rugs covered the floor.

The smell of incense came to Vincent, and he noted a burner, shaped in the form of a tiny temple, that stood on a taboret in one corner.

At the far side of the room was a sort of desk, with huge thick legs that ended at the bottom in dragon claws. Behind this odd piece of furniture sat an ancient Chinaman. He wore a crimson tunic that buttoned tight about his neck, which bore a golden dragon upon its front. The Chinaman wore thick, heavy spectacles, and blinked slowly as he looked impassively at his visitor.

Vincent stood for a moment in real surprise; then he suddenly remembered his mission. It was advisable that he should express no amazement in this room.

He assumed a matter-of-fact pose and walked deliberately across the floor to the desk where the old Chinaman sat.

He knew that this must be Wang Foo, the tea merchant. There was no need for introduction. Gaining confidence, Vincent reached into his vest pocket, removed the disk with the Chinese characters, and exhibited it on the palm of his hand, which he thrust close to the Chinaman's eyes.

Wang Foo nodded knowingly.

He rose and bowed.

Vincent returned the bow and dropped the disk back into his vest pocket.

Old Wang Foo tottered across the room. Vincent watched him curiously as Wang Foo went to a miniature pagoda standing in a corner near the door.

As the Chinaman stooped and pressed a secret spring in the pagoda, his visitor noticed a strange occurrence. The shadow of the old Chinaman seemed to lengthen, across the floor and up the wall.

Startled, Vincent looked all about him, suspecting that some other person was in the room.

He saw only the black tapestries, which were motionless.

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When Vincent looked at Wang Foo the old Chinaman had turned, and was holding two articles in his hands: one a large sealed package, the other a small teakwood box.

Vincent advanced to receive the package, but the Chinaman brushed by him and returned to the desk.

Seated there, he laid both objects on the table. He pressed his right hand upon the package as though to draw it to him, and with his left he pushed the little box across the table.

"Unlock," said Wang Foo.

"Unlock what?" asked Vincent.

The sound of the voices seemed ominous in the midst of the curtained room.

"The box," said Wang Foo.

Vincent was puzzled.

"How can I unlock the box?" he demanded.

The old Chinaman leaned back in his chair and stared through his heavy glasses.

"With the key," he said slowly.

Vincent did not reply.

"You have the key?" questioned Wang Foo quietly.

His visitor remained silent.

"Strange," murmured the old Chinaman, and Vincent wondered at the excellence of his English. "Strange. You have no key. No key from my friend, Wu Sun. Yet Wu Sun sent you?"

The name was unfamiliar to Vincent. He was on the point of nodding, but suddenly feared that he might betray himself. He looked steadily at Wang Foo, seeking some clue as to the answer he should give, but the old Mongol's face stayed impassive.

"No key from Wu Sun," said Wang Foo, calmly. "My friend, Wu Sun, has sent his men before; always with that same disk – the token of Hoang-Ho – which you carry.

"But I sent a message to Wu Sun, six months ago. I said: 'It is not the part of wisdom to rely upon one token only. Here is the key to a little box. Let the messenger carry it, and unlock the box for me. Then I shall know it is the true messenger.'"

The slow, cold, monotonous words of the old Chinaman thrust terror into Vincent's heart. But he steadied himself and became quite calm as he shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

"Wu Sun said nothing to me about a key. He gave me the token only. He must have forgotten the key."

Wang Foo pointed one finger upward.

"Wu Sun never forgets," he announced.

The uplifted finger turned and pointed straight at Vincent. The significance of it suddenly dawned upon the visitor. It was a signal!

Vincent turned quickly, but he was too late. From the tapestries at the sides of the room, two giant Chinamen had already emerged.

Before he could raise a hand to resist, Vincent was stretched upon the floor, his arms pinned behind his back, and his feet bound with leather thongs!

CHAPTER IX. THE ROOM OF DOOM

VINCENT had been lying for a full hour on the floor of Wang Foo's elegant den. His hands and feet were bound with leather straps that would not yield; a silken gag prevented him from crying out for help.

The old tea merchant paid no more attention to him than if he had been a part of the furnishings of the room. Vincent could watch the bespectacled Mongol as he wrote at his desk. Wang Foo was a mild-appearing Chinaman, but nothing in his actions brought hope to the captive American.

The Chinese disk – the token of Hoang-Ho – had been taken from Vincent's pocket, but he had not been injured in any way.

What would Wang Foo do next? Vincent had pondered upon the question ever since his capture. There seemed to be no answer.

At last, after minutes that seemed endless, Wang Foo arose from his desk and walked with tottering steps to a corner where Vincent could see a Chinese gong. The aged Celestial tapped the gong four times. Instantly, the two huge Chinese reappeared from behind the tapestries.

"Clever old chap," said Vincent to himself. "Has two strong men always ready. The place looked harmless enough when I came in."

Wang Foo pointed a birdlike claw toward the prostrate captive helpless on the floor. Without further ado, the two yellow giants lifted Vincent, and carried him to the door. Wang Foo opened it for them.

In the hallway, as though by secret understanding, they were joined by the Chinaman who had first met Vincent in the shop and who had guided him to Wang Foo's apartment. He it was who took the lead, jangling a ring of large, brass keys. The two with Vincent for burden, followed. Wang Foo brought up the rear.

The party proceeded up a steep, side stairway which Vincent had not observed upon his arrival. The Celestial with the keys unlocked door after door for them. There were many doors, and the unlocking of each was made a little ceremony.

At last, following a confusing journey, they entered a cell-like chamber. It was lighted by a faint share of daylight which trickled through a small, barred window.

There Vincent was deposited. Four posts surrounded him; a wooden collar supported his neck; his ankles rested upon a similar, semi-circular device which was open at the top.

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Staring upward, Vincent saw a vague shape looming from above. And, as his eyes became accustomed to the dim light, he was able to identify this as the sharp blade of a huge cleaver suspended from upright posts.

The men were engaged in thrusting a chain beneath Vincent's arms.

Momentarily struck by panic, Vincent attempted to struggle to his feet. At once, one of his captors pounced upon his legs, pinning them down. Then Vincent felt a second chain being wound about his ankles. Then followed the click of padlocks.

The leather thongs were left in position, as well. Vincent found it impossible to move his body; his position seemed barren of hope.

Wang Foo clapped his leathery hands. The three Chinamen left.

"You have made a great mistake," said the ancient Celestial in his even-toned, perfect English. "For this you will know your doom. We who come from the land of China do not delight in torture, although the ignorant say we do. We give quick death – the death that you will experience."

He stepped back. Vincent followed him with his eyes, and saw the old Chinaman lift a chain from the great cleaver that loomed from above.

"When this chain is released," explained Wang Foo, in a pitiless voice, "the great knife will fall and end your life. It will be quick that you will feel no pain."

Wang Foo replaced the chain.

"I, myself," he said, "shall let the great knife fall. From my own room, the mere touch of my hand will do the work. None up here can stop it. But, lest my plan should fail, I shall leave a guard to watch you."

He clapped his hands four times. A short, bland-faced Chinaman appeared in the doorway. Wang Foo gave instructions in Chinese, and the other man bobbed his head.

"The exact moment of your death," said old Wang Foo, again addressing his prisoner, "will be arranged beforehand."

He turned to the new arrival and took from him a huge hourglass, which he set on the sill beside the barred window. Vincent could see the glass plainly. The sand was all in the bottom.

"In my study," continued Wang Foo, "is another hourglass – the mate of this one. Both are true to the last grain. The sands which pour from one are equaled by the sands from the other. Both will begin to fall at the same moment. When the last grain has fallen in the glass upon my desk, I shall release the great knife. You will know that moment if you watch the glass upon the window."

"So you see I shall be kind to you. I shall give you one hour to live, and let you watch that hour as it departs."

Wang Foo bowed deeply and left the room. The other Chinaman remained, leaning in the doorway, watching Vincent intently. A few minutes later, a gust struck from a room below.

Hearing the muffled sound, the Chinaman in the doorway pattered to the window-sill and inverted the hourglass. The prisoner could see the first grains of sand as they began to fall.

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The Chinaman was back in the doorway, still on guard, and the moments were passing.

Vincent's eyes remained upon the hourglass. The slow, regular falling of the sands was fascinating. But, as he saw the little mound increase in the lower portion of the glass, the full fear of death crept over him.

He strove to release the bonds which held him. He worked frantically, exerting his full strength.

At last he was exhausted. He had not moved his body the fraction of an inch.

His eyes sought the Chinaman who guarded the door. He could see him in the gloom, but he could not cry out to the man, because of the silken gag in his mouth.

It meant nothing, however. It would be useless to plead with the accomplice of Wang Foo.

Vincent turned his eyes toward the hourglass. Nearly half of the sand had dropped. He could picture the other glass in Wang Foo's den; the old Mongol there, writing, apparently unnoticing, but always watching from the corner of his eye, as the sands fell in the glass upon the desk. "Quick death!" thought Vincent and shuddered.

A second Chinaman appeared in the doorway. Vincent became aware of this when he heard a mumbled conversation. The first man departed, the newcomer remained on guard.

Evidently Wang Foo left nothing to chance. He was switching the watchers during the course of the hour so that a thoroughly alert guard would surely be on duty.

The grains of sand were falling with the same meaningful monotony. It was as though they were grains of sugar sweetening the cup of life – for right then and there the man who had but recently tried to take his own life was finding that life very worth the living.

Vincent attempted to forget the ominous glass that was spelling out the fragment of earthdom which remained. He sought to locate human aid, and, although his better judgment told him it was useless, his eyes sought the face of the Chinese guard.

The Mongol was looking straight before him, oblivious as an idol. His face was like a dull yellow globe in the semidarkness coming to the room. The afternoon was waning; the insufficient light in the little room of death made it difficult to distinguish objects. Yet the sharp, heavy cleaver above the doomed man's head was plain enough to Vincent's eyes.

Only a few minutes more, and that messenger of destruction would perform its grisly task!

The prisoner tried to groan, but even that action was suppressed by the silken bandage between his jaws. His lips were dry; his eyes were staring; his breath came in fitful partings. He looked once more at the huge hourglass. The lower bowl was nearly filled; only a small amount of sand remained to run its course!

Another Chinaman came to the door. The mumble there attracted Vincent's attention, and he was glad to turn his mind from that fearful glass. Evidently another guard had arrived, even though the hour was nearly ended.

The two Chinese talked deliberately in their native language. The new guard took his position, yet the other remained and pointed significantly to the body on the floor.

His action was easy to interpret. The fiend wanted to remain and watch the death stroke. But his companion gesticulated and talked in a commanding voice. The old guard pattered hastily away to report to his master.

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The sands were almost gone; only a few remained to fall.

The prisoner cast a pitiful look toward the new guard, but saw no mercy there.

The new Chinaman left his post, and, coming close, leaned over the victim. His face seemed hideous in the gloom of the darkening room. There was a devilish leer upon his yellow lips, as he bent low beside Vincent.

Expecting the fall of the knife of death, Vincent cast one more look toward the window. The top half of the hourglass was nearly empty; he could almost count the last few grains as they fell.

But something strange was happening! The wicked-looking Chinaman was at his side, forcing and pressing at the padlock which held the chain about the prisoner's arms.

Now the hourglass was empty at the top!

There was a sharp click; the chain loosened. Vincent's eyes turned upward, and he saw the huge cleaver tremble for its plunge. A powerful arm was beneath his neck; his head was swung forward and upward, just as the mighty knife descended.

The edge of the falling blade whizzed past the top of Vincent's head. He could feel the rush of air as it went by. It struck the floor with a tremendous crash, cheated of its victim at the last possible moment!

CHAPTER X. THE FIGHT IN THE GLOOM

THE short, squatty Chinaman was forcing the padlock, which bound the captive's feet to the lower posts. The rescued man was leaning back, exhausted by his ordeal. His head was propped against the heavy cleaver that had fallen a fraction of a second too late.

There was another click; the chain was loosened at Vincent's feet. But would the Chinaman cut the bonds and remove the gag?

Vincent's mind was working clearly now, and his heart sank.

Perhaps this was not a rescue. No friend could have penetrated to the depths of this fiendish lair. It must be another trick of the ruthless Wang Foo – to save his victim from one expected death only to conceive a more terrifying torture for him.

There was a sound at the doorway. Yes, there they were – the three giant Chinamen who had brought him to this dreadful room. They must have come to carry him away again, Vincent supposed.

The short, squatty Celestial turned his head at the sound of footsteps. He rose, and Vincent expected him to greet companions. But this was not to be.

Even in that dim light, the prisoner could see the look of amazement on the faces of the three giants. He could hear their angered hisses as they dashed into the room.

Sharp knives gleamed as the two leading Chinamen threw themselves at the rescuer who had released Vincent. The little, chunky man seemed to cower and draw away.

But, as the two giants were almost upon them, a strange thing happened.

THE LIVING SHADOW

The little Chinaman grew large; his body seemed to spread upward to almost a foot above his former height!

The stranger's arm shot through the gloom to catch the first of the Chinese giants squarely upon the chin. The monster staggered then slumped to the floor. His companion jumped in, swinging a swift, upward knife-thrust for the midsection of Vincent's rescuer.

With surprising alacrity, the latter turned his body and caught the wrist of his attacker. The huge yellow man was catapulted through the air, his knife skidding harmlessly across the room.

Meanwhile, the third Wang Foo minion was not idle. Thinking his two companions could handle the active opposition, he had turned to the captive lashed upon the floor.

He had stood for a short space of time contemplating he who had so miraculously escaped the cleaver. Then, having evidently decided to make up for the cleaver's failure, he drew his knife and tested its point with his fingers while a wicked light shone from his squinting eyes.

Shortly thereafter he poised the knife above Vincent's breast, then started his arm downward on its death-dealing journey. A strange, terrifying laugh suddenly pierced the room and Vincent closed his eyes.

That which followed was utter black confusion to Vincent. Only in a more peaceful interlude thereafter could he figure out the action that likely had transpired. Once again his unknown rescuer must have served him when sorely needed.

The stranger, Vincent decided, must have hurtled himself upon the back of Vincent's attacker. For the huge Chinaman now lay motionless upon the floor, pierced to death by his own knife!

But there was no time then to ask questions. One of the two opponents who had earlier been temporarily accounted for had now recovered, and was wading in. Without pausing for breath, Vincent's rescuer leaped from the floor, and, seizing the remaining giant by the arms, swung him over his shoulder, and carried him, struggling but helpless, to the door. With one great heave he flung the huge man headlong down the stairs. A great thump, and the groan that followed was sufficient proof that the third of Wang Foo's warriors would fight no more.

The strange Chinaman, Vincent noticed, had resumed his squatty appearance. Picking up one of the knives, he cut Vincent's bonds and helped the prisoner to his feet. He drew Vincent to the window, where the cooling air of dusk brought new strength to the weakened American.

Opening his coat, the Chinaman dropped a coil of rope that had been wound about his body. He fastened an end of the rope to one of the bars in the window, and fitted the other end about Vincent's waist.

"Lean against the wall," he whispered in perfect English. "Rest until I make an opening. Then you can drop to safety. The alley will take you to the street. Your cab will be waiting there."

Vincent was too weak to do more than nod. The room was now almost dark. He could see nothing but the shadowy form of the Chinaman who had rescued him. Then he observed the man's hands at the window.

They were slender hands, but they seemed to possess tremendous power. They were working at a bar, which was set firmly in the framework of the window. It seemed incredible that any human being could move that rod of iron; but as Vincent watched, he saw it bend – just the fraction of an inch.

THE LIVING SHADOW

The hands continued their work. The bar was yielding now, only a trifle more than before. The minutes were moving by; they were precious minutes, Vincent knew. The slim, powerful hands worked on.

The bar had assumed the form of a curve. Then suddenly the hands ceased to twist it. They were motionless, and Vincent knew that the man in the dark was listening. There was perfect silence for a moment.

Then, from the depths of the floor below, came four strokes of a Chinese gong.

The hands became active again. The bar began to move. It budged backward and forward, from side to side. Suddenly it snapped from its moorings, and the hands pulled it inward. The opening between the next bar and the window-frame was just large enough for a man to squeeze through.

"Hurry," came the whisper from the gloom. "Through the window."

Vincent clambered to the sill. He grasped the bar to which the rope had been attached, and pulled his body to the position desired. His rescuer, now invisible in the darkness, helped him push his way to the outer air.

"Steady," came the whisper. "Make sure you have the upper end of the rope. Let yourself down easily. There will be time."

Footsteps were stamping up the stairs. There was the sound of voices, half shouting in Chinese.

Vincent poised himself upon the outer edge of the window-sill. His rescuer had left him. He was faint, and he held himself there, while he breathed the refreshing air.

The scene in the room commanded his attention. While it lasted, he was transfixed; unable to find strength to lower himself to safety.

Bright flashlights gleamed from the doorway. Before their glare came four more of Wang Foo's men, each with a ready knife. In the center of the room crouched the squatty Chinaman – if Chinaman he were – waiting for the onrush of his opponents.

As the men moved forward with a weird cry of triumph, the little man grew large again, and it seemed that he strangely chuckled. His hand swung upward, holding the iron bar that he had wrested from the window. His shadow, passing over the floor and up the farther wall, stood behind him like a huge, living monster.

Into the mass of Chinamen he sprang. His iron club swung right and left with mighty force. His enemies went sprawling to the floor. The men behind, who held the lights, were routed by the attack. Bodies fell tumbling through the doorway, and the lights went with them. In one valiant thrust, this amazing stranger had smashed his way to safety!

As Vincent's hands grasped the rope, and he began his precarious trip to the ground, he heard an exultant sound come up the stairway.

It was a long, mocking laugh; a strange, unaccountable laugh; a laugh that would chill the heart of a man who had never known fear.

That parting jibe told the true identity of the strange rescuer who had chosen a Chinese disguise to enter the house of Wang Foo. Harry Vincent had heard the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XI. A BAFFLING MYSTERY

HARRY VINCENT reclined comfortably once more in an armchair in his room at the Metrolite Hotel. Three days had elapsed since the thrilling episode at the house of Wang Foo, the Chinese tea merchant, and the memory of his close escape from destruction still brought chills to Vincent's spine.

He could hardly remember what had happened after his escape to the alleyway behind Wang Foo's domicile. He knew that he had somehow managed to stagger to the street; that the driver of the green taxi had helped him into the cab, and that he had been brought directly to the Metrolite Hotel, where he had managed to pull himself together sufficiently to reach his room.

But these were simple facts that came as recollections. As to the actual details of his return, his mind was blank.

He had visited Fellows, the insurance broker, at ten o'clock the following morning. He had said nothing of his adventures on the outskirts of Chinatown, he realized that the quiet, round-faced insurance man had probably already been informed of the facts. His conference with Fellows had been very brief.

In the quiet of the inner office, Fellows had told him to enjoy himself until further notice, but to spend his idle moments to good use: namely, to read the front pages of the newspapers, and to absorb all details of any stories that pertained to murder.

This, in itself, had been a task. For three days, one specific crime had continued to dominate the headlines of the daily journals. That was the robbery and murder which had been committed at the home of Geoffrey Laidlow, in the fashionable suburb of Holmwood, Long Island. To date, the police had found themselves checkmated.

The available facts of the case were definitely accepted. Geoffrey Laidlow had been living at home, although his family was away. It was his custom to go out nearly every evening, accompanied by his secretary. On the night of his death, he and the secretary had returned shortly before eleven o'clock.

Burgess, the secretary, had witnessed the actual murder. He explained that he and Mr. Laidlow had entered the house quietly, and had gone into the library, closing the door behind them. The millionaire had intended to sign some letters, so Burgess waited, wearing his hat, coat, and gloves, ready to take the mail to the post office.

Before signing the letters, Mr. Laidlow had searched for a book on one of the shelves, and, finding it, had scarcely opened the volume before he stopped and listened.

Some one had moved in the study across the hall, where the safe was located.

Acting on the spur of the moment, the millionaire opened the library door and rushed across the hall, There he surprised a man rifling the safe. The burglar drew a gun and shot him at close range.

The secretary had reached the hall in time to hear the pistol's report, and to see its flash from the dark study.

He grappled with the burglar as the man emerged into the dimly lighted hall. He, too, was a victim of the murderer's gunfire; a shot struck his arm and caused a flesh wound. Burgess had staggered for a moment; and had then followed the fleeing robber to the end of the hall, where the man had escaped through an open window.

THE LIVING SHADOW

The murderer was carrying the large box that contained the Laidlow jewels. In vaulting through the window, he had dropped his revolver, for it was found on the grass outside.

Burgess, weakened by his wound, had not followed the escaping man. Both the butler and the valet had heard the pistol shots. They had run down the stairs, half-dressed, and had arrived just after the murderer had disappeared.

A neighbor of the millionaire was Ezekiel Bingham, a celebrated criminal lawyer. Bingham had been passing the Laidlow home when the shots were fired. He had pulled his car to a stop at the first shot. Hence his testimony took up the story where the secretary had left off.

The window of the hall opened toward the street, but the house was set back among the trees. By the gleam of an arc light, the lawyer had plainly witnessed the murderer's flight. He stated that the man had almost fallen, but had caught himself and dashed off across the lawn and through a hedge.

Bingham had observed that the man was carrying what appeared to be a box. Realizing that he could not take up the pursuit – the lawyer was an elderly man – Bingham had entered the Laidlow home.

It was he who had notified the police of the crime.

There were other witnesses: the cook, the housemaid, and the chauffeur. But their testimony was virtually without apparent value.

The police had quizzed the secretary, and found his story clear and acceptable. He had been in the employ of Geoffrey Laidlow for five years, and was a relative of the millionaire's wife. He was Laidlow's confidential man; he knew that the jewels were kept in the safe, but had never been given the combination. He was a man of known honesty; and Ezekiel Bingham's statements substantiated those of Burgess.

The secretary had been treated for his wound, and was on hand when the millionaire's family – Mrs. Laidlow and two sons – arrived at their home.

The description of the burglar indicated a man of medium height, wearing a dark suit and a black mask, who weighed between one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds. Burgess had given this information, and Bingham had coincided.

With such an excellent beginning, the police had expected many clues, particularly after the rapid flight of the murderer. But they were disappointed.

The grass on the front lawn was thick; the ground was quite dry, and not the trace of a footprint could be discovered.

There were no clues in the study. Some articles had been removed from the safe and scattered upon the floor of the room. There was nothing among the safe's contents of great value – except the jewels, which were missing.

There were no traces of finger prints upon the dials of the safe. The mechanism was an ancient one; the burglar had opened it without resort to tools. The indications were that he was probably a fair expert in the questionable science of safe cracking.

The revolver gave no clue. It had belonged to the millionaire, and he had kept it within the safe.

THE LIVING SHADOW

The burglar had evidently found it there, and had killed Geoffrey Laidlow with the millionaire's own weapon. The two bullets – the one that had pierced Laidlow's brain and the one extracted from the secretary's arm – were found to have been fired from the same pistol. There were no finger prints upon the firearm.

The fact that the millionaire's own gun had been used in committing the murder accounted for the burglar's readiness to part with the weapon after he had dropped it.

All this information was no more enlightening to Harry Vincent, as he read the news accounts, than it had been to the police. He was glad that he was not a police detective. He regarded the mystery as completely baffling.

Nevertheless, he read the hundreds of details that went with the murder story, including such items as the early life of Geoffrey Laidlow, the place the millionaire's wife held in society, and numerous other facts which led him nowhere.

Harry studied the pictures of the millionaire's estate, the newspaper diagrams of the house, the graphic drawings which illustrated the various positions of the participants, including that of the chauffeur running in from the garage at the rear.

The police were working every device and pulling every cord which might loosen the ravel. Harry Vincent realized the importance that the police of today place upon crude, but often effective, methods.

Yet it seemed to him that a master thinker could untangle the snarl more surely. There must be some clew, some opening, which reason could discover while commonplace systems were failing. Still, a man who runs in the dark, and is fortunate enough to leave no telltale footprints, is indeed a difficult quarry.

Harry could see no purpose in studying the details of this crime. But his instructions had been definite, and he owed so much to The Shadow that it would be both unfair and unwise not to have obeyed orders.

Harry reached the point where he could picture the entire layout of the Laidlow grounds, and every salient detail of the house itself.

On the other hand, the Scanlon murder, Harry was pleased to note, had been relegated to the back pages. This was a real relief; it seemed to have been forgotten.

Harry read the few reports concerning it, and here he drew a definite conclusion. Steve Cronin was not named, but it seemed obvious that he had been recognized about the hotel, or possibly some "stool" had squealed. Knowing their man, the police were probably using the dragnet and communicating with other cities.

Harry congratulated himself that he had come in for no further questioning about the affair. Since his adventure at Wang Foo's, it no longer seemed to him of great consequence.

Harry's passive investigations of the facts in the Laidlow murder were occupying his mornings, for he had been instructed to remain in his hotel room until eleven o'clock every day. The whole business was like a vacation.

He had received a package containing a book of blank checks on a large Manhattan bank. Evidently deposits would be made in his name to cover any expenditures. That alone was a source of real satisfaction.

THE LIVING SHADOW

So, on this morning of the third day, he was comfortable and indolent, idly speculating what the future might bring, when the telephone's ringing interrupted.

He lifted the receiver to recognize the voice of Fellows.

"Mr. Vincent," came the words, "I would like to see you this morning –"

The telephone clicked. He had been cut off.

There was no emphasis in the message. Yet its meaning was obvious. Fellows himself had terminated the conversation, knowing that Vincent would realize his presence was desired at the Broadway insurance office.

Donning his hat and coat, Harry left the hotel and headed for the Grandville Building. He knew a sensation of keen interest. Somehow, idleness was becoming an annoyance. The rest after his adventure with the dangerous Chinese had been welcome, but he knew that he could never be content with enforced, continued inactivity.

He was ushered into Fellows's private office. The chubby, deliberate man behind the desk was discoursing upon everybody's need for insurance with his stenographer for audience. But when the girl had left the room, the insurance broker quietly changed his topic of conversation.

"You have followed my instructions?" he asked.

"Regarding the newspapers?" questioned Harry.

"Yes."

"I've read about the Laidlow murder."

"How does it impress you?"

"It is extremely confusing."

Fellows smiled faintly.

"You would make a good police detective," he said in his slow voice. "Those fellows are perplexed."

"That's a good excuse for me," said Vincent. "I suppose I have a right to be perplexed, too."

"I do not ask for excuses," answered Fellows. "I merely want to know if you have done the work of reading the newspapers."

"I have."

"Good. Then you are ready for the next step."

"What is that?"

"To go to Holmwood."

"For how long?"

THE LIVING SHADOW

"Until you are recalled."

Vincent nodded, and awaited further information.

"You will stay at Holmwood Arms," explained Fellows. "It is not far from the Laidlow home. A room has been reserved for you there. If any one questions your occupation, give the impression that you are an author who has a moderate income from a legacy. Can you use a typewriter?"

"After a fashion."

"Buy a portable, then. Take it with you. Use it occasionally."

"Very well."

"You drive a car, don't you?"

"When I have one."

"You will have one. A coupe is out there now. It has been delivered to the Holmwood Arms garage. It is a used car, but in excellent condition. It will give the idea that you have been driving considerably about the country."

The prospect of his new assignment was pleasing to Harry Vincent.

"I have learned," resumed Fellows, "that you have a New York driver's license. That fits in well with the plans. It saves considerable annoyance, such as passing driving tests. Do you have the card with you?"

"Here it is."

"Fine. You are a good driver?"

"Reasonably good."

"Then you can use the car for most purposes. Come into the city with it, if you wish."

"When shall I come into the city?"

"Only when you receive word from me. I may summon you fairly often. In your assumed capacity of a writer, it would be natural for you to come in occasionally. Always carry a briefcase, containing some typewritten sheets."

Fellows rested his elbows on the arm of his chair locked his hands, and set his chin upon them.

"You have probably guessed the purpose of your trip to Holmwood," he said. "During your stay there, you will learn whatever you can about the Laidlow murder. Do not act as a detective or an investigator. Simply keep your ears open for anything they may pick up. Try to see or observe any one who may know anything about it. Note any unusual activities on the part of any of those people.

"You may even mention the subject yourself if you see an opportunity of starting discussion. Ask a few questions here and there, but do it casually.

THE LIVING SHADOW

"Do not let the subject worry you. Even if you seem to be drawing blanks, keep on playing the game. Do not forget a single detail that you may discover. Each item is important although seemingly trivial to you. Hold all information in your mind. If you think you have learned something unusual, or if you have accumulated a multitude of details, report directly to me. Otherwise, wait until I call you."

"How shall I report?" asked Harry.

"Always in person."

"How will you communicate with me?"

"As I did to-day, if I wish to see you. Perhaps you may hear from some one else – through emphasized words."

"I understand."

The insurance broker studied Harry silently. Then he unfolded his hands and leaned back in his chair, indicating that the interview was nearing its end.

"Listen carefully," he said. "You may receive a letter – perhaps several. They will be written in a simple code – certain letters of the alphabet substituted for others. Here is the code." He passed a sealed envelope across the desk. "There are very few substitutions, so you can memorize them quickly. Destroy this as soon as you have learned it."

"Shall I destroy any letters I happen to receive?"

"That will not be necessary," smiled Fellows. "They will destroy themselves."

The remark was puzzling to Vincent, but he thought it best to make no comment.

"Be sure the code is familiar to your mind," advised the insurance broker. "For you must read each note quickly – immediately after taking it from the envelope. Each letter you receive will be numbered at the bottom. The first will be Number One. Keep a record of these. If any number fails to be received – if Number Six, for instance, should arrive before you have received Number Five – notify me immediately. You understand?"

"I do."

"Any questions?"

"None."

The round-faced man rose from his chair.

"One last word," he said. "Conduct yourself wisely. Seek to make acquaintances. Avoid making friends."

He extended his hand. Harry arose to depart.

Late that afternoon, Harry Vincent stepped aboard a Long Island Railroad local with a one-way ticket to Holmwood in his pocket.

CHAPTER XII. TWO DETECTIVES TALK

WHILE the Holmwood local was still clicking along the rails toward its destination, two men sat in an office at police headquarters. Their day's routine had ended; now they were engaged in a discussion which both regarded as important.

One of the men bore the mark of a police officer long in the service. He was tall, heavy, and domineering. His gray hair lent him a positive dignity, and his face, although full and a trifle pudgy, carried the physiognomy of the thinker as well as that of the man of action.

The other was shorter, and his dark face bespoke an Italian ancestry. He had certain characteristics of the familiar plain-clothes man, but with it there were a calmness of bearing and an ease of expression which were deceptive. His thin lips formed a straight line that never curved upward nor downward, and his dark-brown eyes had a sparkle that betokened the quick observer.

"It's a tough case, Cardona," said the big man, thumping thoughtfully upon the table where he sat.

The Italian shrugged his shoulders. He was standing, looking down at his companion. The latter raised his eyes as though expecting some comment or reply, but he received none.

"A tough case," mused the big man.

"I've had tough ones before," said Cardona. "I landed some; I missed others. But remember" – his voice became significant – "this case means as much to Inspector John Malone as it does to Joe Cardona."

The big man at the table became suddenly alert. There was a challenge in his expression; he appeared as though demanding an explanation. But as he glanced at the dark eyes before him, he relaxed and laughed gruffly.

"I guess you're right, Joe," he said, looking at the table.

"You know I'm right," was the reply. "You know why, too."

"Why? Tell me."

"You're higher upon the force. You'll be the goat."

"What about yourself?"

"I have no competition. You have."

"In what way?"

Cardona leaned forward.

"Listen, Malone," he said, emphatically. "You're an inspector. You were selected. There were other choices, but you got the job. The wolves are waiting right at the door. Make a slip; they'll come in."

"As for you –"

THE LIVING SHADOW

"As for me? Who's going to crowd me out? If I get nowhere, it's a sure bet that none of the other detectives will. The facts prove it. I've been getting results from active work. Put another man in my place. Try it. That would be your finish."

"I guess you're right, Joe."

"You know I'm right, Malone."

"But you aren't easing up on this case, are you?"

"Of course not, Malone. But it's a tough one. You said so yourself."

The police inspector grunted.

"If that thug," he said, "had had sense enough to use his own rod instead of one he picked up in the safe – well, we'd have something to work on, anyway."

"That's where he was wise," came the reply.

"Wise? Using a strange gun?"

"Perhaps he didn't have one of his own."

"That's not likely."

The two men were silent. Malone continued his monotonous thumping. Cardona was motionless.

"The boys have been keeping after the servants?"

The question was Malone's.

"They're out," replied Cardona.

"What makes it worse," mused the inspector, after a pause, "is the fact they got so close to the man. Off he went across the lawn, then the ground might have swallowed him."

"Right."

"What about that secretary – this fellow Burgess? He gives us a good cold description at the start. Old Bingham coming by outside adds plenty more. Yet from then on –"

Malone snapped the fingers of both hands.

Another shrug from Cardona.

"Well," drawled Malone, "if we ever get the guy, we'll have an A-1 witness in old Bingham. This is one crook he won't defend. If he can give witness testimony like he can handle a case in the courtroom, we'll have it all clinched."

"But let's get the guy first," observed the Italian.

THE LIVING SHADOW

A shadow fell across the table where Malone's eyes were gazing. The inspector looked up.

"Oh, hello, Fritz," he said in an indulgent tone. "Cleaning up early, eh?"

The tall, stoop-shouldered janitor looked at him dully.

"Yah."

"You've got the best job in the place, Fritz. Know that?"

"Yah."

Cardona laughed without changing the expression of his lips.

"Yah," he mimicked. "That's all I've ever heard you say, Fritz. Say, boy, you look kinda pale to-night. Sorta thinner, too. You oughta get a bit of exercise."

"Yah."

Cardona shrugged his shoulders and looked at Malone.

"It's all right, Joe," said the inspector. "Fritz will be here when we're gone."

The janitor was busy with mop and bucket. The two men paid no further attention to him.

"Joe," said the inspector, "you've got brains."

"Sure I have."

"Well, there's lots haven't."

"Right. That's what makes brains useful."

"Let's drop the foolishness. You know what this game is, Joe. Hard plugging."

"Correct."

"That story-book stuff is all applesauce. Grind to get your information. That's what we do. And we get it."

"We're not getting it now, Malone."

"I know it, Joe, and that's because we're doing too much grinding. This case is different; it calls for a little fancy headwork."

"How?"

"Listen, Joe. There's a mind in back of this. There's been a couple of smaller robberies. Didn't make much noise, because they were little. We haven't got to the bottom of them yet, though."

"Well, Malone, we haven't had the best men on them."

THE LIVING SHADOW

"I know that. But I figure they were lead-ups to this one. And I figure more. The way I dope it out, there's been a different gag – and a clever gag – in each case. This was the big job; the others were experiments."

"This one is murder."

"Yes, Joe, but that wasn't intended. Let's figure it a bit from the viewpoint of the crook that's running it."

"There you go, Malone. You're assuming this master-crook stuff. You've been to the talkies."

"Why not?"

"Because there's no big crook, Malone. There's a bunch of little racketeers in town; no big man."

The moving arms of the janitor cast a grotesque, pumping shadow over the table before Malone.

"Move out of the light, Fritz," growled the inspector.

The janitor moved across the room, carrying his bucket, and began to mop toward the hall, slowly nearing the door.

"Look at that Scanlon murder," said Cardona. "We know who did it. Steve Cronin. Got away, but as soon as we do lay hands on him, he'll be through. Then take that fellow Croaker – killed the same night. Double-crossed some of his gang. That shows they're a bunch of cheap racket-men. Some other second-rate crook was out tinkering with Laidlow's toy safe, and happened to bump off the millionaire. Simple enough. The tough part is, what became of him?"

The inspector shook his head.

"I don't agree with you, Joe."

"Well, that's my opinion."

"Change it, then."

"Why?"

"Because we've got to try a new track, Joe. Figure this case as complicated; not simple. First of all, let's figure what became of the jewels?"

"They'll be fenced. That may give us a clew."

"I don't think so, Joe. What about all those little jewel robberies? Do you think they're holding the stuff? Not by a long shot. Do you know why those jobs were pulled? I'll tell you what I think, Joe. They're trying a new way to get rid of the stuff. That's why none of the jewels have shown up."

Cardona shook his head.

"Wish I could agree with you, Malone. But I don't. Where would they fence the stuff outside of the places we know about?"

"Maybe they're selling them to some chink."

THE LIVING SHADOW

Another shake of Cardona's head.

"No, Malone. These crooks don't trust the Chinese."

"Well, that's usually true. But I've heard talk of the chinks handling stuff."

"All talk, Malone. I've investigated. Looked over plenty of Chinamen. Nothing to it."

"Maybe they were putting one over on you, Joe. The chinks are a foxy lot."

The Italian detective almost accepted this idea.

"Maybe so," he said.

"Well, if you get a tip on the chinks," said Malone, "I'd advise you to follow it."

"I agree with you there," said the detective. "I'll jump to any real tip with a Chinese twist."

"Yeah, and think of this other angle. A big man in back of it. Two men, maybe. More than two, perhaps. I'm old in the game, Joe. This is something new. Big fellows laying low; little fellows doing the dirty work. Even then, I may not be at the bottom of it."

"Listen, Malone," said Cardona. "The big-minded idea is all right enough, but a big mind betrays itself. And there's none in sight right now. I know. Because I handled a case once that had a big mind in it. You remember Diamond Bert?"

"Yeah. What was his real name?"

"Well, I'm not quite sure. Diamond Bert Farwell was what we knew him as. He went after jewels. Always had trouble getting rid of them, though. That's where we began to get him."

"Maybe there's another like him."

"Not a chance, Malone. That fellow was wise. He would wait for anything. Played safe. The public never heard of him, just on that account. He must have been preparing a long while before he pulled his first jobs. Then they came quick; but he slipped up when he turned the jewels over to a fence, That was where he made his mistake."

"I know that, Joe."

"There'll never be another like him, Malone. He's gone now. Killed five years ago. We got the goods back; recovered so much that the public forgot all about the robberies. Then we were after Diamond Bert. Had his picture, his record – everything. He'd been a bad boy when he was younger."

"Do you think we'd have got him, Joe?"

"If he hadn't been killed when that car went off the bridge? You bet we'd have got him!"

"Maybe. He was smart, though."

THE LIVING SHADOW

"Sure. Came from a good family. Met his brother once. He came from California. Guess he was glad enough when Bert cashed in. Tough on a good family when the black sheep makes trouble."

"When did you meet the brother?"

"Before Bert died. He had a couple of brothers and sisters. All fine people. I sorta ran into them when we were getting the goods on Bert. Then – phooey – Bert was killed and that was the end of it all. Yes, Malone, there was one man. One man. He might have been clever enough to pull this kind of a game you're talking about, but he's gone. Wise – could talk all kind of languages. Smooth – could pass in any company. He's dead, and that's that. I'm glad he's gone."

Inspector Malone lifted himself from his chair.

"Well, Joe, let's move along. Keep working, boy."

"I'll do that, inspector. We'll keep on grinding and watching the fences. That'll bring results."

"Look for brains, too," said the inspector as they reached the door.

"Fritz, for example," replied Cardona, pointing his thumb at the slow-moving janitor who was now working down the corridor.

"Watch the chinks," reminded Malone.

"I'll do that – if I get a real tip-off."

The two men passed the janitor.

"Good night, Fritz."

"Yah."

The door clanged behind the inspector and the detective. Fritz, the janitor, leaned on the handle of his mop.

"Diamond Bert," he said softly. "Diamond Bert Farwell! Dead!"

Fritz shambled down the corridor away from the door through which the men had made their exit.

Reaching an obscure locker, he opened it. His hands drew out folded cloth. A blackened cloak unpleated as it slipped over the stooped shoulders. A slouch hat settled on the head above.

A weird figure had replaced that of Fritz, the janitor. It was a phantom shape that glided noiselessly from this obscure spot. Fritz the janitor had become The Shadow. New facts gained, the master sleuth was seeking outer darkness.

As The Shadow reached the end of the hallway, a low, soft laugh echoed from the walls. A quiet laugh, but a mocking laugh; a laugh that would have surprised both Inspector Malone and Detective Cardona, had they been there to hear it.

CHAPTER XIII. LOO CHOY'S COUSIN

STRANGE were the methods of The Shadow, Master of action, he could also play a passive, waiting game. Aiming for quick success, he had thrust Harry Vincent into the role of messenger to Wang Foo. That stroke parried, The Shadow had sent his rescued agent on a new and less dangerous assignment.

Amazing in his ability at disguise, The Shadow had visited detective headquarters unsuspected. His next move would be to cover the house of Wang Foo; and this campaign of strategy was one that demanded his lone attention.

Time moved slowly in Chinatown. On the outskirts, where Wang Foo's tea shop stood, there was comparatively little bustle in the street. Many of the passers-by were Chinese; others were ragged specimens of American humanity. An occasional taxicab drifting by from the more used streets of Manhattan would wake the quiet street with its roar, but on the whole the scene outside the shop was serene.

Strangers went by apparently unnoticed. But the Chinaman, although his eyes seem to peer straight ahead, can see more from out their sides than one would suppose. And Wang Foo's tea shop, despite its seeming desertion, was a house of many eyes.

Of late Wang Foo's tea shop was more quiet and still than ever. Since a certain happening, no one was seen entering its dilapidated door. The windows grew dustier; the piles of tea boxes were undisturbed. Wang Foo was a prosperous tea merchant, every one knew – yet somehow the Chinese can be prosperous without the bustle and activity that attends business normally.

On the day after The Shadow's trip to headquarters, a newsboy might have been observed in front of Wang Foo's tea shop. It seemed a poor post for business, yet he kept bravely at it, back and forth; up and down the street – but never far from Wang Foo's. He even entered the doorway of the tea shop but did not tarry after he had received a sign of negation from Loo Choy, the calm, almond-eyed Celestial who was forever behind the counter of Wang Foo's shop.

It seemed as though the cries of the newsboy must have had its influence on potential customers. For no one came or left the door of Wang Foo's shop on that particular day. The newsboy was a big fellow – really too old to be called a "boy," and old enough, evidently, to have chosen a better spot for business. Yet he came back a while the next day; then, evidently finding it a hopeless task, he returned no more.

On the following day, a bearded cripple chose a spot almost directly across the street from the tea shop. He was a distorted specimen of humanity. His twisted body, and the stump of an arm that he exhibited had all the marks of genuine deformities. But there was little pity for the cripple in that district. His tin cup collected a few pennies each day that he remained in his chosen place. But he, too, must have thought better fields could be worked, and he went away and did not come back.

It must have been a tiresome sight for the cripple to sit all day with that dingy, black-windowed building in front of him. It was a hopeless sort of building. The signs needed paint; the usual Chinese banners were absent.

At night, the building lost some of its dinginess, but it assumed an ominous appearance. It loomed a black, foreboding mass. No lights appeared at the upper windows. If rooms were occupied, they were certainly not those in front of the house.

At dusk, huge shadows fell across the street from Wang Foo's tea shop. Life seemed to lurk in those shadows.

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They were almost real. Passers-by kept near the curb, and away from the old rickety buildings that were across from Wang Foo's. As for the side of the street where the tea shop stood – no one walked there at all, it seemed.

There was a dim light downstairs in the shop itself: a very dim light, for the tea shop remained open half the night, waiting for customers who never came; open for business that did not appear. One evening – in fact, the very night that the cripple had quit the street, a Chinaman entered the tea shop.

He did not come there to buy. He merely visited to talk with his friend, Loo Choy. For Loo Choy, despite the fact that he stood all day in the tea shop apparently unconcerned by lack of company, was considered quite a gossip among his Chinese friends.

This evening he greeted his visitor with a babble of lingo. So intent was he on his conversation that he did not eject the drunken white man who staggered in the door to prop himself against a pile of tea boxes.

After all, it was cool outside; the harmless outcast had no coat, and he was welcome to stay there for a while – so long as Loo Choy had conversation on his mind.

The American – through his haze – appeared interested in what the Chinese said. Occasionally he would start to interject a remark in English gazing solemnly at the two Celestials with his bloodshot eyes. But always he apparently changed his mind. At last he listened – listened as though fascinated by the strange utterances of the two Chinamen, even though the language must be beyond his comprehension.

Loo Choy was seeking sympathy. He was tired of his job. One would never have suspected it from his bland countenance.

He was actually burdened in mind, he told his visiting friend. There was too much work to do. Standing all day; guarding the empty tea boxes; always anxious and eagerly awaiting a customer. It was a strain, even for a Chinaman. He needed both a substitute and a helper.

But Wang Foo would object, of course. One time Loo Choy had had a substitute. His cousin, Ling Chow, had served in that capacity. In fact, Ling Chow had worked two years for old Wang Foo. But he had saved money and had become enterprising. He had moved to some unknown city and for twelve months Loo Choy had heard nothing from him.

Yes, Ling Chow had written once – when he had arrived at his destination, but the postmark was smudged. He had opened a laundry and probably was doing well. Perhaps some day, Loo Choy would also open a laundry.

But now he had but one ambition – a week's vacation to loll about through Chinatown, then to take turns with his helper. The other man could stay in the tea shop in the afternoon; he, Loo Choy, would remain there at night. But there was only one man to whom Wang Foo would intrust such important duties – that man was Loo Choy's cousin, Ling Chow.

He produced the letter that Ling Chow had sent him a year ago. It was written in Chinese, of course; but some American had addressed the envelope. The envelope was old and dirty. Loo Choy laid it on the counter when he opened the letter.

Had he been able to read the postmark on the envelope, he would have learned that far-away city was Yonkers, and that it was not far away at all.

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The drunken, coatless white man who had sought refuge in the tea shop might have managed to decipher the postmark, for while the envelope was lying on the counter he staggered forward and began to babble in a foolish way. Thereupon Loo Choy and his friend ejected the troublesome disturber and went on with their conversation.

The next morning there was neither newsboy nor cripple in the street outside the tea shop, nor during that afternoon. This was a matter of some consequence to Loo Choy, for every afternoon his master, Wang Foo, inquired whom he had seen outside the store.

Then, early in the evening, shortly after he had made his daily report to Wang Foo, Loo Choy received an agreeable surprise which he took in typically calm Chinese fashion. For in walked his old cousin, Ling Chow.

There was something different about Ling Chow. He looked very much the same; he talked very much the same – but somehow he was different. Ling Chow had never talked very much, and he said very little now. He had left his laundry business for a while. He would like something to do.

Loo Choy proposed the opportunity. Ling Chow would take his place for a week.

At first Ling Chow seemed reluctant to do so. Finally, he consented.

So Loo Choy toddled upstairs and arranged matters with Wang Foo. The old Chinaman remembered Ling Chow, of course. He remembered everything. He asked to see Ling Chow, and when the cousin was admitted to the sanctum, the old tea merchant gave him certain instructions which seemed quite familiar to Ling Chow.

For one week thereafter, Ling Chow stood behind the counter of Wang Foo's tea shop.

During the week, no one loitered in the narrow street. Strangely enough, a few visitors appeared during that period. At night, the shadows were not so strange across the street – particularly the shadow that was directly opposite Wang Foo's tea shop.

When the week had passed, Loo Choy returned to duty. But he was there during the evening only. In the afternoon, Ling Chow was on the job. In the evenings, the shadow seemed to deepen across the street after Loo Choy had taken up his work. But no one noticed the shadows, for they were thick and heavy along the thoroughfare.

Ling Chow stayed on – he was very indefinite about how long he would remain. So Loo Choy was content, and paid very little attention to his friendly cousin. It seemed quite natural for Ling Chow to be there again – natural to both Loo Choy and to Wang Foo. Yet there was a real mystery in his presence.

For at the same time that Ling Chow was standing behind the counter in Wang Foo's tea shop, Ling Chow was also taking bundles over the counter of a Chinese laundry in Yonkers!

There were two Ling Chows; and no one – not even Loo Choy or Wang Foo – could have distinguished one from the other!

CHAPTER XIV. AT HOLMWOOD ARMS

THE first week at Holmwood Arms was an enjoyable experience for Harry Vincent. He had lived in luxury at the Metrolite Hotel, but he had been merely one guest among many, and had followed the isolated existence that is the usual routine of those who stay in large hotels.

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A different spirit prevailed at Holmwood Arms. The inn was a fashionable one and a great deal of the social life of Holmwood centered about its spacious salons. Many of the guests had been residents for years; all of them were persons well situated in life; and they welcomed a new arrival.

Particularly a gentleman like Harry Vincent. He was very evidently a man of refinement and education. With money at his disposal – and his supply seemed virtually limitless – he was capable of cutting a good figure in such surroundings.

The mysterious stranger of the bridge had chosen well when he had picked Harry Vincent for a henchman. For the young man was serious, yet affable; friendly, yet discreet.

Harry felt that he had assumed a real responsibility; that his work demanded proper living and wise action. The fact that he could obtain money whenever he wanted it made him choose the wise course of economy. He limited his expenditures to reasonable amounts, and kept a careful account of all expenses. This had not been asked of him; but he wanted to be ready with a full account, should it ever be demanded of him.

The great appeal of his unique work lay in the adventure that it offered.

Harry had always craved adventure; but had never possessed the initiative to seek it. In his present position, it might be forced upon him at any time. He felt that he was ready for it.

He had no desire to go through another experience like the disaster at Wang Foo's; at the same time, he had no fear for his future safety.

The Shadow had been powerful enough to snatch him from the clutches of what seemed certain doom; and Harry felt confident that he would be saved from any danger which might come, or it would not be The Shadow's fault.

Harry spent his first week at Holmwood Arms without making any effort to gain quick results. He felt that he was gaining the confidence of the people in the inn; that he was establishing himself soundly in the community.

Harry drove about considerably in his coupe. The car was a recent model of a high-priced make – speedy, powerful and reliable. He rode slowly past the Laidlow home and took in the surroundings much more effectively than he had from the newspaper photographs. He walked about the district also, but gained no added information during his casual inspections.

The inn was about half a mile from the town of Holmwood. Leaving the village, one followed a shady avenue that led directly to the home of the murdered millionaire. A side street, turning left from the road to the Laidlow house, went to Holmwood Arms. The millionaire's house was about a half a mile from the hotel.

Beyond the Laidlow home was the residence of Ezekiel Bingham, the well-known lawyer whose testimony had been so important to the police. Bingham's house was not a pretentious one; the grounds were small, but the place was well kept.

In his study of the terrain, Harry gained a first-class impression of what must have happened on that eventful night. He rode by the Laidlow house in his car, after dark, and visualized the scene.

The path that the burglar would logically have followed lay straight across the lawn and through the hedge, Harry thought. Old Ezekiel Bingham must have witnessed the man's entire flight across the dark grass; but even had he possessed youthful agility, he would have been unable to stop the fugitive.

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During one of his trips to the village, Harry encountered the elderly lawyer. He was in the bank, cashing a check. The teller spoke to Bingham by name.

Strolling to the door, Harry saw the lawyer enter a large sedan and drive toward his home. Bingham evidently had no chauffeur. He had been driving by the Laidlow house alone on the night of the murder.

Harry smiled as he observed the slow course of the lawyer's car. He passed it in his coupe as he rode back to Holmwood Arms; then, on sudden thought, he kept on the road toward the Laidlow home and parked in front of the nearest house before the millionaire's residence.

He watched Bingham's sedan roll slowly by; one could tell that the driver was probably a man of years. He noted the meager speed of the car as it neared the Laidlow estate. If Bingham always traveled at that snail's pace there was no wonder that the old man had stopped quickly when he heard the shots.

Back at the inn, Harry did some serious thinking. How far was he getting with his investigation? Not far, he must admit. Nearly ten days had elapsed since his arrival at the Long Island town, and he had merely gained a view of places and people that he had already known about.

He had not even seen Burgess, Laidlow's secretary. He had noted one or two persons on the Laidlow grounds, but had not viewed any of them closely. Harry had picked up various remarks regarding the murder, but most of them seemed unimportant, although he remembered them.

Burgess, he learned, was still living at the house of the murdered millionaire. Mrs. Laidlow was at home, but neither she nor her two sons were to be seen. They were going away shortly; already packing for a trip to Florida, and it was understood that Burgess was going with them.

The secretary had proven his worth by his valiant effort to apprehend the man who had murdered his employer. He belonged definitely to the Laidlow family, and it was obvious that the wife of the dead millionaire would rely upon Burgess to identify the murderer – if the criminal should be captured.

With both Burgess and Bingham as material witnesses, there was an excellent chance that the murderer would be recognized when – and if – arrested.

During his second week at Holmwood Arms, Vincent began to study the guests at the hotel. There must be some possible clew to the murderer in the town of Holmwood – that is, if The Shadow actually expected clews. But otherwise he would not have ordered Vincent there.

Since he was to look for clews, and had not yet discovered any, Harry figured the best course would be to work around the inn for a while. For if a clew lay there, it would be positive negligence to overlook it while it was so close at hand.

When this idea first occurred to Harry, his original thought was to watch the guests who seemed most reticent to talk. He looked for suspicious characters, for persons who kept to themselves and who did not make friends.

There were several guests of this type, but Harry soon realized that his plan was wrong. Any man who might be bold enough to stay so close to the scene of a murder with which he had some connection would seek to avoid suspicion.

Harry tried to picture himself in the place of the imaginary man. How would he behave? In a friendly way, of course. Very much in the way Vincent was now acting – playing the part of a man who had some occupation

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which did not require all of his time or effort.

As he spent only a few hours of the day at his typewriter, Harry had an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with other guests. There were five men at the hotel whose occupations seemed sketchy. He chatted with them frequently, and gradually eliminated them until he came to Elbert Joyce – a man about forty years of age, a talkative fellow who knew many subjects and loved to swing his conversation from one theme to another.

Joyce claimed to be a salesman. He had left one concern and was awaiting another job on the road – a job which had been promised positively. In the meantime he was taking things easy – why shouldn't he? He made plenty of money, so he said, and knew how to salt some away.

"I never worry about money," he told Harry. "I always have it; I always can get it."

Joyce was affable and entertaining. He seemed always occupied with some trivial matter.

Harry came upon him in the lounge room in the afternoon. Joyce was working on a cross-word puzzle in a newspaper. Vincent laughed.

"Thought that stuff was out of date, Joyce," he said.

"What's out of date?"

"Cross-word puzzles."

"Not for an active mind, Vincent."

"Don't you grow tired of them?"

"Occasionally. But I usually do one a day."

Joyce ran his pencil among the squares, completed the last few blocks with amazing rapidity, and turned to another part of the paper.

"I do these, too," he remarked, pointing to a jumble of letters.

"What are they?"

"Cryptograms. One letter substituted for another. Sort of a code. An old idea – but popular again. Poe used a cryptogram in his story, 'The Gold Bug.'"

Joyce's pencil was at work. In the spaces below the jumbled letters he began to decipher the complex code.

"You work quickly," observed Harry.

"Most cryptograms are easy," answered Joyce. "Certain letters must obviously be vowels. E, for instance, is normally a frequent letter. Double letters give a clue also."

He was continuing while he spoke and he completed the short cryptogram with apparent ease. Harry marveled at the man's ability; and at the same time felt apprehensive. He recalled the simple code that he had received from Fellows, and which he had committed to memory. How long would it take a chap like Joyce to

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decipher such a code? Half an hour, perhaps. Vincent realized that he must be careful if he received a letter.

Joyce tossed the paper aside, and yawned.

"How about a ride?" suggested Harry.

"Where to?"

"Just around the country. It's a nice day. My car is outside."

"I'll go with you, Vincent."

They rolled slowly up the avenue past the Laidlow home.

"There's a puzzle for you," remarked Harry, waving his hand toward the house of the murdered millionaire.

"How so?" asked Joyce.

"The Laidlow murder," Vincent supplied. "That's where it happened."

"So that's the house! I recall reading of the murder some time ago. What came of it?"

"Still unsolved."

They were passing the next house.

"That's where Bingham lives," said Harry.

"Who's he?"

"A lawyer who saw the burglar escaping."

Joyce gazed indifferently at the old attorney's house.

"Thought you might be interested," observed Vincent. "There's a real problem. I should think it would intrigue you."

"I seldom read about murders."

"This was a very big one."

"Perhaps. They're all alike to me. Let the police worry about them. That's their business."

The conversation shifted. Harry headed the car toward the Sound, and they rode along beside the broad sheet of glistening water, watching the distant steamers that looked like tiny toys.

Elbert Joyce talked constantly; yet his words were emptiness. He compared Long Island Sound with the Great Lakes; he spoke of sales trips he had made to Detroit; he discussed yacht racing and told of a winter he had spent in Havana.

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While Harry listened, his mind kept reverting to a single thought: the indifference that Joyce had expressed regarding the Laidlow murder. This was not consistent with the man's regular method of conversation. Joyce would talk of any subject that came along – would talk actively until he changed it. Yet he had sidestepped this matter entirely.

Furthermore, Joyce's apparent ignorance of the story of the murder must surely be a pose. Joyce did not confine his newspaper reading to the puzzle columns. And being interested in such problems, it seemed strange that he would pay no attention to a murder mystery – especially one which had occurred so close at hand.

Perhaps Joyce was connected with the crime! He might even have been the burglar! Harry rejected the latter thought.

Then he began to form a different suspicion. Joyce, he knew, was a clever man. If he had been an active participant in the Laidlow murder, he would have found some opportunity to slide away before this. Also, Harry recalled, Joyce was a newcomer at Holmwood Arms. He had arrived later than Harry.

No. It was impossible that Joyce was the murderer, or that he knew much about the crime other than what he might have read of it. Joyce – Harry decided as they rode along – was a crook of a different sort. He was playing another game. He avoided all discussions of criminal activities of any sort simply as a matter of precaution.

Joyce was probably safe at Holmwood. But why was he there?

They were swinging back to town. They pulled up at the inn just before dinner, and went into the dining-room together.

Joyce was beginning to note Harry's silence. But there were others at their table; the talk was lively and vivacious.

Harry and Joyce lighted their cigars as they left the dining-room and wandered into the lounge. Here both picked up newspapers. Joyce turned immediately to find a cross-word puzzle. He pulled a pencil from his pocket and blocked in a few letters.

He looked up to catch a glance from Harry. He threw down the paper in disgust.

"Darn these puzzles," Joyce said. "They're a lot of foolishness. They annoy me most of the time."

He went to a card table close by, and called to the attendant for a pack of cards. He began a game of solitaire.

Harry went on reading. His mind was at work. Joyce, he realized, had overstepped himself and knew it. He had shown too much interest in puzzles during the afternoon: now he was trying to disclaim his enthusiasm.

Harry strolled out on the porch. It was a moderately warm Indian Summer evening. He enjoyed the air and talked for a while with several of the other guests.

Then he went back to the lounge. Three other men had joined Joyce, and the four were playing poker. They invited Harry to sit in with them, but he declined. Instead, he took the easy-chair and finished reading the paper. He puffed his cigar contentedly as he lolled back in the chair.

"I'll take two cards," he heard Joyce say.

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Harry opened his eyes. Joyce was dealing. His hand was turned toward Harry. And that young man's eyes opened even more widely. For Joyce was discarding the ace of spades and the ace of clubs, to hold three small diamonds in his hand!

His curiosity aroused, Vincent watched for the outcome. He did not see the cards that Joyce dealt to himself, for each man at the table was playing his hand tight. But after the bets were made and the pile of chips had accumulated, Joyce spread his hand on the table and exhibited five diamonds – a flush, which won the pot.

Harry left the room unnoticed while Joyce was raking in the chips.

"So that's your game, Mr. Joyce," Harry observed to himself. "A smooth crook – a gentleman gambler. A man who lives to unravel problems, but hesitates to talk of crime!"

Harry was thoughtful as he stood on the porch.

The game had not been one for large stakes. No one gambled high at Holmwood Arms. Why then was Joyce operating here?

Harry smiled as he deduced the answer.

Joyce was in Holmwood on a mission. His services were required by some one – for something. He had been at the inn less than a week. Probably he was still awaiting a call.

In the meantime, the opportunity for picking up expense money by his artifice at the card table was too good to resist. Hence the shifty work that Harry had observed. It was a clew to Joyce's main purpose, in that it proved the man to be a crook of some caliber.

Here was something to report to Fellows. Harry had not yet heard from the insurance broker, nor had he visited New York.

He'd wait one day more, Harry decided. He would watch Joyce during the afternoon and evening, and perhaps gain some added information.

The day after tomorrow he would report to the office in the Grandville Building.

CHAPTER XV. TWO MEN MEET

AT breakfast the next morning, Harry Vincent ate his bacon and eggs with real zest. The day was pleasant and he was satisfied. As the agent of The Shadow, he was showing progress. He wondered just what significance would be attached to the information he had gained concerning Elbert Joyce.

More than that, he had a positive feeling that something else would follow. From the moment that he had come upon Joyce working out a puzzle in the paper, Harry had started on a steady trail. A night had intervened; but he believed the day held more in store.

Joyce was certainly awaiting a definite time. The man had been at Holmwood Arms for several days now. Perhaps he might wait longer. Harry hoped not. He disliked leaving Holmwood before Joyce had taken action. It would be best to wait before reporting to Fellows.

Joyce was not at breakfast, but he appeared on the porch a short time after. Harry greeted him cordially, then

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left for his room and killed an hour by punching the typewriter.

After that, Harry strolled down to the porch. Joyce was still there.

The morning and afternoon passed slowly. Harry walked downtown after lunch, but did not stay long. He knew that his place was at the inn, keeping tabs on Joyce's actions. But nothing happened before dinner, and he found himself seated at the same table with Joyce in the dining-room.

"How was everything to-day?" inquired the affable Joyce.

"So-so," answered Harry. "I did a little writing, off and on. The weather's too mild and pleasant to bother much about work."

"Perhaps you find it that way. I'm anxious to get moving, though," replied Joyce. "I'm looking forward to my traveling job."

"That's the proper spirit."

"But I still have a wait ahead of me. Two weeks at least."

"It's a long while if you're bored."

"Too long. But it's all in the game."

The conversation pleased Harry. He knew that Joyce would try to lay a false trail as to the length of time he intended to stay at the inn. "Two weeks" would more likely prove to be two days.

Harry sensed that action was approaching.

Joyce found a note in his mail-box after dinner. He read it by the desk in the lobby and carried it with him as he strolled out to the porch. Harry, watching from the doorway, observed him tear the paper to small pieces which he scattered in the wind.

There was a card game in the lounge. Joyce came in and watched. He was invited to participate, but declined. Harry, idling by the window-seat, regarded this as important. If Joyce could resist the temptation of taking some more easy money from the card players at Holmwood Arms, it meant that he had important work afoot that night.

Harry pulled a few written sheets of paper from his pocket, and pretended to read them as he walked from the lounge into the lobby. He timed his progress so that his path converged with that of Joyce. They almost bumped together, due to Harry's feigned preoccupation.

Joyce laughed.

"Don't try that stunt crossing a street," he warned.

Harry grinned sheepishly.

"I've got a lot on my mind," he said. "Guess I'll wander upstairs and type these notes while they're still fresh. I scrawl away so fast that sometimes I can't read my own writing."

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He entered the elevator. Upon reaching the fourth floor, where his room was located, Harry stuffed the notes into his pocket. As soon as the elevator had continued upward, he came down the carpeted stairway. Harry was treading quietly when he reached the landing that looked down on the lobby and commanded a view of the lounge. Joyce was not in sight.

Harry walked to the doorway, and inspected the porch. If Joyce were there, he must be lost in the darkness. It was worth while to go out. Even if Joyce should be in the obscurity of the veranda, and should hail him, it would be easy enough for Harry to make the excuse that he had forgotten something he had meant to get at the village.

So Vincent went down the broad steps and started up the road that led to the avenue.

Away from the hotel he walked along the grass beside the sidewalk. He walked rapidly, with keen intention. He was acting on the hunch that Joyce had gone up that street a few minutes before.

He saw a figure ahead of him. The other man was walking on the grass also. The fellow reached the end of the road and came beneath a light at the corner.

Harry recognized Joyce as the man drew his watch from his pocket and looked at it.

A hedge at the left of the sidewalk afforded a good retreat. Harry was close by the hedge; he became motionless in the darkness as he still watched Joyce. His precaution proved useful, for the man at the corner looked back down the sidewalk for fully ten seconds. Then, apparently convinced that no one watched him, Joyce turned and went to the left.

Harry suppressed an exclamation of satisfaction. The town was to the right. Joyce was going in the opposite direction.

Still close to the friendly hedge, Harry made his way to the corner, combining speed with caution. There he stopped.

The light made it unsafe for him to turn the corner. Should Joyce look back along the sidewalk of the avenue, any one at the corner would be a direct target for his gaze.

There was an opening in the hedge and Harry slipped through to the property of the corner house. Stooping, he moved along the line of the avenue. It was fortunately a moonless night. There was little likelihood of any one seeing him if he proceeded carefully.

After walking quietly for thirty or forty feet, Harry popped his head above the hedge, which came to the level of his shoulders. Instantly he dropped from view. For he had seen a spark of light beyond the sidewalk – the light of a glowing cigarette.

The hedge was a scraggly, ill-kept mass of shrubbery. Harry discovered an opening in it, and peered through.

Yes, a man was standing beside a tree – the tree being between him and the corner, some forty feet back. Was it Joyce?

Harry suspected that it was, but he had no proof. He only knew that the man had taken a position which would make him virtually invisible from the corner; and it was at the corner that Joyce had looked to see if he were being followed.

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The cigarette-ember dropped to the ground. Its smoker stood quietly, facing the avenue.

Then Harry saw him fumbling in his pocket for another cigarette. A match flared, and as it was raised to the smoker's face, Harry grinned in the darkness. The tiny flame had revealed the features of Elbert Joyce.

Three minutes of waiting. Harry sat behind the hedge, waiting.

Suddenly a car drove up and stopped. The door was opened instantly. Joyce stepped into the car, the door was closed, and the automobile was on its way down the street.

Harry scrambled hastily through the hedge and rushed to the street. He stood there in chagrin. His man had eluded him in the twinkling of an eye.

Harry had been unable to identify the car through the hedge. He had reached the street too late to see more than the tail-light and the black back of the car. The license plate could not be distinguished at that distance.

Harry cursed his stupidity. He had surprised Joyce while the man was on a mysterious errand, and now his quarry had escaped. It was another incident to add to his report, but that was all.

He decided to go back to the inn and bring out his own car. Perhaps if he drove to the town he might be able to track the other automobile, but he doubted it.

A car was coming up the avenue from the village. Harry stepped back on the sidewalk, and watched it through the darkness. It was moving slowly, and Harry had a sudden thought.

Could it, by any chance, be the same car that had picked up Joyce? Since Joyce was keeping a secret meeting, it was reasonable to suppose that the car might have turned and reversed its course after Joyce had entered it.

The car was moving slowly, and it seemed worth Harry's while to follow it. For the avenue continued less than a mile, before it turned into a stretch of barren, poorly paved road. Furthermore Vincent thought of this as he was already dog-trotting after the automobile – the avenue went by the Laidlow residence.

The car was out of sight by the time Harry reached the millionaire's home. He was disappointed when he could see no sign of an automobile either in the avenue or in the driveway.

Harry crossed the street, and was about to turn and go back, when he glanced up the avenue and dimly made out the tail-light of a distant car. He watched it intently. The car must have been parked. It was on the right side of the road.

Vincent hurried along to investigate. He came to a driveway. It was the entrance to the home of Ezekiel Bingham, the lawyer.

Then two thoughts clicked together. It must have been Bingham's car that had come slowly along the street. The old man's characteristic method of driving would be hard to duplicate.

Yet a glance up the drive failed to show any car there.

Harry kept on, with a new thought in mind. Perhaps the parked car belonged to the lawyer. Well, he remembered the license number of the lawyer's car – he had noted it when following the car from town some days before.

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Slipping among the trees that stood between the sidewalk and the avenue, Harry approached the car. The license plate was Bingham's. But was Joyce in the automobile with the lawyer?

Harry, with deliberate boldness, slipped along beside the car, crouching near the grass. The car was parked beside a tree. Harry moved beside the thick tree-trunk, and listened.

He could hear nothing at first. If there were any conversation in the car, it must be in an undertone. Harry stepped a trifle forward, silent as a cat.

The front window of the car squeaked as it was lowered. Harry was glad that it had been closed when he had made his false step.

He listened again. Whoever was in the car must have been on guard for Harry could not catch the slightest sound of talk. It was tense there in the darkness.

Harry wondered what he would do if he were discovered. The best plan seemed to be to avoid discovery.

All was silent there on the road beyond Ezekiel Bingham's home. It was an excellent spot for a secret conversation, for the lightest footfalls on the pavement or the motor of the smoothest car could easily be heard approaching.

So Vincent waited, breathless, knowing that if he did not betray himself, a conversation might eventually commence, unless –

He was right. Some one spoke.

It was the old lawyer. Harry could not catch the words of the querulous voice. He edged even closer to the car, arriving at his new position just as Ezekiel Bingham completed a sentence.

There came a distinct reply to the lawyer's question.

Harry could hear the words – plainly now – from his new vantage point. But it was not that which made him exult; it was the voice of the speaker – a voice which he instantly recognized.

Old Bingham's companion was Elbert Joyce!

CHAPTER XVI. WHAT VINCENT HEARD

"ALL right, Mr. Bingham. I'll do anything you ask," had come Joyce's words to Harry Vincent's ears.

"I knew I could count on you," was the lawyer's reply. The words were distinct, for Harry was closer to the car and the window was open.

"I've been waiting several days to hear from you," said Joyce.

"That couldn't be helped," Bingham replied tersely.

"Why not?"

"That's my business, Spider."

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"Don't use that name. Call me Joyce. I'm used to it. I want to forget the past."

The old lawyer responded with a tittering laugh.

"That's just what I wanted to know," he said. "You would like to forget the past. Well, we will both forget it, if you will keep quiet about this matter."

"That suits me."

"Let me warn you, Spider – excuse me – Joyce. I pulled you out of one jam. The jury acquitted you, and you owe it all to me."

"I paid you plenty for it."

"Of course you did. It was worth all you paid, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was."

"But I would dislike to see you in court again – charged with another and greater crime."

Joyce was silent.

"I have the goods on you, Joyce," said the lawyer. "The real goods. One word to the police and you would be a hunted man. But it's not my business to make trouble for you. You are safe – so long as you play fair."

"I'll do that, Mr. Bingham."

"You had better do so. When I strike, they feel it. I have sufficient evidence in my office to bring about the conviction of two dozen men who are now unsuspected. What is more, I can put any man in jail – whether he is a criminal or not."

"How?"

"By a frame-up. Phony evidence is my specialty, Joyce. You ought to know that. It helped you out."

Joyce was again silent.

"Frankly speaking, Joyce," resumed the lawyer, "there is not much difference between my game and the game of the men I defend in court. But I know the law. I work with it; they fight against it. I am telling you this because you are a man of intelligence."

"Thanks for the compliment."

"I mean it. I want you to understand the circumstances. The odds are all in my favor. The cards are stacked for me. You know the advantages of a stacked deck, I take it."

Joyce laughed.

Harry smiled as he recalled the card game at Holmwood Arms the night before.

"All right, Mr. Bingham," said Joyce. "What do I have to do to keep in right?"

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"Listen, Joyce," answered the lawyer. "I'm going to treat you right. I'm not asking you to work for nothing. I didn't tell you to come here so I could threaten you and save some money that way. You can use some cash, can't you?"

"Absolutely and always. I'm pretty low. The poker pikers over at the inn have been paying my expenses without knowing it."

"Well, here's the story, Joyce. Let's check it up to date. A pal of yours told you to stop at Holmwood Arms until you received a note telling you what to do. You received my instructions to—night; you met me as specified. Did you know I was the man you were to meet?"

"I half suspected it."

"I thought so. Well, we are here, and the rest is easy for you. I picked you because you are an expert when it comes to solving codes."

"I've done some good work in that line."

"Well, I have a code that I want solved. It contains some information that is important to me. I am giving you a copy. Here it is."

Harry could see Joyce lean forward to examine a paper by the light on the dashboard.

"All numbers," remarked the gambler.

"Yes," agreed Ezekiel Bingham. "Can you solve it?"

"I don't know. Do you have the original?"

"It is in my safe at home, sealed in an envelope. The copy is exact."

Joyce leaned back in the seat, and Harry could see him thrust the paper in his inside pocket.

"What do you make of it?" questioned the lawyer.

"Not much – yet," replied Joyce.

"Will it be easy to solve?"

"No."

"How long will you require?"

"I can't tell."

"Why not?"

"Because it may simply be a key. If it's a code, I'll get it, no matter how clever it is. It may take me three or four days. I'll use every possible method."

"Suppose you don't decipher it."

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"Then I'll know it's not a code."

"What good will that do me?"

"Well, if it's a key and not a code, I'll compare it with all the systems that I have studied; I have plenty of those. I'll hit on some sort of a solution I expect. I've never failed yet."

"All right, Joyce. Remember, I rely on you. I want concentrated action until you complete the job."

"I'll start on it to-morrow morning."

"Good. But remember – not a word to any one. Absolute secrecy. That's all I require. If you can gain any information from the message, forget it as soon as you have delivered the solution to me."

"I promise you that."

"Then keep your promise. I am friendly toward you, Joyce. I may use you again, to your advantage. Only remember that I have the upper hand; that my game is safe while yours is not. Nothing that I know will ever be used against you so long as you play square. Pay no attention whatever to any of my affairs; that is the safest course for you."

"I agree with you, Mr. Bingham."

There was the sound of paper crinkling. The old lawyer passed something to the other man.

"Six hundred dollars, Joyce," said Bingham. "It's worth that to me. I'm paying you in advance. I want service – with results as soon as possible."

"How will I communicate with you?"

"Call my office and ask for an appointment."

"Where shall I stay – at Holmwood Arms?"

"Not now. I wanted you close by until I was ready to see you. You can leave to-morrow. Choose a private spot where you can work – somewhere where your old cronies won't find you."

"All right, Mr. Bingham."

The lawyer's next words were drowned by the sound of the self-starter. Harry slipped away from the runningboard, and sought shelter behind a tree as the car pulled away. He walked back toward the inn, stopping only for a few seconds as Bingham's car went by. It had gone down the road, had turned and was now heading for the town.

During his walk, Harry tried to find some significance that concerned the message which Ezekiel Bingham wanted decoded. He decided that it was probably something that pertained to a case in court – perhaps involving some criminal whom the lawyer was going to defend.

The episode that had just transpired explained Elbert Joyce's lack of interest in the Laidlow murder. Obviously the man himself had no connection with the crime. But Ezekiel Bingham was involved as a witness, and the gambler had realized that the lawyer had summoned him to Holmwood. Hence he had been

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anxious to avoid any conversation that might bring up a discussion of Ezekiel Bingham.

Satisfaction and disappointment mingled in Harry's mind. He had outwitted Joyce, to be sure. He had information of a very definite nature, concerning a man who was admittedly a crook. But he could make no connection between it and the crime which had been committed in the Laidlow home.

Still, the next step doubtless would be an immediate report to Mr. Claude H. Fellows.

Harry waited in the lounge until Elbert Joyce returned, a half an hour later. The gambler passed directly through the lobby, going upstairs to his room. He did not come down again.

As the evening continued, Vincent began to wonder what the code expert was doing. Perhaps the six hundred dollars had spurred him on to immediate effort. Would it be advisable to drop in on Joyce and surprise him at his work?

This was an idea that led to other thoughts.

Harry Vincent went upstairs to his own room to plan a course of action. He could, of course, keep tracking Joyce after the man left Holmwood Arms. It would be ideal if he could gain possession of the code after Joyce had deciphered it.

Still it would be better if he could take the code from Joyce and carry it with him when he went to see Fellows. That would mean robbery, however, and Vincent did not relish the thought. So far, crime had been totally absent from the duties which he had been required to perform for The Shadow.

His mind wandered from his objective to thoughts of the purpose that had brought him to Holmwood. What did The Shadow want? What was his interest in the Laidlow affair? Was he a friend of the millionaire's family or was he in league with the man behind the crime?

Was he working with the police or was he playing some strange game of his own?

These questions bothered Harry. They made him forget Joyce for a time. But eventually his thoughts returned to the man who had received the code from Ezekiel Bingham, and Harry was seized with an uncontrollable desire to get busy.

It was now nearly midnight. Harry left his room and went to the stairway. He descended to the third floor and tiptoed along the hall to the doorway of Elbert Joyce's room. No light appeared beneath the door. Joyce, likely, was asleep.

Harry tapped lightly on the door. He tapped again – a trifle louder. He hoped that he would not awaken Joyce. He was framing an excuse for the disturbance in case the man might come to the door.

But all was silent.

Slowly Harry turned the knob. He was determined to enter the room, on the mere chance that he might find the message to be decoded lying somewhere accessible.

Harry could take it, copy it, and then return it. There was a real idea, Harry thought. It required care, to be sure, but would be worth the chance.

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Within the room, Harry listened for the sound of Joyce's breathing, but heard nothing. He moved across to the bed, and slowly laid his hand upon the covers. There was no one in the bed.

He walked to the wall and pressed the switch. The electric lights revealed an empty room. The bed was made. No clothes were in view; not even a suitcase was in evidence.

Harry opened the closets and looked beneath the bed. No sign of an occupant. Then he looked at his watch and realized what had happened. Within the last three quarters of an hour, Elbert Joyce had checked out of the inn and had in all probability, taken the midnight train for New York.

Harry returned to his own room somewhat crestfallen. He had not wanted to lose track of Elbert Joyce. It would now be virtually impossible to trail him, for he had been instructed by Ezekiel Bingham to pick some little-known spot for his hideaway. Nevertheless, the bird was out of the nest, and wishes would not bring him back.

Harry, returning to his room, phoned down instructions to be called at eight o'clock. He slept soundly that night, after a half hour of concentration in the darkness, during which time he reviewed the details of the last few days.

In the morning he brought his car from the garage and drove to the city. It was a short journey, but traffic was heavy over the bridge. It was nearly ten o'clock when he called at the office of Claude H. Fellows.

The insurance broker accepted his arrival in a matter-of-fact way, listening methodically, while Vincent recounted his story. He asked that certain details be repeated, then suggested that his visitor wait for further instructions. He opened the bottle of blue ink and wrote a lengthy note that he sealed in an envelope and tendered to the stenographer for delivery. On second thought, he decided that Vincent could step out a while to return later in the day.

At two o'clock, Vincent came back to the insurance broker's office. The Shadow's agent invited him into the inner office.

"Compliments and commendations," remarked Fellows, "are not a part of this business, Vincent. I have learned not to expect them. You must learn as much.

"Hence, I have no comment to offer regarding the information that you have obtained. I sent it to Jonas's office in synopsis form so that I might receive instructions for you. The instructions have come. You are to return to Holmwood. Leave your car there, and come to New York by rail, prepared to stay for a few days. Stop at the Metrolite, as usual, and report to me at ten o'clock to-morrow morning.

"But remember, Vincent" – Fellows was smiling knowingly – "if commendation is lacking when you expect it, do not be disappointed. For we make mistakes quite frequently; and when we do, no fault is found with us. That makes things equal."

Harry arrived at the Metrolite early the same evening. He registered at the hotel with a feeling of satisfaction. For he knew that developments were under way, and in his heart he was sure that The Shadow was pleased with his discoveries.

CHAPTER XVII. BINGHAM SEES A SHADOW

EZEKIEL BINGHAM sat in his upstairs study. The room was on the second floor of the lawyer's compact

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home at Holmwood, Long Island. It was after midnight, but the old man did not seem weary.

In fact, Ezekiel Bingham slept very little. He was one of those unusual persons who required very little rest. He had trained himself from youth to be content with four or five hours of repose.

He never went to bed until dawn. He slept during the morning, arising before noon, and only visited his office in New York after mid-day. This was his constant procedure except when he was to appear in court; then he altered his routine in order to meet the occasion.

Hence Ezekiel Bingham worked while others slept. He secretly attributed much of his capability to that fact. The hours of the night were silent ones. They were hours for concentrated action.

Bingham was a widower – his wife had died many years before. His companion in the house was a male attendant named Jenks, who had been with him for years.

Jenks slept on the same floor as did Bingham. He was a powerful fellow, faithful, reliable, and of reasonably good intelligence. A native intelligence, for Jenks's education had been neglected; he could scarcely read or write.

Jenks was always up before Ezekiel Bingham retired. He was on duty all day and in the early evening. He went to bed when the lawyer came in for the night. Hence some one was always awake and about in the Bingham house.

The night after his secret meeting with the man who called himself Elbert Joyce, the old lawyer had taken his usual evening ride down to Holmwood, leaving the faithful Jenks in the house. Upon his return at half past ten, Bingham had dismissed Jenks. The man was now sound asleep in another room.

But the mere pressure of a button upon the lawyer's desk would summon the attendant instantly. The buzzer was beside the sleeper's bed.

The doors and windows were locked downstairs. Moreover, they were arranged with a burglar alarm that would arouse Jenks the moment that any one attempted to enter the house. The alarm system had not been installed in the three rooms on the second floor, but there the windows were barred. The upper part of Ezekiel Bingham's home looked like a prison; it had had this appearance for so many years that it no longer caused comment among the citizens of Holmwood.

There was a door in the corner of the lawyer's study. It was sheeted with metal and had a lock of peculiar construction. Behind it was Ezekiel Bingham's safe – concealed from view at that moment, since the door was closed.

The old lawyer prided himself on a safe of the latest pattern, and well he might, for many of the papers he possessed were of high importance. But it was also a known fact that most of the data that pertained to his legal cases was kept at his office in New York.

It was strange, in a way, that the old lawyer should maintain such a stronghold for he was not known to be a man who had enemies. On the contrary, he was highly esteemed by the criminal world, for he had successfully defended many crooks. The barriers that protected his house were more of a precaution than anything else; for they meant that the lawyer was prepared to resist any attempt at forcible entry, and hence granted his home a definite immunity.

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That night old Bingham was going over a pile of papers that he had taken from his safe. He sat half-facing the window, which was slightly open from the top. He was wearing his reading glasses, deeply occupied in his work. Yet, no matter how attentive the elderly man might be, he was susceptible to the slightest noise. That was why he chose to work at night, in the silence of suburban Long Island.

The minutes ticked by and the elderly man went on with his work without disturbance. It was after one o'clock when he had reached the bottom of the pile. Then he lifted a long envelope, cut it open with a paper-knife, and drew out a flat sheet of paper.

His perusal of this paper had become a nightly ritual. It was always to be found at the bottom of the pile. Yet, keen though his brain might be, the paper might as well have been blank for all it told him. It was the code message, a copy of which he had given to Elbert Joyce.

That particular night, Bingham studied the paper intently. He had tried to decipher it several times before. He had finally called upon the services of Joyce in desperation. For some reason, known only to himself, the lawyer had been reluctant to let an outsider see the mysterious message.

Now that the expert was at work, the lawyer had definitely admitted his own inability to decipher the legend on the paper. Yet he was curious, impatiently so.

Ezekiel Bingham found the paper fascinating. His forehead wrinkled as he went over the mystic numbers that appeared on the sheet before him.

There was a light rustle at the window. Bingham looked up quickly. Just a breath of wind – that was all. His eyes went back to the sheet of paper. As soon as the lawyer's gaze was fixed, the lower sash of the window slid upward, less than an inch.

The movement was noiseless. Bingham continued to stare at the paper before him. The window moved upward a trifle farther until it was open a full two inches.

The elderly lawyer was drumming upon the desk with the fingers of his right hand, while his left held the paper. The sash moved more perceptibly now; it came upward until there was a considerable opening at the bottom.

Bingham's right hand stopped drumming. It pulled open the desk drawer and brought out a long, thick envelope. The paper went into the envelope, and the lawyer sealed the message therein.

That was not all. He produced a piece of sealing wax and lighted it, letting burning drops fall upon the back of the envelope. He clenched his left fist and pressed the hot wax with a signet ring that he wore on his third finger. He studied the seal that he had made, and a satisfied smile appeared upon his face.

A shadow fell on the floor beside his desk. It was a peculiar shadow, long and narrow. It was almost like the shadow of a human being. Had there been a sound, Bingham's eyes might have wandered to the floor. But shadows are noiseless. The old man's ears heard nothing.

The shadow was noiseless on the floor, and Bingham did not observe it when he turned his chair and swung away from the desk, still clutching the sealed envelope.

He did not glance toward the window as he walked by, so he did not see that the lower sash was raised. He went to the wall where the steel door stood and, drawing a key from his pocket, unlocked the barrier.

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The door swung open toward the window, going back against a blank stretch of wall. The front of the safe was visible, and the old lawyer crouched before it as he worked the dial.

Although his body partly obscured the front of the safe, there were slight clicks that might have been heard. For the old man was deliberate in his movements.

As the door of the safe opened – in the opposite direction from the steel door – something happened behind Ezekiel Bingham – something which he did not see, and which even his keen ears did not hear.

An arm appeared through the window. It was a long arm, and it reached out toward the edge of the steel door. Long, supple fingers touched the key that was still in the lock, and drew it free. The arm disappeared through the wide bars of the window.

The lawyer was placing the sealed envelope in a compartment of the safe.

The arm appeared again. The hand held the key, and it again sought the steel door. The fingers sought to slip the key back in its place; they did not succeed at first, for the task was difficult. Finally, they made a delicate motion, and the peculiar piece of metal found its proper resting place. The steel door moved slightly inward as the key entered the lock.

The slight sound it made was lost as the lawyer closed the door of the safe and spun the dial.

The hand began to draw away, empty. It moved quite slowly. Then it stopped.

Ezekiel Bingham had turned, and was staring at a spot on the floor. A shadowy blotch appeared there. The lawyer was studying it. He rose, and his own shadow moved, the blot on the floor appeared to fade. The hand was gone, and Bingham had not seen it in the flesh.

The old lawyer gazed suddenly at the window. It was now closed at the bottom; he did not know that it had been opened.

Yet he seemed perplexed. He turned and crouched before the safe; then arose and watched his shadow. No, it was not the same. He repeated the experiment. Still he was not satisfied. He went quickly to the window and opened the lower sash. He peered through the bars toward the lawn.

There were shadows there; shadows that seemed to move as the night breeze rustled the trees and bushes. A long shadow flitted over the lawn and vanished. But the keen, piercing eyes of the lawyer could detect nothing else. He had removed his reading glasses and was staring with his far-sighted eyes.

He closed the window and laughed. He turned back and shut the steel door with a clang. He removed the key and placed it in his pocket.

"Shadows," he murmured. "When people worry about shadows, their minds begin to wander. Croaker talked of shadows. What was it he screamed the night he died? 'The Shadow!' That was it! Perhaps The Shadow is a living being. But if he is – what of it?"

The old man laughed again.

He went back to his desk and began to write.

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But now his mind was alert as his ears had always been. At moments he gazed quickly toward the window, which he had closed and locked.

The hours went by and the first streaks of dawn appeared. Ezekiel Bingham finished his writing, laid the papers in the desk drawer, and yawned.

There was a knock at his door.

"Come in."

Jenks entered. The man was dressed in working clothes, and stood there, his stolid face impassive.

"I am on duty, sir."

"All right, Jenks."

The old lawyer went into the front room and made ready for bed. As he pulled down the shades to obscure the increasing rays of daylight, he smiled and spoke aloud.

"The Shadow!" were his words. "Some people have wild imaginations!"

A faint laugh seemed to mock the lawyer's words – a laugh that issued feebly from the walls of his room.

It was a chill of mirth that might have crept in from outer spaces, where crimson tints had flushed the new day's sky. A laugh that was a left-over from darkness, bespeaking the departure of some creature that dwelt in night.

Old Bingham chewed his lips; then smiled sourly. The touch of day against the window shade quelled his momentary alarm. Darkness had passed; there was no need to fear the presence of an imaginary being called The Shadow.

"Bah!" snorted Bingham. "Just the scurrying feet of rats."

Satisfied that his plans were secrets known only to himself, Ezekiel Bingham fell asleep untroubled. Not for one moment did he suspect that the night just past had brought him an unseen visitor.

Only The Shadow knew that fact. Silently The Shadow had arrived; his mission accomplished, the weird intruder had faded with the end of night.

CHAPTER XVIII. FELLOWS ASSEMBLES FACTS

CLAUDE FELLOWS was working in his inner office. He was seated at his personal typewriter. The door to the outer office was closed.

The insurance broker had been engaged so all morning – ever since Harry Vincent had reported at nine o'clock, only to be told to come back toward the end of the day.

It was nearly half past one, and Fellows had not gone out for lunch. Evidently he intended to complete the work that he had in hand.

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He struck a few words on the typewriter, then pondered. He shifted to another line, allowing considerable space, and typed a few more words.

He was nearly at the bottom of the sheet. He stopped and drew it from the machine, dropped the piece of paper upon others that were beside him, then carried them all to his desk. There were not many papers in the pile, but Fellows seemed satisfied with what he had accomplished.

He sorted through the sheets, arranged them in order, and read the one on top. It contained simple lines of condensed information that ran down the page at intervals.

Fellows read each statement in an undertone, pausing between the phrases:

"Geoffrey Laidlow – millionaire.

"No enemies – house at Holmwood.

"Collection of gems – kept in safe.

"Family away – wife and two sons.

"People in house – secretary and servants."

Fellows paused and considered a row of stars that ran across the typewritten page. Then he read below:

"Laidlow returned home – accompanied by his secretary – went into the library – closed the door – heard a sound in the house – went to the study – discovered a man at the open safe – was shot and killed – by revolver kept in safe."

Fellows laid the sheet of paper face down upon his desk. He scanned the next page of typewriting:

"Howard Burgess – Laidlow's secretary – came in with Laidlow – with him in library – ready to go out – wearing coat and gloves – was with Laidlow – followed him to the study – attacked by the burglar – shot in the arm – followed the burglar – ran to front window – saw the burglar escape."

The third sheet carried further information:

"Ezekiel Bingham – criminal lawyer – lived near Laidlow – passing the house – heard shots fired – stopped his car – saw a man cross the lawn – entered the Laidlow home – found Burgess – called the police."

A line of stars; then this data:

"Met a man named Joyce – in his automobile at night – gave Joyce a copy of the code – original in Bingham's safe – demanded quick translation – ordered silence – purpose of the code – unknown."

The next sheet bore these memoranda:

"Unknown burglar – entered Laidlow home.

"Opened the safe.

"Knew the combination? Worked the dials.

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"Jewels were there – he took them.

"Removed papers – scattered them on the floor.

"Nothing missing – except jewels.

"Killed Laidlow.

"Shot Burgess – dropped the revolver on the lawn.

"Seen by Bingham.

"Escaped across lawn – left no trail."

The pages that followed were all very brief; they mentioned facts and actions concerning other persons who had arrived on the scene after the murder was committed.

Fellows read these quickly; then he looked over a report sheet which gave information concerning the careers of the various people mentioned – with the exception of the unknown burglar.

These report sheets showed that Fellows was unquestionably a capable man when it came to assembling cold information. As a matter of fact, he had handled a few insurance policies for Geoffrey Laidlow, and was in a position to obtain considerable information concerning the millionaire's past life. He had worked through insurance sources to gain data about Ezekiel Bingham, and Howard Burgess as well; and a pile of newspaper clippings that lay in an opened desk drawer indicated that he had overlooked no source from which he might have obtained additional facts.

His reports, thorough as they were, showed nothing very unusual. Both Geoffrey Laidlow and Ezekiel Bingham were well-known persons who had often been in the news. Fellows had managed to go through the clippings in the "morgue" of one of the New York newspapers, but had gleaned very little of interest from that source.

His report on Howard Burgess corroborated all that the police had discovered; it showed that the secretary had been an old and trusted employee, related to Mrs. Laidlow. The man had known a great many of the millionaire's affairs, and had handled many of his money matters. Yet, evidently, some important affairs were kept from Burgess, for the secretary had stated that he did not know the combination of the safe.

Fellows permitted himself the liberty of a few remarks on this point. They were the only items of original thought in the whole parcel of information, and they were on a separate page that carried question marks above and below:

"Laidlow probably kept the safe combination to himself because he had the jewels there. It is strange that he relied upon this antiquated safe, because no other valuables were there. All important papers were in safe-deposit vaults at banks. No record to show that the jewels were ever kept at a bank."

Then, at the bottom of the page, appeared this entry:

"I have included facts regarding Elbert Joyce in the statements which concern Ezekiel Bingham. Let me remind you that Harry Vincent brought no evidence to link this with the Laidlow murder. Your instructions were to include these facts, and I have done so."

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It was now nearly two o'clock, the insurance broker noted as he glanced at his watch. He hurriedly folded the papers and placed them in a large, heavy envelope which he thrust in the inside pocket of his overcoat. Then he put on his hat and coat, buttoned the outer garment tightly, and opened the door to the outer room.

"I am going out to lunch," he said to the stenographer. "I shall be back at three o'clock."

Instead of going directly to a restaurant, Claude Fellows hailed a passing cab the moment he reached the street. He rode down Broadway and went east on Twenty-third Street. His destination was an old, time-marked office building. He dismissed the cab upon his arrival.

Fellows went up the steps to the third floor, and stopped at a door near the end of the hall. On the frosted glass appeared the name, "B. Jonas."

Fellows drew the envelope from his pocket and pushed it through the mail chute beneath the glass.

Very little light showed through from the room within. It evidently had a single window that opened upon an airshaft, which provided very little illumination. There was dust on the glass of the door, thick dust. Apparently, no one had been in the room for weeks or months.

In this old building, the tenants paid extra for janitor service; and it appeared that Mr. Jonas frowned on such a luxury.

But all this was an old story to Claude Fellows. He had once made inquiries regarding the closed room, but since then had given the matter no attention.

Curiosity was not one of the insurance broker's characteristics. He was a man who dealt in fact, method, and routine. Since he had become used to the duties that he performed for the man he knew as The Shadow, he had accepted them as a matter of regular business.

Fellows thought of this as he was eating lunch in a hotel near Twenty-third Street. He recalled various affairs which he had handled for the man of mystery, and his mind went back to the circumstances which had brought about the connection.

Some months ago, Fellows had been in financial straits. He had mentioned his troubles to various friends and had tried to borrow money, without success. Then he received a letter without a signature – a letter which had offered him opportunity and prosperity in return for faithful service.

He had accepted the terms of the letter – accepted them by walking along Broadway from Forty-second Street to Twenty-third, on the east side of the street, carrying a cane in his left hand!

That had been the signal. The following day he received a letter written in ink that faded to blankness after he had read the letter. This was followed by a code which simply transposed letters. He memorized the code, then destroyed it.

Since that time, Fellows had been a trusted agent of The Shadow. His work had been of a passive sort, conducted entirely from his office. He had gained information on certain subjects, and had sometimes caught an inkling of what they signified.

This matter of the Laidlow murder was the most important of them all; and it was the first case in which he had knowingly come in contact with another of The Shadow's men.

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The reports which he had deposited in the mail box of the office that bore the name of Jonas were the culmination of his routine work. What The Shadow wanted with them was more than Fellows knew; and he was not particularly concerned about the matter. He knew that his patron could have probably gained all the information himself; in fact, may have done so. But the reports presented facts in definite, condensed form, and they would at least serve as a check-up.

The insurance broker was glad that his services were needed. His own business was doing well of late, but he was always assured of a regular income from this new and unknown source. Cash came in by messenger once every month.

Fellows knew that if he required money for an emergency, a note placed in Jonas' door would bring a prompt response. He was wise enough never to question a messenger who brought an envelope from his unknown benefactor. Fellows reasoned that the messengers, who were all uniformed delivery boys, had received the envelopes from some one on the street, and had been watched until they entered the Grandville Building. So they would know nothing of value.

In brief, the insurance broker's whole interest concerned his own welfare. Beyond that, he scented danger, and so avoided it. His present work was finished; new instructions might not arrive for some time to come. Yet the monthly payments would keep on.

Fellows finished his coffee and smiled with satisfaction as he started back to his office. Why should he worry about The Shadow's identity? The less he knew about it, the better.

All that he had ever written to the mysterious stranger had been inscribed with the special ink that vanished permanently; a new bottle came by mail when it was needed. The typewritten statements would not disappear; but they merely put forth facts and carried no clew as to their origin.

Whatever The Shadow's purpose might be, Fellows could see no danger threatening himself so long as he continued discreet.

CHAPTER XIX. WOVEN FACTS

A CIRCLE of light shone on a square table. It was like a spotlight that came from above, for it was focused by an opaque lamp shade.

Beneath the light, a pair of hands were opening an envelope. All that showed in the ring of light were the hands, the envelope, and a watch that lay on the table. The watch indicated four minutes after six.

The arms were clad in black, and they faded away into the darkness beyond. The hands were white; they were long, and the fingers tapered. Upon the third finger of the left hand a translucent gem glowed beneath the lamplight. It was a large blue girasol, or fire opal, and it shone with a strange red reflection.

The hands removed a group of folded papers and spread them on the table. They were the lists of data and reports that had been typewritten by Fellows, the insurance broker.

The hands held up each paper in turn. Eyes above the lamp shade read the typed words. Eyes that were hidden in the darkness; eyes that were lost in gloomy, sinister shadows.

The papers were spread upon the table, overlapping in the circle of light. A pair of scissors flashed suddenly beneath the illumination; scissors that came as though they were conjured out of nothingness.

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The hands handled the scissors deftly. The typed lists of facts were cut into tiny pieces, and arranged in little separate rows. The hands brushed the remaining scraps from the table.

A large sheet of paper appeared in the light, and with it a jar of paste. The hands moved like living creatures. They passed from one row of paper slips to another, fingering the bits of typing, choosing first one and then another.

The slips were laid at intervals upon the large sheet of paper. Occasionally the hands changed the order of the slips. Sometimes they rejected bits of information, substituting others in their place.

The actions were uncanny. As the hands worked in silence, they seemed to be fingering real facts and actions, instead of mere slips of paper, forming new combinations of phrases that differed from those which Fellows had assembled.

Minutes passed; but the hands kept on, untiring. They slipped here and there in rapid silence, and the quickness of their motions showed that they were controlled by a mind that thought with amazing speed. The circling second hand on the face of the watch seemed slow and sluggish in comparison.

At last the hands ceased their movement. Many slips were lying upon the paper. The fingers touched one and pushed it to a new position. They took another, only later to be removed. Again the motion stopped.

Then the hands dipped the paint brush in the jar. They worked rapidly again, applying paste to the backs of the chosen slips.

The bits of paper were pasted in position, and the result was a series of lines, the disconnected items of information standing well apart.

The assembled phrases read as follows:

"Geoffrey Laidlow... millionaire... no enemies... house at Holmwood... Laidlow returned home... accompanied by his secretary... went into the library... closed the door... heard a sound in the house... went to the study... discovered a man at the open safe... Howard Burgess... Laidlow's secretary... knew the combination?... wearing coat and gloves... was shot and killed... ran to the front window... shot in the arm... dropped the revolver on the lawn... opened the safe... jewels were there... removed papers... scattered them on the floor... Ezekiel Bingham... criminal lawyer... lived near Laidlow... passing the house... stopped his car... heard shots fired... entered the Laidlow home... found Burgess... called the police... saw a man cross the lawn... met a man named Joyce... in his automobile at night... gave Joyce a copy of the code... demanded quick translation... ordered silence... purpose of the code... unknown... collection of gems."

The hands reappeared above the patched paper. The right hand now held a pencil. The left steadied the paper, the fire opal on the third finger gleaming like a live coal. The pencil was poised for an instant, then it crossed out the single question mark that appeared among the statements.

With easy, unhesitating motion, the hand used the pencil to print words in the blank spaces between the typed items. Its uniform speed indicated that the controlling mind was well ahead; as the new words were formed, the mixed phrases became coherent. The hands stopped. A complete, amazing story stood forth in bold relief.

It was most emphatic because the words that had been added were printed in small, neat capital letters, as perfect as the typing. This was the finished result:

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"Geoffrey Laidlow, A RETIRED millionaire, WHO HAD no enemies, LIVED IN A house at Holmwood, Laidlow returned home ONE EVENING, accompanied by his secretary.

"LAIDLLOW went into the library ALONE, AND closed the door. LATER HE heard a sound in the house AND went to the study. THERE HE discovered a man at the open safe.

"THE MAN WAS Howard Burgess, Laidlow's secretary, WHO knew the combination OF THE SAFE. BURGESS WAS wearing coat and gloves. LAIDLLOW was shot and killed BY BURGESS, WHO THEN ran to the front window, WHERE HE WAS shot in the arm BY HIMSELF.

"BURGESS dropped the revolver on the lawn. BURGESS HAD opened the safe, BUT NO jewels were there. BURGESS HAD removed papers AND HAD scattered them on the floor.

"FROM THEM HE TOOK ONE THAT BORE A CODE. Ezekiel Bingham, THE criminal lawyer WHO lived near Laidlow, WAS NOT passing the house. ACTUALLY, HE HAD stopped his car OUT FRONT. WHEN HE heard the shots fired, HE IMMEDIATELY entered the Laidlow home, WHERE HE found Burgess, WHO GAVE HIM THE CODE.

"BINGHAM called the police AND TOLD THEM THAT HE saw a man cross the lawn, THUS SUPPORTING THE SECRETARY'S STORY.

"SOME TIME LATER BINGHAM met a man named Joyce WHO JOINED HIM in his automobile at night AND gave Joyce a copy of the code. BINGHAM demanded quick translation AND ORDERED silence.

"THE purpose of the code IS NOT unknown. IT TELLS WHERE LAIDLLOW KEPT HIS collection of gems."

The hand used the pencil to check over the entire story, carefully touching each word. Then it moved to the bottom of the sheet and wrote in script.

Words appeared. Those words were thoughts, expressed in rapid writing. They were sound, accurate thoughts – clear deductions supported by the facts in Fellows's reports on the persons involved, and based upon the finished story that stood above.

The writing was as follows:

"Howard Burgess had no questionable past; but he knew more about the affairs of Geoffrey Laidlow than any other man. His control of expenditures, under the lenient millionaire, might have caused him to steal, and he may have feared discovery.

"It is probable that he made contact with Ezekiel Bingham by secretly visiting the lawyer to ask advice. Bingham – a man who holds control over crooks and who admits his own crookedness – must surely dominate Burgess.

"We may assume that he arranged the robbery, and was ready to receive whatever was stolen. When Burgess was surprised by Laidlow, his only chance of safety depended upon the murder of the millionaire.

"These facts support the case:

"First: Burgess must have known the combination to the safe. He handled ordinary affairs in the household. Many trivial papers were in the safe. Yet he disclaimed knowledge of the combination.

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"Second: Burgess was wearing gloves. He wanted to be sure that no finger prints remained.

"Third: The use of the gun that was in the safe. A robber would have had his own revolver. He would not have trusted a strange gun, especially as there is no likelihood that he would have taken the time to examine it to see if it were loaded.

"Fourth: The safe at Laidlow's home was antiquated and poorly protected. The millionaire kept all valuable papers in safe-deposit vaults. It is certain that the jewels were not in the safe. Yet both Burgess and Bingham stressed the fact that the imaginary burglar carried a box. They went so far as they dared to convince every one that the jewels were taken from the safe.

"Conclusion: Burgess knew that the code was in the safe. He either planned to steal the code, along with other papers, or he was merely looking for the code to copy it. He expected no interference from Laidlow, who was accustomed to read for hours before retiring. Laidlow, confident that the code could not be deciphered and believing that Burgess was trustworthy, had not concealed from Burgess the fact that the code existed. But he would tell no man where the jewels were kept for he did not even entrust them to the security of a safe-deposit vault.

"Upon the deciphering of the code hinges the fate of Laidlow's jewels. If Bingham obtains a translation from Joyce, there will be a second robbery at the Laidlow home – a robbery that may never be brought to light. But it will not take place until the dead man's secret has been discovered."

The paper, with its double story, lay between the unmoving hands while the fire opal glistened and its crimson depths held their strange glow. Unseen eyes were reading from the page, and the invisible mind behind them was remembering every word.

The hands folded the paper once, and then again. The pencil wrote on the outside of the packet:

"This report would be a great help to Detective Joe Cardona. It would also interest Inspector John Malone."

Pencil, paste and scissors disappeared, carried away by the hands. Then the long fingers gripped the folded paper and tore it once, then again and again, until it became tiny fragments which lay in a heap on the center of the table. The typed sheets met the same fate.

The hands gathered the torn paper bits until the left hand clutched them all. Not one scrap remained. The right hand picked up the watch, which registered half past six. The hands moved from the light. Only the blank top of the table remained in view.

A sharp click and the room was in absolute darkness. All was silent for a moment; then from the midst of that Stygian gloom came a soft, weird, mocking laugh – a laugh no louder than a whisper; yet a laugh that echoed and reechoed from the walls.

CHAPTER XX. A LETTER FOR HARRY

"MR. VINCENT?"

"Yes."

"This is the clerk at the desk. There's a letter here for you. Shall I send it up to your room?"

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"Right away."

Harry Vincent opened the door of his room and awaited the arrival of the bell boy. This was quick action.

He had visited Fellows shortly before five o'clock, and had been instructed to return to his room at the Metrolite Hotel to await orders. It was now only half past seven.

The letter arrived. It was in a long envelope which bore no return address. Harry opened it at the writing table, and saw that it was in the simple code he knew. The figure "1" appeared at the bottom.

He read the message with ease, for only a few letters had been substituted. Yet there were enough to make the note unintelligible to any one other than Vincent.

His reading was accomplished with care.

"Report to the Excelsior Garage," the message read. "You will find a taxicab there in your name. Put on the uniform that is in the back seat. You will find another note in the pocket. Lose no time."

Harry stared at the message and read it a second time. Then he blinked his eyes. The writing was slowly disappearing. In a few seconds it had gone!

He held the paper close to the light.

Not the slightest trace of any ink remained.

Harry dropped the sheet of paper in the waste-basket. Now he knew what had happened to the letter that Fellows had been reading in the insurance office. He also appreciated what Fellows had meant when he had remarked that it would be unnecessary to destroy any messages that he might receive.

Harry had not yet eaten dinner, but he did not wait for that. He looked up the Excelsior Garage in the phone book, found that it was located on Tenth Avenue, and took a taxi in that direction.

He dismissed the vehicle some distance from the garage. It was obvious that he was to pose as a cab driver, and he did not know whether or not taximen hired the cabs of others during their leisure hours. Probably they did. Nevertheless, he could avoid any complications by arriving on foot.

He entered the garage and mentioned his name.

"So you're the fellow that has the cab," said the attendant. "It's been waiting for you for a couple of days. All fixed up and ready to go."

"Where is it?"

"Over in the corner."

Harry found the cab and looked in the back seat. He saw the uniform and felt in the pocket. The note was there.

He turned on the light in the cab, opened the envelope, and read another message with substituted letters.

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"Come to Wang Foo's before ten o'clock. Drive past. Circle the block and drive by a second time. Then park around the corner at the end of the street. Keep the cab out of sight, but loaf near the corner and watch down the block.

"When you see a Chinaman come from the tea shop, hurry back to the cab and be ready to pick up a man who will be coming from Wang Foo's. If he does not arrive within one minute, drive down the street and watch for a passenger at the other end. The man may go the opposite way. Take him where he desires and remember his destination. Watch the meter. Collect."

A notation following the message gave Wang Foo's address. This was important. Harry had been to Wang Foo's – he remembered the visit all too well – but he had been taken by a round-about way, and until now he had no idea as to the exact location of the place.

He was due before ten o'clock. That would give him time to get some dinner. He dressed in the cab.

The driver's uniform fitted him well. He noted a picture that looked something like himself and bore the name Harry Patman. That would be well to remember. The first name was his own.

Evidently the person whom he was to pick up would be a stranger who might suspect something wrong if the card were not in its place.

Harry picked up the note, which was lying on the seat, and observed that the writing had disappeared. This reminded him that it had borne the number "2," so he took a blank diary from his suit and crossed out the first and second days of January. That seemed a good way to keep a record. Then he folded the suit and put it under the back seat.

It was his first experience at the wheel of a taxicab. He knew the streets of New York fairly well, and did not worry about the traffic; but he felt strange in his disguise.

He saw a lunch room on Tenth Avenue. He parked his cab and had dinner.

There was plenty of time before he was due at the corner above Wang Foo's. Harry did not particularly relish the thought of loitering too long in that section on the border of Chinatown. Neither did he care to drive about in the cab. He might have to argue with prospective passengers who would not be satisfied with his statement that the empty cab was engaged. So he lingered in the lunch room after he had finished eating.

Gauging his time for the trip to Chinatown, Harry set forth in the cab. He kept to the streets and avenues where traffic was not heavy and drove rather slowly. He passed several persons who shouted and whistled for his services, but paid no attention and kept on his way.

It was eight minutes of ten when he reached his destination. He rolled slowly down the street in front of Wang Foo's and felt his nerves tingle as he passed the front of that grim, foreboding building where he had so narrowly escaped death.

He circled the block in accordance with the instructions of the message and rode by the tea shop a second time. Then he came back to the corner above the building and parked the cab in a convenient space.

There were not many persons on the street. The district was dismal and forlorn. But the few who passed – among them some Chinese – paid no attention to the man in the cab driver's uniform.

The night was a trifle chilly. Harry walked up and down the street beside the cab, swinging his arms. His action was natural, and, as he reached the corner, he swung around in a casual way so that he could catch a view of Wang Foo's tea shop.

He continued his patrol for half an hour. It became monotonous. He expected some sign of the mysterious Chinaman each time he reached the corner. But he was constantly disappointed.

Harry began to count the number of turns he made in his short walk. Ten – twenty – thirty – and still the same monotonous patrol. But he kept on, back and forth.

Eleven o'clock went by. Then half past eleven. It was approaching midnight, and the pretended taxi driver still continued to pace the sidewalk.

CHAPTER XXI. WANG FOO RECEIVES A VISITOR

WHILE Harry Vincent had been undergoing his experiences as an amateur hackman, other events had been slowly unfolding within the tea shop of Wang Foo.

Loo Choy, the regular counter man, had come in earlier than usual to relieve his lately rediscovered cousin, Ling Chow. In fact, he had arrived at five o'clock in the afternoon.

There was a purpose behind his action. Since the double shift had been instituted, Loo Choy had had his afternoons to himself. He had found the freedom that he had lacked for an entire year, and he wanted more. He had felt that if he arrived at five instead of six, he might be able to persuade his cousin, Ling Chow, to stay on duty that evening.

Ling Chow had listened silently to Loo Choy's efforts at persuasion. But he had given no indication that he would consent to the plan. In fact, he intimated that the evenings were too much work after a hard afternoon. He understood that many customers came to the tea shop in the evening – perhaps as many as five or six; and it would require great effort to attend to their wants.

Loo Choy had denied this. He held up the fingers of his left hand, and had counted two of them. Only two persons had come in last night. In fact, only one had been a customer; for the other, a large white man, had gone upstairs to see Wang Foo.

Ling Chow had still been skeptical. No one ever went upstairs to see Wang Foo – that is, no American men. That one statement had been sufficient to prove that Loo Choy was not truthful.

This had brought a torrent of triumphal words from the lips of Loo Choy. He could prove to his doubting cousin that the American man had come the night before! But in order to see the proof, Ling Chow would have to stay in the shop during the evening.

The American, Loo Choy explained, had come unannounced. He had signaled at the door in the rear, and had been admitted. He had arrived just before ten o'clock, and had stayed about half an hour. Then, Wang Foo had summoned Loo Choy upstairs, and Loo Choy had heard the ancient Chinaman say, in English:

"Come to-morrow night. Same time."

Loo Choy's knowledge of English was extremely limited, but he had understood all these words.

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Then, Wang Foo had sent him downstairs and out into the street, to see that no one was in sight. Having reported that all was clear, Loo Choy had watched the big man depart, and had seen him from the doorway as he shouted to a passing taxicab at the end of the street.

Despite what Loo Choy related, Ling Chow still maintained his doubts. Finally, Loo Choy made a small wager that if Ling Chow would stay in the tea shop he would see the big American. This aroused Ling Chow's sporting spirit. He took up the bet, but insisted upon a compromise.

It was to this effect: He, Ling Chow, would leave the tea shop at that moment, but would return by eight o'clock, and would remain there the rest of the evening. Thus he would have a few hours to himself, and yet be able to witness the arrival of the visitor.

Loo Choy agreed. Ling Chow left at half past five.

At eight o'clock, Ling Chow came back to the tea shop, in accordance with his agreement.

Loo Choy left immediately. It was his first night off since his vacation. He wandered into the street, and looked across. The shadows did not appear so thick to-night. He had noticed the same on the night before, when he had gone to the door with Wang Foo's visitor.

Within the shop, Ling Chow sat placidly behind the counter. He stared straight ahead, patient and quiet as an Image of Buddha. Not a customer entered the tea shop.

Shortly before ten o'clock, there came the sound of heavy footsteps on the sidewalk outside. Some one climbed the rickety step and entered the door.

It was a white man, fairly tall and decidedly heavy. He strode toward the counter and looked at Ling Chow.

This newcomer had a full, red face, a large, pudgy nose, and a square-set jaw that hung like that of a bulldog.

Ling Chow's eyes were directly upon him. However, after a glance at the Chinaman, the stranger went on through the shop and disappeared behind the tea boxes in the rear. Ling Chow could hear him pound on the door four times.

Through the partition came the sound of heavy footfalls on the stairs that led to Wang Foo's private sanctum.

Ling Chow did not move from his counter for one hour and a half. Then he toddled toward the rear, where he inspected a stack of tea boxes which had been neglected until they appeared on the verge of falling.

From there he went to the door at the rear, where he listened for a moment. He looked at the door as though he meant to knock upon it. At that instant a bell rang. That would be Wang Foo's signal.

Ling Chow tapped four times. The door opened. Ling Chow ascended.

At the top of the stairs, he paused in the open doorway that was the entrance to Wang Foo's den. The old Chinaman was seated behind his desk. The visitor was standing near by.

"It is time for you to go," said Wang Foo to the stranger.

Wang Foo beckoned to Ling Chow, who respectfully approached the desk, and received instructions in Chinese to the effect that he should proceed downstairs and see that the street was clear. Ling Chow waited in

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the doorway again, until the stranger should be ready.

The man with the beefy face suddenly reopened conversation with Wang Foo.

"The old boy may have the goods any time," he said. "But for some reason he's holding back."

"Perhaps he is not yet prepared," replied Wang Foo.

"But the job was pulled."

"I know that."

"Maybe he's going to fence them some other place."

"I think not."

"He's a foxy fellow. Treats me all right, though. I'm one he hasn't got anything on – maybe that's why. He trusts me, too, because I came from you. He hasn't anything on you, either."

"No one has anything on me."

"That's so, Wang Foo."

"That is why I bring you here. Remember, if the police ever suspect you of anything, out you go."

The red-faced man laughed.

"There ain't much chance of that, Wang Foo. The bulls know me all right, but they ain't ever found me mixed up in anything crooked. That lunch wagon I'm running is a great hangout for crooks. That's why the bulls think I'm all right. When they come snooping around my place, the boys behind the counter keep their mouths shut."

"Don't the police ask you for information?"

"Not any more. They know I ain't no stool pigeon. Treat 'em both straight – crooks and cops; that's my game."

The beefy-faced man paused, then added:

"You know, Wang Foo, I'm supposed to be out of town. I've got lunch wagons in other cities. Couple here around New York. So when I'm working for you nobody knows I'm anywhere near here."

"It never pays to feel too sure," warned Wang Foo. "Be careful."

"Sure," said the man, grinning. "Only feel safe two places – with the old boy, and here with you."

Wang Foo raised his scant eyebrows.

"With the old boy out on Long Island," explained the red-faced man, "anybody's safe, because he's got his racket, and it's a good one."

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"Whereas with me?"

"Perfect. You're one chink that minds his business and plays straight. I bet you don't have no worries."

"Not many," smiled Wang Foo. "But I have been careful lately."

"Why?"

"Some other Chinese tried to work something. They sent a false messenger in here. I trapped him."

"Was he a chink?"

"No, an American."

"How do you know that Chinamen were behind it, then?"

"Because only Chinese would have known about the messenger. After I caught him and had him upstairs, a Chinaman rescued him."

"Whew! That's bad. How did the chink get in?"

"He must have followed the messenger, and remained hidden in the hall outside."

"How did you trap the messenger?"

"I had two men behind the curtains. I always have under such circumstances."

"Maybe you've got them there now, watching me."

In reply, Wang Foo rose and went to the wall. He lifted the curtain.

"Look anywhere you want, Johnny. I trust you."

"Thanks, Wang Foo. Well, I hope there's no more trouble."

"I don't expect it. Both men escaped. The Chinese fought his way out. That's my only trouble, Johnny. My own people. The police mean nothing."

"Why, Wang Foo?"

The Chinaman spread his arms, with the palms of his hands upward.

"If they came here," he said, "and found me with the goods, what would it mean? Some trouble, yes. But I have never been under suspicion. They would believe my story – that I had bought without knowing that the articles had been stolen."

"I guess you're right at that. But suppose somebody should happen to be here with you?"

"Ah! That is why I deal only with those who have never been suspected. You, for instance. You are my friend. As innocent as myself, and quite surprised to learn that the goods were stolen."

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"You're smart, Wang Foo."

"It is profitable to be smart."

"You're right."

"I always am."

The red-faced man chanced to glance at the floor. He started nervously as he observed a long shadow beside him. It was the shadow of a human being, grotesque because of its great size. He looked hastily behind him and saw Ling Chow standing silently in the doorway.

"Say," he said to Wang Foo. "I didn't know that chink was standing there. He musta heard us talking."

Wang Foo smiled.

"Ling Chow knows very little English," he explained. "Furthermore, he is reliable. He has been away from me for some months; but it takes a Chinese of his type a lifetime to learn English. He is employed in the shop downstairs. Like his cousin, Loo Choy, he is indolent. These men know little. They are faithful. Therefore, they are useful."

The man called Johnny looked at Ling Chow, and then at the silent Chinaman's shadow. Funny things, shadows. A little man with a big shadow!

Wang Foo then repeated to Ling Chow the instructions that he had given him some time before. Ling Chow toddled downstairs and the big man with the red face followed, to wait in the shop while Ling Chow went out to the street. The Chinaman came back and bowed, indicating that the way was clear.

"Funny bunch, these chinks," the American muttered. "Wang Foo is different from the rest of 'em, though. No wonder he watches out for trouble."

He walked heavily down the steps.

"Now to find a cab," he muttered. "I was lucky last night. But it's later now, and I may have to walk a ways."

He started up to the end of the street and whistled as he neared the corner. A cab was standing near the intersection, and he could hear the motor.

"Taxi, sir?"

"Right-o!" answered the beefy-faced man as he thrust his heavy body through the door.

CHAPTER XXII. FRESH TROUBLE

THE big man in the back of the cab grunted as the car bounced along a poorly paved street. Evidently the driver did not know the best way to the address that had been given him.

The cab swung a corner, rolled along a street that was somewhat better, then began to increase its speed. Suddenly the passenger in back whistled.

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"Whoa, boy," he said. "Let's stop in here a minute."

He pointed to a lunch wagon they had just passed.

"Might as well let them know I'm in town," he muttered to himself. "Now that I've fixed things with Wang Foo, there's nothing to do until I see the old boy on Long Island. I'll hear from him in time to plan another business trip."

Stepping from the cab, he turned to the driver.

"Come in, boy," he said to the taxi driver.

Harry got out of the front seat reluctantly.

"Don't like to spare the time," he began.

"Forget it," replied the beefy-faced man. "Leave your meter running. This is on me."

Together they entered the lunch wagon. A cry went up from two men seated there, and the cook waved his hand in recognition.

"English Johnny!"

The red-faced man laughed.

"They call me that," he said, "but you fellows know I ain't an Englishman."

"Perhaps not," said one of the customers, "but you've got some English in you, and you sure look English."

English Johnny turned to Harry Vincent.

"Sit down, bud," he said, "and order up."

Vincent called for a cup of coffee. He listened to the conversation, but learned nothing except that the man they called "English Johnny" was well known and well liked.

"When did you get back, Johnny?" came a question.

"To-night."

"Where are you staying?"

"Well, I usually pick a downtown hotel, but I ain't registered yet. Just came in from a trip, you know."

"Starting any more wagons?"

"Expect to, soon."

The talk drifted a bit. Harry had finished his coffee. The beefy-faced man had gulped down two sandwiches and had swallowed a cupful of tea. He rose and walked to the door, with Harry following.

THE LIVING SHADOW

As they neared the cab, another taxi drew up and the driver alighted.

"Hello, English Johnny," the driver called.

"Hello, boy."

The driver gazed curiously at Harry Vincent, but said nothing. Harry felt rather ill at ease. Perhaps he should greet this other man.

English Johnny detected the glance of the newcomer, but the taxi driver was evidently a mere acquaintance, and not a friend. Harry climbed into the cab and held the door open for English Johnny.

They rolled beneath the elevated. Harry stepped on the accelerator. It would be best to deliver the man in back before any trouble might arise. The street was deserted; this was a time for speed.

He went past a corner. English Johnny whistled at him. Harry slowed down.

"Where you taking me, fellow?" asked the beefy-faced man. "This ain't the shortest way. Cut over to the left. Don't you know your New York?"

"Not all of it, sir."

"Looks like you don't know none of it."

Harry swung to the left; as he did so, a passing car honked warningly. There followed the grinding of brakes, and the other automobile narrowly missed a collision with one of the elevated posts.

An oath issued from the other car. Its driver stepped from one door and a policeman from the other. Harry was stopped in the middle of the street.

"What's the idea?" demanded the policeman.

"Just turning left," said Vincent.

"Where was your hand?"

"I had it out," answered Harry truthfully.

The officer turned to his companion.

"Did you see him put his hand out?"

"No" said the other man. "I'm glad I was giving you a lift, officer. You can see what we drivers are up against. These taxis think they own the streets. Why don't you run him in?"

The policeman glowered at Vincent. He looked as though he was sorry there had not been an accident. He seemed to be after an excuse to make an arrest.

"Get out your driver's license," he said. "Show me your certificates."

THE LIVING SHADOW

Vincent fumbled in the pocket of his uniform. He half expected to find the credentials there. Then he realized that he would be unable to sign properly – doubtless the officer would require that.

This was something that had not been anticipated; evidently no provision had been made for it. The pocket was empty.

"One chance in a million," thought Vincent. "One chance that I would run into a mess like this."

The policeman was opening the back door of the car.

"Let's take a look at your mug back here," Vincent heard him say.

"Do you mean me?" came the voice of English Johnny.

"No. I mean the picture of this bum driver you have in the license frame. But I'll look you over, too if you want. What's your name?"

"Well," came the reply, "my name's Harmon; but most of the boys know me by the title of English Johnny."

The policeman looked up.

"English Johnny!"

"Sure."

"The fellow that owns the lunch wagons?"

"The same one. I know some big men on the force, too."

"I've heard that. Say, what'll I do with this driver you've got here?"

"Let him take me out to my place, first. He's been long enough getting me there."

The officer laughed.

"Drive along," he said to Harry. "This gentleman wants to get home."

"What about running him in?" asked the man from the other car.

"Forget it," said the policeman.

Vincent put the car in gear and drove hurriedly away. The interruption of English Johnny had been fortunate. He hoped there would be no more complications.

Just then another whistle from the back seat broke in on Harry's thoughts.

"Pull up by the curb here," came the voice of his passenger. Harry obeyed the order.

English Johnny stepped out of the door – he had ordered Harry to the left side of the street – now he looked sharply at the driver of the cab, whose face was clearly visible beneath the light of a street lamp.

THE LIVING SHADOW

"Listen here, fellow," demanded English Johnny, "are you trying to give me the run-around?"

"No, sir," replied Vincent.

"It looks like you were."

"Why?"

"Because you talk like you know the streets, and yet you've been getting mixed up every few blocks."

Vincent decided that a taxi driver would answer this sort of talk with some emphatic statements of his own. So he tried it.

"Maybe I know the streets better than you," he growled in a sullen voice. "I'm driving the cab. I know my business."

"Maybe you're all right," replied English Johnny, as though half convinced. "I just wanted to make sure."

"I'm all right."

"Well, you kinda got into trouble back there at the elevated."

"That's all in the day's work. Every cab driver runs into mix-ups like that."

"Well, you acted kinda funny. Then, when you got lost again, I thought I'd better see what it was all about. I ain't trusting myself with no half-drunk taxi driver."

"I haven't been drinking."

"I know that now, bud. Still, things ain't right – least, they don't seem that way to me."

"Why not?"

"You ain't handling the car like you knew where you were going."

Harry was silent.

"Tell me where we are going," demanded English Johnny. "What was the address I gave you?"

Harry was about to blurt out the reply when he sensed something in the man's pugnacious red face. He knew instinctively that English Johnny was suspicious. For some reason the man was sorry that he had given his address to this strange taxi driver.

"Come on!" English Johnny persisted. "Where did I tell you to take me?"

"I can't remember, sir," replied Vincent.

"You don't remember?"

"No, sir."

THE LIVING SHADOW

"What kind of a taxi driver are you, anyway?"

"I'm an all-right driver; I just forgot the address you gave. All I can remember is East One Hundred and Something Street. I was figuring on asking you again when we got up around the Nineties."

"So that's it."

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you check up on the number when I gave it to you – back where I got in the cab? Repeat it to yourself, I mean, so you wouldn't forget it?"

"No, sir. I didn't catch it exactly when you gave it to me. Then we stopped at the lunch wagon; and after that trouble back on the avenue, I got so mixed up that I couldn't even remember the street you told me."

Another taxi pulled up in back of Vincent's cab. The driver came forward to listen to the argument.

"What's the row?" the fellow asked Harry.

"Don't ask him," interrupted English Johnny. "He wouldn't know."

"How so?" asked the newcomer, surveying the beefy-faced man suspiciously. That was natural enough, Harry thought. One taxi driver would side with another.

"Looka here, bud," said English Johnny. "I gotta right to be taken straight to a place, ain't I? But this fellow ain't doing it. He admits he forgot the number I gave him. I don't believe he ever drove a cab before."

"Show him your licenses, pal," said the taxi man.

"That's right," English Johnny chimed in. "Show 'em to me."

Harry fumbled in his pocket, playing for time.

"He hasn't got 'em," jeered English Johnny. "I shoulda let the cop run him in. He's a phony."

The other man was studying Harry curiously.

"I guess you're right," he admitted. "He don't look like a regular taxi man. What's the racket, fellow? There's been a lot of cabs snatched off the street lately. You pulling that game?"

"We'll find out quick enough," growled English Johnny, glancing back down the street. Harry twisted around in his seat and saw a policeman approaching.

English Johnny waved an arm for assistance.

Silently, Harry slipped the car into gear.

But English Johnny had leaped on to the running board. His beefy face, usually affable, was now distorted with anger. The cab hadn't started rolling yet.

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"Cab stealer, eh?" he shouted. "Maybe you were going to run me out somewhere to grab my dough. Well, your game's up!"

His huge hand clamped upon Harry's shoulder. An instant later, the man at the wheel swung his left elbow straight upward. It landed squarely on the point of English Johnny's chin.

The man with the bulldog jaw was staggered for a moment. The interfering taxi driver joined English Johnny on the running board, and saved him from falling off.

Turning the wheel sharply with his right hand, and stepping on the gas, Harry drew back his left and thrust the open palm against English Johnny's face. The big fellow went back, and the sharp turn of the car caused him to lose his balance and tumble in the street.

The other man was spilled from the running board by the force of English Johnny's catapulting bulk.

Harry looked back over his shoulder. English Johnny had regained his feet. He was in the middle of the street, shaking his mighty fist and shouting incoherently.

The genuine driver ran back to give chase in his cab. The policeman had reached the scene of the recent action.

Harry swung his car grimly as he turned a corner. He raced down an avenue, cut off to the right along a side street, and commenced a twisting, bewildering course to elude pursuit.

Harry was driving rapidly. He had the feel of the wheel, and he was pleased with the easy way in which the cab handled. He roared onto Tenth Avenue and whirled down that broad thoroughfare until he reached the Excelsior Garage.

An attendant opened the door. Vincent parked the car in the vacant corner and changed to his street clothes.

"I'll get the cab to-morrow," he remarked as he left the garage. "Maybe I'll send some one after it."

He walked down the avenue and called to a passing cab, and was whisked to the Metrolite Hotel.

The telephone bell rang just as he was getting into bed.

"Mr. Vincent?" came a voice.

"Yes."

"I wondered where you were. Did you forget that I was to call you this evening? I am the man who sold you the radio set for your friend. Where do you want it to go?"

Vincent caught the emphasis instantly.

"Where did the man go?"

The man must be English Johnny.

Slowly and carefully, Harry repeated the address that had been given him in the cab – the address which he had so wisely pretended to have forgotten.

"Thank you, Mr. Vincent," came the voice.

The receiver clicked.

Harry walked to the window and whistled a soft tune as he gazed out at the twinkling lights of Manhattan. It had been an exciting night. He had tumbled into trouble and out again. English Johnny Harmon! What did this fellow have to do with the game?

He shrugged his shoulders. The whole affair was a mystery to him. What would be his next mission?

He was still wondering when he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII. ENGLISH JOHNNY'S GAME

BIG, bluff English Johnny arrived at his uptown residence, still fuming because the pretending taxi driver had eluded him. He and the policeman had followed Harry Vincent in the other cab, but had given up the chase after a few blocks, for their quarry had gained too great a start.

Furthermore, they had not detected the license number of the fleeing cab. It had been well down the street before they had made any effort to note the license plate.

English Johnny, however, had remembered Harry's face. Some day, he said to himself, he would encounter him, and would square accounts.

English Johnny had continued home in the other cab, but had given the driver a false address, and had dismissed the vehicle some distance from the house where he lived. He then walked up the street to an unpretentious building, unlocked the door of the house, and entered.

He climbed the steps to an upstairs room of the simple two-story house. There he opened a letter which he had found in the mail box.

The beefy-faced man whistled as he read. He was evidently pleased by the message he had received.

He tore the letter into pieces, dropped the fragments in a large ash tray, and burned them. After scattering the ashes from the window, he drew down the shade, and took a seat at a table in the corner of the room.

Half aloud, he repeated the information that he had gathered from the letter:

"Expect to complete matters to-night. We will meet away out on Saturday night, at eight o'clock. If plans are changed, you will hear by Saturday morning."

It was now Thursday night. The meeting was to take place in two days.

"That's good," mumbled English Johnny. "The old boy is getting busy at last. Eight o'clock. That will get me back to Wang Foo's by eleven."

English Johnny took pen and paper, and penned a brief reply:

"Glad that work will be done soon. Will see you as stated. Have made all arrangements with my representative, and am anxious to obtain action."

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That was the content of the letter, but much of the spelling was incorrect. Even this short note, which bore no greeting and no signature, was something of a labor for English Johnny.

He sealed the letter in an envelope, scrawled an address, and affixed a stamp. He left the house and mailed the letter at the corner. Then he returned; locked the front door and went upstairs. There he sat in meditation.

"Bad business with that cab driver," he mused. "Wonder who the fellow was. Wonder if he did forget this address. I'm laying low out here, and it ain't good for nobody to know about it. Well, I'll be careful until after Saturday night. You won't poke your nose out of this place for two days, Johnny, old boy.

"Wang Foo is a wise chink. All the tips he gives are good. 'Be careful' is what he says. He's right, Johnny. He's right. It's been good business with him in the past, and this job is going to be the best of all. Yes, sir. Play safe, Johnny."

The big man listened intently for a moment. He fancied he had heard a click at the front door. He arose and went downstairs. The hall was very dim, for there was no light there; but he could see his way from the illumination in the street, for the two doors of the vestibule had glass panels.

Noises seldom annoyed English Johnny. But this slight sound, coming in upon his thoughts of danger, needed investigation.

He entered the vestibule. The outer door was locked as he had left it.

"Locked all right," he said, "but the lock ain't worth much. Old-fashioned. A smart guy could open it with a hairpin."

The vestibule was shadowy – almost black.

English Johnny went into the hall and shut the inner door of the vestibule. He locked this, also. There was something in that pale gloom that troubled him. He sensed a difference in the hallway as he walked toward the stairs.

This was unusual, for English Johnny was not an imaginative man, susceptible to vague impressions. But he was keen and alert when his mind was centered upon anything important. As his heavy footfalls made the floor creak, he formed the definite belief that some one – or something – was following him.

He took advantage of the landing in the stairs to cast a sidelong glance down the passage he had just left.

The hall was a mass of shadows, and from his higher elevation, English Johnny was positive that he detected a motion in the blackness on the floor.

Yet he made no action that might betray his thoughts. English Johnny reasoned coldly. He knew that if any one had entered the house to do him bodily harm, the attack would have landed after he had closed the inner door of the vestibule. The dark hallway would have been the ideal spot.

The unseen visitor – if real, as Johnny now believed – could have no purpose other than to steal, or spy. The big man with the underslung jaw could laugh at a thief in the security of his lighted room. He considered himself a match for any one. As for a spy, well, that would be different. Give a spy the opportunity and he would betray his presence.

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So Johnny entered his room and closed the door. He sat at the table in the corner, with his back toward the entrance, so that he would be plainly visible through the keyhole. He lighted a long black stogie, and began to whistle softly, while he scrawled meaningless words upon a sheet of paper.

His whistling became abrupt. Every now and then the man at the table became silent, as though some thought had made him forget his tune for the moment. It was during one of these lulls that English Johnny fancied he heard an almost imperceptible noise.

Had he turned suddenly he might have seen the doorknob turning. But English Johnny did not care to turn. He was playing another game.

He imagined that the door was opening – slowly and by small degrees. Opening, perhaps, twelve inches; then closing again. At the instant, English Johnny pictured the door as shut again; he fancied that he heard the slightest sound imaginable.

He still remained at the table; then, with an angry, impatient snort, crossed out everything that he had written.

With a loud, prolonged cough, he pushed his chair back from the table and began to pace about the center of the room. His eyes followed the walls, but they took in the situation at the corner of the room by the door.

English Johnny had tossed his overcoat and hat upon a chair in a corner. That corner of the room was dark and shadowy, for the light was on the table, diagonally opposite. There was space enough for a person to be hidden between the chair and the wall, behind the shelter of the coat.

English Johnny let his eyes roam along the wall above the chair. Not the slightest trace of interest appeared upon his poker face as he observed the shadow that appeared on the wall. It was a larger shadow than that which his coat would cast!

Shadows frightened some people, English Johnny knew. To others, they were laughing matters. But to English Johnny, a shadow might mean the presence of a person.

He had seen proof at Wang Foo's, when his eyes had noted the long shadow of Ling Chow. Furthermore, he recalled a name that had been whispered among some crooks who had visited his lunch wagon.

"The Shadow!"

Those were the words that came back to English Johnny. And those were the words which a crook named Croaker had screamed and gasped the night that his fellow gangsters had killed him.

English Johnny strolled back to his chair at the table, puffing his cigar in speculation.

The table was a heavy one; to the left of it was an unoccupied space, and then the bed. A good place to hide, that space – because the edge of the table obscured all light.

English Johnny moved his chair back, and, with feigned carelessness, let his pencil drop to the floor. As he leaned to pick it up, he noted the shadow from the space beside him, and calculated the exact distance that it extended from the wall. This was an innocent shadow – a shadow with a straight-edged ending.

Dropping the pencil on the desk, English Johnny took the pen and wrote another letter, to this effect:

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DEAR SIR: Your letter came to-night. I am surprised that you will want another week at least, and maybe more, and that you say I must not come to your house until one week from to-night. On that account I will leave town to-morrow or Saturday, and go up State. I will come back next Thursday and will be here at my house on that day.

The writer paused and scratched his head with both hands, as if thinking of something else to say. He walked to the window, raised shade and sash, and peered out in the darkness.

After three minutes he returned to the table. His eyes darted furtively to the floor.

The shadow beside the table had altered! It extended farther away from the wall, and its edge was irregular!

Without looking toward the hiding place that he suspected, English Johnny added a postscript to his note:

I have seen my representative and will not communicate with him until I hear from you. I will spend all my time attending to lunch wagons. JOHNNY HARMON.

Again, English Johnny arose and went to the window. He pulled down the sash and drew the blind. He regarded the wall when he returned. The irregular shadow was still there! English Johnny sat, while seconds went by, staring at the letter. He was evidently engaged in thought. His mind appeared to be puzzling over some complication.

Finally, he pulled a plain envelope from a pile on the table. He affixed a stamp; then walked beyond the window, carrying the pen. There he hastily addressed the envelope, standing so that anyone beside the table might have observed his action, without being able to see the writing. A chiffonier was beyond the window, and English Johnny used its high surface as a writing desk.

He thrust the envelope in his pocket, went to the door, and put on his coat and hat. Then he left the room, went down the stairs and out into the street. He walked to the mail box and drew a letter from his pocket. He dropped the letter in the box.

The shadows of the houses seemed ominous as he returned from his trip to the corner. Each shadow appeared as a lurking place – a vantage spot from which invisible eyes might be peering. English Johnny sensed this; but when he reached the shelter of his own hall, the feeling had left him.

He locked the doors and walked slowly up the stairs, confident that he alone was in the house.

In his room, he made an inspection behind the drawn window shade. He placed his hat and coat on their customary chair, and studied the shadow which they cast. He inspected the space beyond the chair, he observed that the shadow from the wall was no longer irregular.

"The Shadow!" he said in an undertone. "Perhaps there is such. Perhaps he was here. Perhaps he read my second letter."

He chuckled.

"I hope he did," he added. "If he knew where it was going, so much the better. If he didn't know, he won't find out."

From the inside pocket of his coat, English Johnny drew out the envelope that he had placed there a few minutes before. He tore it into shreds, letter and all, and burned the remnants in the ash tray. He turned out

the light, raised the window, and scattered the ashes to the wind.

English Johnny was a rather clever fellow. He had dropped another letter in the mail box – an unimportant letter to a manufacturer of lunch wagons – a letter that he had forgotten to mail on his previous trip to the corner!

CHAPTER XXIV. A VISIT TO BINGHAM'S

HARRY VINCENT was back at Holmwood Arms on Long Island. He had spent a busy day. The morning after his experience as a cab driver, he had visited Fellows, and had told him the details of that episode.

In return, Fellows had given him instructions previously received. Harry was to go to Holmwood and report the actions of both the Laidlow family and of Ezekiel Bingham. He was to return as soon as he gained definite information.

Harry had been extremely fortunate. He had reached Holmwood before noon, and had stopped in the cigar store near the post office. Hitherto he had heard little of consequence there, but on this occasion he obtained a veritable mine of information as he listened to the gossip of two old idlers.

"I hear the Laidlows left yesterday," one old man had said.

"Yes," another had replied. "That fellow Burgess went with them. Down to Florida, I hear."

"Servants go along, too?"

"Yes, the whole shooting match. The house is all closed up."

"Funny they'd leave it that way."

"No, it isn't. There ain't nothing of value there now."

"What about the furniture?"

"Oh, that's safe enough. They've got a watchman hanging around the place. Besides, you don't never hear of burglars hitting a place where they've been before, do you? They don't strike twice in one spot. They're like lightning."

"Guess that's right. What else is doing?"

"I hear old Bingham went out of town."

"Where to?"

"Who knows that? He goes away every couple of months, I reckon. Drove away in his car, I hear."

"All alone?"

"He's always alone."

"That's right. Did he leave Jenks here?"

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"Course, he did. Jenks was downtown here last night.

"I thought he never left the house when the old man was away."

"He don't leave it long. I guess the old man don't know he leaves it at all. He sneaks out, though, whenever he gets a chance. Meets his girl and puts her on the eight-ten train."

"What! Has Jenks got a girl?"

"Sure. That kid over at the drug store. He meets her outside at eight – that's when she quits work – and walks with her to the station."

"Hm-m-m. That's a good one! Jenks has a girl!"

"It's straight, though. No use laughing about it. Sometimes old Bingham lets Jenks come downtown but not often. So it's a sure bet Jenks will be here to-night. He don't stay away from the house long though. Three quarters of an hour, I reckon."

So ended the conversation that had interested Harry Vincent. After that he had hurried up to Holmwood Arms, and had obtained his car at the garage. He had driven into the city, to report all he had heard to Fellows.

The insurance broker had sent out a note by the stenographer. That was at two o'clock. When Harry returned at three thirty, he found an envelope and a small box awaiting him. The box was secured with seals.

"Keep the box in your pocket," Fellows had said. "Go back to Holmwood. Check up on the information you have gained, if possible. Read the letter in your room, at precisely half past seven."

So here was Harry, back at Holmwood Arms. He had learned positively that the Laidlow family had gone away, and that the house was empty. But he had not been able to gain assurance that Ezekiel Bingham was out of town.

Harry's watch showed seven thirty. He opened the envelope.

It contained a list of instructions, the words depending upon the use of letter substitution. Decoded, it read:

"Watch Bingham's house immediately.

"When Jenks has gone, try the door.

"If it opens, enter and go to upstairs study.

"Turn on the radio; tune in on Station WNX.

"Open your package and lay its contents on table.

"Listen for Modern Dentrifice program.

"Write down important words given by announcer.

"Follow instructions; then leave.

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"Drive in to Metrolite Hotel; register there and wait.

"Important: If Jenks does not appear, or if door does not open, give it up for to-night."

Harry read these instructions over two or three times, then the ink faded from view. This reminded him that he must start immediately. He left the inn and walked up the avenue, on the side of the street away from Bingham's house.

His watch showed quarter of eight when he arrived. He had less than a minute to wait. He saw a man come quietly from the door, and start walking rapidly toward the village. He decided that it must be Jenks, the old lawyer's servant.

Harry slipped across the street and tried the door. It opened. Jenks must have left it unlocked. The floor was heavily carpeted, and the stairs likewise.

Harry reached the study without misadventure. The room was unlighted, but he found a lamp on the table and turned it on. The room was a small one. It contained a desk, a bookcase, a filing cabinet, and a radio. There was a steel door in one corner. The shade of the window had been drawn.

It was nearly ten minutes to eight. Harry pressed the switch on the radio, and turned the dial until he found Station WNX, which he recognized by the popular comedy program that was a nightly feature from seven forty-five until eight o'clock.

Harry drew the box from his pocket, broke the seals, and brought three objects into view.

One was a peculiarly shaped key; in fact, Harry had never seen a similar key before.

The second article was a small black bottle with a screw cap. He took off the cap and found that a sponge was wedged in the neck. Evidently it was there for a definite purpose. So he let it remain.

The third article was a small memorandum pad with a pencil attached. Its purpose was obvious to Harry. He was apparently to take notes of some sort; the pad and pencil had been included in the box to make sure that he would be provided with the necessary materials. The Shadow didn't miss a trick!

Sitting at the desk, Harry listened to the radio, waiting. He had tuned in carefully so that the sound would not be too loud. He knew that he was alone in the house, yet felt nervous. Less than five minutes remained before it would be eight o'clock. Those minutes seemed as hours.

The comedy number was reaching its conclusion. Harry realized that in his nervous state he had hardly caught a word. He must be careful now, and listen.

A clock downstairs struck eight times, and the sound of its gong startled him. The strokes seemed unduly slow – as though they were minutes apart.

The Modern Dentifrice Program was on the air. Harry had his pencil in hand. What would the announcer say? Curiosity, mingled with nervousness in Harry's mind.

The announcer was speaking. Harry detected a strange voice. He had listened frequently to this program, but had never heard this particular announcer before.

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The voice spoke slowly. In the first sentence, Harry caught an emphasis that brought a gasp of astonishment to his lips.

The man at Station WNX was stressing certain words, exactly as Harry had heard words stressed over the telephone.

The radio broadcast was bringing a message from The Shadow! A message that would be heard by millions, yet whose true significance was meant for Harry Vincent alone!

His pencil was busy, writing the important words upon the pad.

"We now open our program," came the slow, carefully modulated voice of the announcer. "Let me remind you that opportunity is at your door. Rely upon a safe method to preserve your teeth by using a combination of dentrifices. Six thousand five hundred and thirty-seven dentists have endorsed this one method. You may place your confidence in them. Brush your teeth with liquid; then with paste.

"When you buy your dentifrice, look for the gold label, which appears on every sealed package of Modern Dentifrice.

"If you will send a stamped envelope to this station, you will receive a copy of our booklet, 'Perfect Teeth.'

"You will now hear our nightly program of popular musical numbers."

The strains of a jazz orchestra burst from the radio. Harry turned off the instrument. He had received his message. Now to consider it.

Harry considered these words on the pad:

"Open door safe combination six five seven one place liquid on sealed envelope copy numbers."

Harry realized instantly that the door he was to open was the steel one in the corner of Ezekiel Bingham's study. He picked up the key that he had found in the package and tried it. It fitted the lock. He opened the steel door and revealed the safe.

The safe combination – six, five, seven, one – puzzled him for a moment. In what directions should he turn the dial? Probably left, right, left, right. He tried it. The safe opened.

Next, he must discover a sealed envelope. There were not many papers in the safe.

Harry picked up one small pile, but did not find the envelope in question. There were three envelopes in the next packet: one of these had sealing wax on the back, and the mark of a signet ring. Evidently this was the envelope.

Harry handled it carefully. He did not even touch the seal.

Going to the desk, Harry performed an operation which occurred to him as obvious. He inverted the bottle. The sponge became saturated with liquid from within. Harry rubbed the sponge over the entire face of the envelope. The paper became transparent immediately.

There was a single sheet of paper inside the envelope. The paper was now entirely visible. It contained several rows of numbers. Harry realized this must be the original code from which the old lawyer had made

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the copy to give to Elbert Joyce, that night in the darkened automobile.

He tore the top sheet from his pad, crumpled the paper in his pocket, and quickly transcribed the numbers to the pad. They were meaningless to Harry, but he copied them exactly:

"730-16; 457-20; 330-5; 543-26; 605-39; 808-1; 457-20; 38-14; 840-28;
877-27; 101-13; 872-21; 838-10."

He checked the list to make sure he had taken them down correctly. He noticed that the surface of the envelope was less transparent.

Putting the pad in his pocket, Harry carefully straightened the piles of papers, and replaced the envelope where it belonged.

The envelope had dried completely; there was no trace whatever of the liquid which had enabled Vincent to read the hidden message.

He closed the safe and locked the steel door, then gathered up the various articles that he had brought. Turning the dial of the radio to the degree it had been originally, Harry quit the room. His watch showed eighteen minutes after eight.

Leaving the house, he crossed the street, and strolled back toward Holmwood Arms. He heard some one walking rapidly along the street, coming from the opposite direction. Jenks, likely, thought Harry, realizing that he had not had many minutes to spare.

Of all his adventures in the service of The Shadow, this had been the most unexpected. The radio announcer at WNX! How had that been arranged? Who was he? The Shadow, himself?

Harry thought of the numbers on the pad. No wonder they had puzzled old Ezekiel Bingham. He pictured Elbert Joyce working over them. Had the cryptogram expert solved their meaning? Well, soon the mysterious numbers would reach The Shadow and Joyce would be racing against a masterful rival.

Harry found his car at the garage, and drove toward the city. The rest of his work was easy. Back to the Metrolite Hotel to await further instructions.

"No adventures for another two hours, anyway," Harry mused as he sped along. "But they'll be coming along sooner or later."

In this, he was but partly right. He was due for excitement much sooner than he expected.

The brilliant sign of a gasoline station reminded him that his car needed more fuel. The gauge showed less than two gallons. He pulled up, and ordered his tank filled. He proffered a twenty-dollar bill to the attendant.

The service man shook his head.

"Can't change that. Nothing smaller?"

Harry searched in his pocket. Two twenties were all the money he had with him.

"I'll get it changed for you," volunteered the man.

"Make it quick. I'm in a hurry."

"You'll have to wait a minute," replied the man. "Here's another car coming up, and I'll have to serve him gas before I can leave."

"Where are you going to change it?"

"Over there at the lunch wagon."

Vincent looked to where the service man pointed.

"Tell you what," he said, "I'll leave my car here, and get it changed myself."

"O. K.," replied the service man. "Tell them Fred sent you. They'll change it for you."

Vincent walked to the lunch wagon, climbed the steps, and pulled back the sliding door. There were two men behind the counter, and several others sitting on the stools.

"Change for a twenty?" asked Vincent. "Fred sent me."

"Sure thing."

Vincent counted the bills that he received, thrust the money in his pocket, and placed his hand upon the handle of the sliding door. Before he could open it, the door slid back suddenly. A man was entering the lunch wagon, and Harry found himself confronted by English Johnny!

CHAPTER XXV. A FRIEND IN NEED

HARRY stepped aside to let English Johnny pass.

Trying to appear nonchalant, Harry hoped he might escape recognition. The episode of the taxicab had occurred less than twenty-four hours before; but Harry was no longer wearing the cap and uniform in which the beefy-faced individual had seen him.

English Johnny's attention was distracted for a moment by a cry of greeting that came from the men who were eating at the counter.

"H'lo, Johnny!" called one. "Heard you were coming out to-night."

"Hello, boys," was the reply from the doorway. "Yes, I expected to be out of town, but I sent word I'd come here instead to see how business was coming along."

The big man entered the lunch wagon. As he stepped forward, Harry Vincent started to slip by. In his anxiety to get out, he accidentally jolted English Johnny.

"Hey, fellow!" shouted English Johnny gruffly. "What's your hurry?"

He gripped Harry's arm, and stared into his face.

"Just the fellow I've been looking for!" English Johnny exclaimed.

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"What do you mean?"

"Don't try to crawl out of it, now. You're the fellow who was giving me the run-around last night."

Harry forced a laugh.

"I don't quite comprehend," he said.

"You were driving a cab last night."

"You must be mistaken."

"Think so? Well, I don't."

There was a tone of finality in English Johnny's voice.

Plainly, the man meant trouble. Harry started to shake himself loose, but the big man's grip only tightened.

"You can't get out of it that easy," said English Johnny.

"Out of what?"

"Out of this – that's what. You tried to pull a fast one on me last night. I'll see to it that you don't fool me again."

The crowd at the back of the lunch wagon was moving forward. They were unanimously in accord with English Johnny.

Harry figured that a break for freedom was the only course. But to escape he must get the awkward door open and, at the same time, hold off English Johnny.

The big fellow evidently divined Harry's intent, for English Johnny raised two huge fists in front of the young man's eyes.

"What's the idea?" asked Harry, keeping up his bluff.

"You'll find out quick enough. I'm going to knock that mug of yours out of shape. It'll look blame funny when I get through."

"You'll be letting yourself in for a lot of trouble if you do."

"Hear that?" demanded English Johnny of the gang. "Hear him threaten me? I've got a right to sock him, ain't I?"

There were seven men in the throng. Their words were all for English Johnny.

"We'll stand with you. Hand him plenty!"

"I'll take care of him when you've finished."

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Harry clenched his fists. He felt that he was the match of any one of the men, including the boastful English Johnny. But, against eight – his chances were hopeless.

The two men behind the counter, clad in white coats and aprons, were leaning on their elbows watching the show with anticipation. Fights were usually taboo in lunch wagons, but English Johnny was boss, and if he wanted a battle, it was all right.

Harry took a bold course. A fight was unavoidable. He might as well start it and get in a few blows for himself, before they ganged him – as seemed likely.

"Get out of my way," he ordered.

He placed his hand against English Johnny's chest and thrust the man back.

"Hit me, will you?" exclaimed the proprietor of the lunch wagon. "Now I've got a right to clean you up. You started it. You witnessed it, boys."

He swung his massive fist at Harry's face. Harry parried the blow with his right hand, and struck out with his left. His sweeping hook would have landed against the side of English Johnny's face except that one of the bystanders, with an ugly laugh, reached out and blocked Harry's blow.

The big man profited by this opportunity. He landed a short punch which sent Harry staggering against the window behind him. Seeing that he had jarred his opponent, English Johnny became suddenly confident.

"Leave him to me, boys," he ordered.

Harry was slumped against the window, still gasping from the body blow against which he had had no opportunity to defend himself.

His huge antagonist was waiting, on the alert. As Harry began to straighten up, the big man poised his right fist for the finishing blow.

Then came an unexpected interruption.

One of the men behind the counter had left his place to join the crowd. Now he thrust his body between English Johnny and the big man's victim.

The man who caused the interruption was of medium height; well built, and determined of expression. His face was swarthy; it almost seemed as though it might be covered with grease paint.

English Johnny surveyed the fellow in astonishment.

"What's troubling you?" he demanded. "What are you butting in about?"

"Leave this guy alone," the man replied, waving his hand toward Harry.

English Johnny turned to the other man behind the counter.

"Say, Bill," he inquired. "Who is this fellow, anyway? I never saw him here before."

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"New man on to-night," was the reply. "Pete was sick. This fellow happened to come in. Said he could do the work, so I put him on."

"Well, he's through to-night."

English Johnny again accosted the man who had sided with Harry.

"I'm boss around here," he said. "You know that, don't you?"

"You're not my boss."

"I own this lunch wagon."

"You don't own me."

English Johnny pushed the man aside.

"Grab him, boys," he said. "Grab him if he tries to start anything."

English Johnny turned his attention again to Harry Vincent. Lashing out with his right –

But a long, white-clad arm flashed through the air. A terrific blow caught English Johnny on the side of his jaw to send him reeling against the counter.

"Get him, boys," cried the big man, spluttering with rage.

English Johnny leaped forward himself, but another smash landed squarely in the midst of his beefy face. He dropped to the floor in front of the counter.

Then the mob closed in on the man who had taken Harry's part. There was a swirl of fists, and among them two arms in white cloth swung heavily and well.

Harry had straightened up, and as one of the battlers was propelled in his direction, he grappled with the rowdy and hurled him against a stool.

The mob had broken; three men were groveling on the tile floor. The others, too, had been beaten back by a white-armed cyclone that struck with the speed and power of lightning.

The door was pulled back, and Harry was thrust through it.

"Get your car," commanded his new friend. "We'll have to run for it."

English Johnny had arisen. Screaming a curse, he hurled his huge bulk at the man in white.

Harry ran for the car. As the door slid shut, he heard a terrific crash – English Johnny had been flung over the counter to come cascading down amid a chorus of falling plates.

It was but a few yards to the gasoline station. Harry reached the wheel of his car. He tossed a five-dollar bill to the astonished service man; spun the starter, and shot the coupe to the front of the lunch wagon. He could hear the sounds of fresh conflict within. He leaped to the ground and pulled back the door.

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A lone fighter was engaged with two opponents. He flung them aside, then beyond him came the flash of a revolver, drawn by a man in the background.

But before the gunman could draw a bead with his weapon, the white-coated stranger galvanized into action. His long, remarkably strong fingers stabbed out like the beak of a vulture. In a flash he had wrested the revolver from the gunny – it all happened so quickly that the latter barely had time to marshal his amazement.

So, with a path clear to possible safety, and with Harry waiting for his unexpected savior, the astounding stranger darted through the doorway. Then Harry sent the door crashing shut.

Leaping for the wheel of his car, Harry got under way. The stranger vaulted into the seat beside him.

Harry stepped on the gas. As the motor's drumming increased, the lunch wagon's door opened. Three men barged forth, brandishing lead spillers in their hands.

Again The Shadow's forces had scored.

CHAPTER XXVI. A RACE FOR LIFE

"SPEED up," came a terse voice from Harry's side. "They've got a car. They're following us."

As he pressed the accelerator, Harry marveled at the power of his companion. Virtually alone – for Harry's help had been trivial – this man had handled eight opponents and had disposed of five of them.

While the brawl had lasted, not a man in the crowd had had an opportunity to draw his gun. But when the mob had been scattered about the floor, the danger of a revolver shot had made flight the only reasonable course.

The motor hummed as Harry gave it full power. The coupe was heavy, and held the road well. It was built for speed. They flashed through the countryside like a whirlwind. Vincent had not chosen the direction. He had taken the nearest highway that had appeared before him.

The other car was gaining. Harry could sense that from his companion's actions. He could not see the other man, for his eyes were focused on the road ahead, where the bright lights of the car opened a brilliant path. Yet he knew that his companion was peering from the opened window, back along the highway.

The road seemed endless. Vincent knew nothing of the car that was behind. It must be a powerful automobile if it could overtake his speedy coupe. A turn from the highway might be advantageous, but he doubted if it would prove practical. He kept straight on, trusting to speed alone.

Yet still he knew that the other car was gaining. He knew it first by a glare reflected in the mirror in front of him. The light increased. Miles were flying by; and with every mile the pursuers were coming closer!

Then he could hear the roar of the automobile in the rear. He felt a great helplessness. He was at the wheel of a powerful, swift machine, forging ahead at rocket-like speed. Yet in back was another mighty engine of the highway – superior to his by just the smallest percentage; and in the final test he would be overtaken.

There was a further disadvantage. When they reached the end of this stretch of well-paved road, Harry would have to slow his pace. If the distance became short by then, the coupe would be overtaken, and its occupants would be at the mercy of the merciless gangsters.

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But these thoughts were useless. Harry bit his lips in grim tension as he spurred the car to its limit.

He was at the center of the road. The highway was almost deserted. But occasionally he would see a car coming from the other direction, and would bear down into the glare of its lights without slackening his speed. Each time the oncoming automobile would swing to the side of the road and let him pass.

There was another sign that the race was closing up. The roar of the pursuing motor had become louder; and above it came sharp, quick reports. The gangsters were firing at the coupe. But the fast-moving target eluded their shots. But would their aim improve when the range became less?

It was a time for action. But what else could Harry do?

He listened for a sound from his companion. But there was none. Had the man been struck by a bullet? No; Harry would have heard the steel messenger crash through the back of the coupe. Perhaps – the thought was chilling – the man had been clipped by a revolver shot as his head had been thrust from the window.

Harry dropped his right hand from the wheel. He touched the body of his companion.

"Easy," came a whisper. "Watch the wheel. I'm all right."

The man had divined Harry's thoughts. Somehow Harry felt that this wild ride might have a happy ending. His companion had shown amazing strength during the battle in the lunch wagon. Perhaps in the next emergency he would again display some unexpected power. That would be soon, Harry knew, for the pursuers had lost no ground.

The road began to wind. The course was slightly uphill. It was harder to control the car, but it was an unexpected advantage for the occupants of the fleeing coupe. As a target, their car was more elusive than before.

The highway now curved steadily to the left. The voice spoke beside Harry.

"Keep to the left of the road."

This was strange advice. It would throw them into the path of any car that might be coming from the opposite direction. Yet Harry obeyed. The voice had carried a command. It was different from the voice of the man who had fought in the lunch wagon. It sounded like a voice that Vincent had heard before – where, he could not recall, for his mind was feverish from strain.

The voice spoke again – an instant later.

"Close to the left."

The turn in the road was becoming sharper. Harry held tightly to the wheel. There was a hill at the left, and it was difficult to stay close. But the lights of the pursuing car were almost lost behind the bend.

Another command from Harry's right.

"Use your brakes. A sharp turn to the left. Take it close. Slow down quickly."

Harry could only obey. He jammed the brake and the speed of the car suddenly decreased. He was at the sharp turn; it curved almost at right angles. Here, at the left of the road, Harry could not have controlled the

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car but for the slackened speed. At that, the momentum seemed to draw to the right, where the broad highway was banked, and he pushed the brakes on again – almost stopping the car.

Then the roar was upon them. Swerving around the curve, the pursuing car came whirling at terrific speed. It was high on the banked-up road, its position at the right giving it the advantage which Harry had neglected.

The gangsters could not have sighted the coupe until they were almost beside it; for as their huge sedan came up, Harry could hear cries of exultation. Instinctively, he looked to his right and saw the big machine beside him – on the other side of the road, close to the white rail fence. Then his companion leaned between him and the window. Harry saw the glint of steel; and a sharp shot came from the gun that had been wrested from the gangster in the lunch wagon.

There was another report from the sedan – a louder explosion. The big machine swayed; then crashed through the rail amid the clatter of breaking glass and shouts of terror. It hung there, precariously poised upon an embankment.

The realization of what had happened came to Harry as he pressed his foot upon the accelerator, and felt the coupe leap in response. With one well-timed stroke, his companion had disposed of the pursuing car, through strategy and skill. His single pistol shot had found its resting place in the left front tire of the big sedan! The tire had blown, and the driver had been helpless to save his speeding car from the crash that brought destruction!

He looked to his right. His companion was lost in the darkness. Some time during the flight, the man, without Harry's knowledge, had removed his white coat and apron.

The road straightened suddenly; then curved to the right. Harry was on the proper side, and as he took the turn he automatically gave the car full speed. Then he gasped in sudden terror. Directly before him was a railroad crossing; across his pathway stood a freight train, scarcely fifty feet ahead.

He brought his foot to the brake pedal, but he knew that the operation was hopeless. A big box car seemed to grow before his eyes, and he bent his head for the certain crash. Then a hand appeared before him; the wheel was jerked violently to the right, and the car careened on two wheels as it was guided to a narrow road beside the freight train.

Harry's head struck the post beside the window. He heard the click of the emergency brake, and he sank behind the wheel, exhausted and half stunned as the car came to a stop.

He felt himself being helped from the coupe. Then he was half lying on a wooden bench. He closed his eyes and pressed his hands against his forehead, as he breathed the cold night air and sought to steady his trembling nerves.

Harry opened his eyes and looked about him. He was sitting on the bench of a little station. The end of the freight train was rolling by; he could see lights in the caboose.

He stood up and saw the road down which the car had come, but the coupe was gone. The man who had thrice rescued him within the past hour had ridden away in Harry Vincent's automobile!

Harry reached in his pocket and found the pad upon which he had inscribed the numbers of the code in Bingham's safe. He scanned the top page by the light on the station platform.

The page that bore the code was gone!

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In its place were carefully inscribed words, printed in pencil. The message was brief but clear:

"Train for New York in twenty minutes. Take it."

Harry studied these words, his groggy mind pondering over their significance.

Harry realized that his copy of Bingham's code had reached its proper destination. Instead of being called for at the Metrolite Hotel, it had been picked up on the way.

For the battler who had fought in the lunch wagon, who had sent the pursuing gangsters through the rail, who had snatched the coupe from what had seemed sure destruction, was none other – could have been none other – than The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXVII. THE CODE IS SOLVED

THE watchman outside the Laidlow house flashed his lantern across the lawn. Great, long shadows appeared beneath its gleam. The watchman was used to such shadows. They seemed to move and sway as he walked his course.

He flashed his light against a side window. All was darkness underneath. Shadowy darkness – thick darkness that seemed like something real.

The window was locked, but it was like many other windows in the house – easy to be opened if one would care to perform that action.

The watchman turned away. As his light was withdrawn, the black gloom moved up and obscured the window, and amidst the sable darkness the window opened silently.

It had been unlocked and opened before the watchman had traveled sixty feet.

Something was moving in the Laidlow house; moving silently, invisibly. A mysterious presence had entered the place. A clock struck one.

The tiny, penetrating ray of a pocket flashlight appeared in the library. The shades of the windows were down. The light could not have been seen from outside.

The light flashed along rows of books. There were many such rows in that library. They occupied the walls on two sides, from the ceiling down to the floor.

The light stopped. It came closer to the shelf and was focused on a single book. The volume was an abridged dictionary; one which must have been consulted often, for its leather back bore signs of considerable usage.

Tapering, well-shaped fingers appeared in the little disk of light. They were fingers with smooth-pointed nails. The fingers drew the dictionary from its position. The light disappeared.

A moment later it appeared again, this time shining upon the polished surface of a mahogany table. A hand placed the book beneath the glow; and two slips of paper fell on the table.

One sheet carried this numbered inscription:

"730-16; 457-20; 330-5; 543-26 605-39; 808-1; 457-20; 38-14; 840-28;

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877-27; 101-13; 872-21; 838-10."

The other sheet of paper was blank.

The hand turned the pages of the dictionary; not slowly nor rapidly, but easily. The book lay open at page 730.

An index finger moved down the left column of the page, pausing an instant at each word, checking off the words as a clock might tick. It stopped at the sixteenth word.

The word was "slide."

This appeared immediately afterward upon the blank sheet of paper. It was printed by the hand, which used a sharp-pointed pencil.

Then the leaves of the dictionary were moved again, and the mystic finger stopped at the twentieth word on page 457. This word was "left."

The cryptic number 457-20 appeared twice on the sheet that bore the code; so the hand, as though to save excess operation, printed the word "left" two times, allowing proper space for the words that were to come between.

The movement of the hand continued as it went through the pages of the dictionary. The fifth word on page 330 was "frame"; the twenty-sixth word on page 543 was "of."

The transcribing went on so regularly that each new word appeared as though timed exactly. After a while the complete series of numbers was decoded, forming a message in capital letters which read:

SLIDE LEFT FRAME OF PORTRAIT TO LEFT AND UPWARD WORD BLUSH WILL UNLOCK

In only a few hours after Harry Vincent had copied the code in Ezekiel Bingham's safe, its secret had been divined and its message had been translated!

The papers were picked up and crumpled by a hand. The light moved along the floor and back to the book case, where the dictionary was carefully replaced in its position on the shelf.

Then the flashlight swept the wall, stopping for a brief moment upon each picture in the library.

It moved through the doorway and along the hall, into a living room where shades were also tightly drawn. Each picture was subjected to the searching ring of brilliant light; and finally the circle of illumination poised on a small painting of a child, which was set in a heavy gold frame that seemed fastened permanently to the wall.

A hand appeared again, and its thumb and index finger touched the frame at the left side of the portrait. They moved to the left, and the frame followed. They pushed upward, and the frame responded to the movement.

A mechanism clicked, and the painting, actuated by hinges beneath its right side, swung open like a little door.

The circular glow revealed a wall safe that had been cunningly concealed behind the portrait. There were five slots on the door of the safe, set in a row. A letter showed in each opening. The fingers started at the left, and

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touching the letter, caused an interior wheel to revolve.

The letters B, L, U, S, and H came into view.

The fingers reached for a knob; the door of the safe opened outward. It was hinged at the left, opposite from the hinges of the portrait.

The interior of the little safe was entirely illuminated by the radiance of the bulb in the flashlight.

The safe was empty!

The light remained there for half a minute. Some one was thinking behind that flashlight. A mind was working amid the darkness.

Then the hand reappeared and closed the safe. The fingers spun the letters. The portrait was shut also, and the frame at the left was brought back to its correct position. A silk handkerchief brushed the frame, removing any marks that might have remained.

The flashlight was out. All was silent for a while then the circle of illumination appeared again above the table in the library. A hand was writing in blue ink. Keen thoughts were finding their cold expression on a sheet of paper:

Joyce discovered the purpose of the code. The house was entered last night and the gems were taken. Bingham has them now. That explains his absence.

English Johnny will meet Bingham – soon. It cannot be to-night. It may be to-morrow night, for it must be soon.

The note that English Johnny wrote was false. It was obviously false. It was done to deceive an unseen watcher who was not deceived.

The crude way in which the note was left on the table partly finished was one proof. The pains that English Johnny took to hide the envelope which he addressed was a second proof.

English Johnny was watched to-night. He will be watched to-morrow night. He will be watched every night. That is one way to find the meeting place.

Bingham must be traced. If discovered, he, too, will lead the way to the meeting place.

For that is where the gems will be.

The writing faded. The sheet of paper was taken between two supple hands. It was torn to tiny fragments, which eventually found their resting place in the palm of the left hand.

The ray of the flashlight disappeared.

Silence continued through the dark, empty house. A window opened noiselessly and shut again. Under the pressure of an unseen blade of steel, the lock was quietly restored to its original position.

The watchman, finishing another round of the premises, threw his lantern so it shone upon the lawn. Again he watched the flitting shadows – shadows of the boughs of trees that swayed back and forth in the light autumn

breeze.

Strange – those shadows. He fancied that he saw one glide across the lawn and merge with the darkness that lay beyond the hedge.

CHAPTER XXVIII. VINCENT SEARCHES

A NIGHT'S sleep at the Metrolite Hotel had proven an excellent tonic to Harry Vincent. The nerve-racking experiences of the previous evening had brought on fitful dreams until early in the morning; time and again he had imagined that the bed was swaying with the motion of a fast-moving automobile.

But at last Harry had fallen into a restful slumber. When he awoke shortly after nine o'clock, he felt unusually alert and was eager to learn what the new day held in store.

He reported at Fellows's office before ten o'clock.

"I was just about to call you," said the insurance broker as they sat together in the inner office. "I have received instructions which are quite important – In fact, they concern work that may occupy your time for several days to come.

"Your mission is simple, but extremely important. You must locate Ezekiel Bingham, the criminal lawyer."

"Have you any idea where he may be?" Harry asked. "I know that he has left Holmwood, but I have no knowledge of where he went."

"That is the difficulty," smiled Fellows. "The only information is that which you brought in yesterday – namely that Bingham is not in Holmwood. Perhaps you may be fortunate enough to discover some clew that may enable you to find the man."

"How soon must he be found?"

"As soon as possible. The matter is urgent."

"I doubt that any one in the town of Holmwood knows where he has gone."

"Perhaps some one knows. It is your work to find out."

"Jenks might know."

"Call at Bingham's house, then."

"What excuse shall I make?"

"State that you must see the lawyer on an important legal matter."

"How soon shall I start?"

"Immediately."

Harry arose and picked up his hat, but the insurance broker stopped him before he reached the door.

"What about your car?" asked Fellows.

"That's right," replied Harry ruefully. "I lost it last night."

Fellows smiled.

"It is waiting for you in the garage at Holmwood Arms," said the insurance broker. "You will need it in your hunt for Ezekiel Bingham."

"It will certainly be necessary," replied Vincent.

"Do you have the key to the back of the car?" asked Fellows.

Vincent produced the key.

"You will need it," said Fellows.

"Why?"

"I'll tell you. If you locate the missing lawyer you may find him in some distant place."

"That's right."

"You will have to send word at once."

"I can telephone to you."

"That may be impossible. It may be necessary for you to stay close to watch Bingham. You may be in a place where a telephone is inaccessible."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"That is why I asked you if you had the key to the back of the car. Should you discover Bingham, and be far from a telephone, unlock the back of the car, and you will find a box within."

"What is the purpose of the box?"

"You will discover that if you need to communicate. Here is the key to the box. Use it only if necessary; do not open the box unless an emergency arises. A letter inside the box will explain its purpose."

"What information shall I give if I find Bingham?"

"Send word exactly where he is; if he leaves, follow him and report again. Do not lose him once you have discovered his whereabouts."

"Are there any other instructions?"

"No, that is all. There is a train for Holmwood in twenty minutes. You will have just enough time to make it." Harry puzzled about his new assignment after leaving the insurance broker's office. Now he sat in the smoking car of the Long Island train, half listening to snatches of conversation between the other passengers. He realized that if he expected to locate Ezekiel Bingham he must not neglect a single opportunity for

information. Harry knew commuters could be great gossips.

But luck was against him.

Harry had been fortunate the day before when he had learned that the criminal lawyer was not in Holmwood. Some one had seen his car leaving the village.

That was all; for Ezekiel Bingham was a silent man who rarely spoke to any one. It was quite unlikely that he would have let drop an inkling of his destination to any of the townspeople

It might be days – it might be a week – before Harry could obtain a single clew. He would have to trust to chance; yet he must not be idle. Accordingly he formulated his plans – few as they were, before the train reached Holmwood.

Finding his coupe at the garage, Harry drove to Ezekiel Bingham's house and parked the car a short distance from the place.

Then he went up the front walk and knocked at the door. It all seemed different from his last visit, when he had approached with stealth, and had tried that same door to find it unlocked.

Jenks responded to Harry's knocking.

"Is Mr. Bingham at home?" inquired Harry.

"No, sir."

"Do you expect him shortly?"

"No, sir."

"It is very important. I must see him. Can I reach him at his office?"

"He is not there, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"I just called, sir."

"Do they expect him there?"

"Not today, sir."

"Will he be here this evening?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Isn't there any way that I can reach him?"

"I don't know of any place, sir."

"Is he away from New York?"

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"I don't know, sir."

"This is very important. I expected to find Mr. Bingham at home. I have come to see him regarding an important lawsuit. I must see him today."

"I'm sorry, sir. He is not here."

"Didn't he leave any word where he might be reached?"

"None at all, sir."

"Isn't there anyone who can give me information?"

"You might call the office, sir."

"I'll try that. I guess it's the only thing to do."

"Do you wish to leave a message, sir?"

"No. It would be useless. I must see Mr. Bingham personally."

Harry was convinced that Jenks had been telling the truth. It was obvious that the man had no idea where his employer might have gone.

The lawyer's office would provide no information. Fellows had tried both by telephone and by personal call, but had learned nothing from that source. The only reply had been that Mr. Bingham was not there; that his associates would be glad to interview clients in his place.

It would avail Harry nothing to try again where the efficient Fellows had failed.

So Harry drove to the village, where he whiled away two hours trying to pick up stray bits of local news. The loiterers in the cigar store talked of various subjects, but did not mention Ezekiel Bingham. A casual inquiry addressed to the teller in the bank brought no information concerning the old lawyer. Even at the post office and at the station, Harry had no luck whatsoever.

He ate lunch in the village restaurant and chatted there a while with any one who would talk to him, ever bringing the conversation around to Ezekiel Bingham. But his efforts were without results.

About two o'clock Harry climbed in his car and started slowly back to the inn to think the matter over. Perhaps some one at Holmwood Arms might have seen the old lawyer since he had left town. It was worth a chance, anyway.

Harry was getting disgusted with the fruits of discretion. He intended to inquire openly and let those whom he questioned draw their own conclusions and talk all they liked.

Going up the road to the inn, Vincent happened to glance through the coupe's rear window. He caught a glimpse of the head of a boy clinging, evidently, to his spare tire.

Harry stopped the car to remonstrate with the youth. Leaping to the ground, he caught the youngster by the arm before the lad could run away.

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"What's the idea? Want to get hurt?" Harry demanded severely.

"Just hookin' a ride," replied the boy.

"It's dangerous business. A bump in the road would be enough to throw you in the street."

"I was hangin' on pretty tight."

"Where do you live, son?"

"Up the road, about a mile past where it gets rough."

"Get in with me. I'll drive you up there right."

"Say, that's swell, mister. Thanks."

The boy entered the car with Harry, who surveyed the youth with curiosity. The youngster was shabbily dressed, and his face and hands were dirty. Vincent asked him his age.

"Twelve years," replied the boy.

"You're old enough to know better than to jump on the back of an automobile," advised Vincent. "Why don't you ask people to give you a lift?"

"Yeah! Try it yourself. They ain't all good sports like you, mister."

They were passing the road that turned off toward the inn, but Vincent kept on. He was interested in the boy, and he would not lose much time by taking him to his home. Harry's time didn't seem to be exactly at a premium that day.

"That's why I hook rides," the youngster went on. "Nobody stops when I holler at 'em."

"Suppose they go past your house?" asked Vincent. "What do you do then?"

"Not many of 'em goes as far as my house, mister. I ride a ways and walk the rest."

"That's right; not many cars go over that bad stretch."

"Besides" – the lad was a talkative little fellow – "I usually hook onto autos that are goin' slow – like yours was. I can drop off easy then when I want to. I generally hop on back of the car that belongs to the guy in there" – the youngster paused to jerk his thumb toward Ezekiel Bingham's house, which they were passing at that moment – "because he drives slow."

"Do you mean Mr. Bingham, the lawyer?" inquired Harry with sudden interest.

"Yeah. The old crabby guy. Drives around like a slowpoke. But he fooled me yesterday, he did!"

"How was that?"

"I hopped on back of his car, an' he went past his house, so I hung on. An' when he got to the bad road he started to go like blazes. You wouldn't think an old guy could run an auto that fast."

"What happened then?"

"I was afraid to let go. I had to hang on an' ride along with him."

"This was yesterday, you say?"

"Yes – no, it wasn't, neither. It was day before yesterday, in the afternoon."

"How far did he take you?"

"A mile past the bad road. I thought he wasn't ever goin' to slow down. But he turned at a crossroad an' I had a chance to drop off. I had to walk all the way home again."

"Which way did he turn at the crossroad?"

"To the left. Down the road that goes to Herkwell. Hey, mister, slow up. That's my house over there."

Harry dropped the youth in front of a frame house which needed a coat of paint badly. Then he started the coupe forward and drove rapidly along the poorly paved road.

He knew the road to Herkwell, which was some twelve miles distant. It was a straight road, with no crossings; a road that was fairly well paved but little used.

As he came back to the good highway, Harry stepped on the accelerator and grinned as the car sprang onward. He had found the trail at last. The boy's story had given him the clew he required.

Old Ezekiel Bingham had gone to Herkwell. A twelve-mile trip to that obscure village was clear indication that the lawyer's destination lay farther out on Long Island.

Harry turned left at the crossroad satisfied at the favorable turn in events.

The Shadow would be pleased.

CHAPTER XXIX. ENGLISH JOHNNY'S TRICK

ENGLISH JOHNNY stood at the doorway of his house and glared sullenly down the street. It was daytime – two o'clock in the afternoon – yet he was suspicious.

An old man, gaunt and weary-looking, was moving slowly along the opposite sidewalk, leaning heavily upon a stout cane. English Johnny had seen the old man earlier in the day, and he wondered why the fellow had returned to this street.

This was Saturday – an important day for English Johnny. He had an appointment to keep, and that appointment meant much to him. He was not due until eight o'clock at night, but many things could happen in the meantime.

For one thing, some one might follow English Johnny. A few days ago he would not have worried about such a situation; but the beefy-faced man had learned much to alarm him during the past forty-eight hours.

There had been that cab driver, for instance. English Johnny had given the fellow his address, and he had a

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hunch that the man had lied when he had said he forgot it. Then there was the suspected visitation of that sinister wraith – if such it was – The Shadow!

Last night's happenings had wiped out all sense of security that English Johnny might have held to. Funny thing, that cab driver showing up in the lunch wagon.

Johnny had let it be known to several friends that he was going there; and the taxi driver had appeared also. Could there be a leak?

Perhaps that part of it had been coincidence; but it did not explain the presence of the mysterious man behind the counter – the man who had beaten a crew of gangsters and who had hurled English Johnny across the counter. Bill, the manager of that particular lunch wagon, did not even know the name of the substitute who had caused the trouble!

English Johnny sauntered down the street and turned the corner of the avenue. After closely regarding a cab that was standing there, assured, he entered the vehicle and gave an address to the driver.

The cab took him to a house that English Johnny knew was vacant. He rang the bell, waited a few minutes, then hailed another cab and told the driver to take him downtown.

English Johnny rubbed his tough jaw with pleasure as he considered this ruse. If the first cab had been planted there, with a spy at the wheel, the hounds would now be watching only an empty house.

Still he was not entirely positive of success. He turned to look behind, and saw another cab – a green one – following. Johnny thrust his head through the open panel and ordered the driver to turn up Eighty-sixth Street.

The cab in back aped the move.

The beefy-faced man barked a new command. The driver swung down the avenue and turned back along Eighty-fifth Street.

The other cab followed suit.

"Smart guys," mumbled English Johnny. "Well, I'm just as wise."

English Johnny dismissed his cab at Columbus Circle and went into a drugstore. One of the clerks was known to him; he chatted with the fellow for a while. Then he left the store and took the subway to Forty-second Street.

His next stop was an office building. He entered an elevator. Three or four others joined him in the car.

At the fifteenth floor he stepped out, another man did the same.

English Johnny looked about him, and suddenly decided that he had gotten off at the wrong floor.

He rang the bell for a descending elevator. He noted that the other man was going from door to door, as though searching for an office, the number of which he was uncertain.

The big, beefy-faced man stepped into the elevator and came down to the street floor. He hurried from the building, jumped into a cab, and rode a few blocks.

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He chuckled as he alighted on a side street just off Broadway.

"Fooled the fellow that time," Johnny said to himself. "Left him cold on the fifteenth floor!"

Then a sudden thought struck him, and he growled angrily.

"What if there was two of them? I never thought of that! One up and one downstairs, waiting for me, or what if there was just one guy wise enough not to go up?"

He walked back to Broadway and entered a cigar store, where he bought a supply of black stogies. He lighted one and puffed it thoughtfully. Then he was struck by an inspiration.

Entering the phone booth, Johnny called a number.

"Hello? That you, Kennedy? This is English Johnny... Yeah, I'm feelin' fine. Goin' out of town to-night. What?... Oh, up to Buffalo, to look at a lunch wagon. Won't be back for a week... No, I don't think I can make it, Kennedy... I'd like to, but I ain't got time. Train leaves at eight... No, I ain't bought my ticket yet... All right, I'll go later; I'll come on out now... Right now, yes... So long."

English Johnny's red face bore an air of satisfied confidence as he left the cigar store.

He walked down Broadway at an indifferent pace, past Forty-second Street, and on to Thirty-third. He entered the station of the Hudson Tubes and bought a ticket to Newark.

The car was nearly full, and the big man gazed curiously at the other passengers, as though he suspected that at least one of them was an enemy.

English Johnny was a keen observer. He eliminated most of those in the car. There were only three or four others who impressed him as possible trailers, and he looked these over carefully.

"Wonder who's in on this game," he said to himself. "It can't be the bulls. They ain't wise. Maybe some other crooks – but who?"

The Shadow! This name puzzled him. He had heard talk of a Shadow – but no one had seemed to know who the man might be. The name was scarcely more than a myth among gangsters. Only a few had spoken of it; and they had said very little.

There were those, of course, who claimed that they had heard his voice coming through the spaceless ether over the radio. But at the broadcasting studio, The Shadow's identity had been carefully guarded. He was said to have been allotted a special room, hung with curtains of heavy, black velvet, along a twisting corridor. There he faced the unseeing microphone, masked and robed.

The underworld had gone so far as to make determined effort to unravel The Shadow's identity – if it were truly The Shadow whose sinister voice the radio public knew; for there were doubters who maintained the voice was but that of an actor representing The Shadow. But all crookdom had reason to be interested; those without the law had to make sure.

So watchers were posted at the entrance to the broadcasting chain's building. Many walked in and out; none could be labeled as The Shadow. In desperation, a clever crook whose specialty was wiretapping applied for and secured a position as a radiotrician. Yet questioning of his fellow workers brought nothing but guesses to light. Around the studio The Shadow was almost as much a myth as on the outside. Only his voice was

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known.

Every Thursday night the spy from crookdom would contrive to be in the twisting corridor – watching the door of the room that was supposed to be The Shadow's. Yet no one ever entered that room!

Could it be, then, that The Shadow broadcast by remote control – that his voice was conveyed to the studio by private wire? No one knew. He and his fear–striking laugh had been heard – that was all.

English Johnny's train duly arrived at Newark. There he hired a cab which drove him to the airport.

The afternoon was waning. He hurried over to a hangar. An aviator came out to greet him.

"Howdy, Kennedy," exclaimed English Johnny.

"Hello, Johnny."

"Well, I'm here. Like I promised. Thought you'd be glad to see me."

"I sure am. You're just in time to take a little hop."

"How much? I might try it."

"Nothing to you, Johnny."

The beefy–faced man darted a look toward the group of idlers who were standing near the hangars. None of them resembled the men he had suspected in the Tube. Nevertheless, Johnny was going on with the game he had planned.

"All right, Kennedy. Let's go."

The two climbed into a speedy cabin job.

"I'll take you up for about ten minutes, Johnny," said the aviator.

The mechanic spun the propeller, the motor revved smoothly, and the plane took off and circled above the field. When the ship was in the air, English Johnny leaned forward to tap the pilot on the back. By means of an emphatic finger and with gestures, English Johnny made his wants known. Kennedy must have understood him, for the pilot nodded.

Although the group of idlers down on the field knew nothing of what passed between English Johnny and the birdman, the consequence was not unnoticed.

"That's funny," observed one of the hangers–on. "Kennedy must have changed his mind about that ten–minute trip. Looks mighty like he's going some place, and in a hurry, too."

The plane had settled to an arrow–straight course. Headed toward the north, its hum grew fainter and fainter to the neck cranes at the airport.

As the monoplane became but a dot against the dusking sky, a stranger in a long overcoat quit the hangar. Only the tip of his nose showed from behind the upturned collar of his overcoat. He strode along most rapidly, weirdly laughing to himself.

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Night had fallen; the hour was at hand when shadows come to life. The Shadow had clung tenaciously to English Johnny's trail, only to lose it. Yet he still had reason for mirth.

For The Shadow, keen in every intuition, believed that the odds favored Harry Vincent's trailing of Ezekiel Bingham. Where English Johnny had been oversuspicious, Bingham had proven disdainful.

The two, The Shadow knew, would find a common meeting point. Relying upon Harry to locate that spot, The Shadow was already making plans that could be executed promptly should Harry's report come through.

CHAPTER XXX. TRAIL'S END

A CAR was rolling along a road not far from Long Island Sound. Harry Vincent was the man at the wheel. He was following another clew.

At Herkwell he had traced the course of Ezekiel Bingham's car. A man had seen an automobile turn off on the side road to Winster two days ago. Very few cars went that way. The man, an idler in the corner store, had noted the car quite closely. It answered the description Harry sought.

Harry had stopped at a muddy spot along the road and had noted the mark of tires. The tread was of a peculiar design. This had been a valuable discovery. For two side roads led off from Winster. Both were muddy, but no one had seen a car go over either of them.

Harry had made a long examination and had detected the telltale marks of the tread on one of the roads. Hence he had followed it instead of keeping through the town.

This was the road that had carried him near the Sound. Now it ran into another road, and the course turned inland. The new road was well-paved.

Harry had covered nearly thirty miles since leaving Holmwood, but the poor condition of the roads and the stops that he had made consumed much time. It was now past four o'clock.

Harry stopped at a gasoline station, where he inquired if the service man had seen a car like Bingham's.

The man laughed.

"Lots of cars go past here, friend. I can't keep track of them all."

"I thought perhaps this car might have stopped for gasoline."

The man shook his head.

Harry obtained a road map and consulted it carefully. He traced the course that he had followed from Holmwood. There were several ways to reach the spot where he was now located; and he felt sure that the roads he had taken were not the best.

But if Ezekiel Bingham had been anxious to leave no trail to his destination, the course would have been logical. It was only by careful inquiry and keen observation that Vincent had managed to find the way so far.

"Looking for a stolen car, friend?" quizzed the man at the service station.

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Vincent grunted in reply.

"I'm not trying to find out your business," said the man, "but I might be able to help you."

"How?"

"Well, if the car came along here, you've got to take a chance on tracking it from here on. The road forks up ahead about a mile. Either road would be a likely one. But I'd advise you to take the one to the left."

"Why?"

"Because it goes past Smithers's garage. He's got big signs out, advertising good gas cheap. Pretty near everybody stops that goes by there. What's more, Smithers has got a cute stunt of listing the license numbers of cars that go by."

"What is the idea of that?"

"Well, he figures that cars that go by a few times must be using the road regular. He finds out who owns them, and sends them advertising circulars."

"That is a good idea."

"I don't know. Seems to me like a waste of time. But it's good for you, because if that car went by there, Smithers may have its number."

Harry thanked the man and gave him leave to fill up the tank of the coupe.

He turned left when he reached the fork and arrived at Smithers's garage. A stout man, evidently the proprietor, came out at Vincent's call.

"Mr. Smithers?"

"That's me."

"I want to ask you something."

Explaining that he was tracing another automobile, Vincent gave the man the number of Bingham's license tags, and asked if he had seen the car. Smithers became suspicious.

"Why do you want to know?" he asked.

"I've been sent out to trace it."

"Why are you after it?"

"I have important reasons. That's all."

"What makes you think I have the number?"

"Because I know you keep a record of the number of cars that go by."

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There was a positive assurance in Vincent's voice that made the garage proprietor think the young man might represent the law. At least, he was sure that Harry had some way of getting information that was not widely known. Still he hesitated.

"What if I do keep license numbers?" demanded Smithers. "There's no law against my doing it, is there?"

"Certainly not," Harry replied. "And there's no law against your giving me information from your list."

"I guess you're right," admitted the garage man.

Harry produced a ten-dollar bill.

"Maybe you could use this," he said casually.

"Wait a minute."

Smithers went to the office of the garage. He returned in a few minutes and collected the ten-spot.

"The number is there," he said. "Went by day before yesterday."

Hot on the trail, Harry urged his car along the road. He was entering wooded country, and was well away from the nearest town. Five miles beyond Smithers's place, the road curved to the right and joined a broad highway where three automobiles were passing.

This required a consultation of the road map. Harry pulled to the side of the road and studied the situation. The map showed that it would have been shorter and more convenient to have taken the right fork of the road than the left if any one had desired to reach this highway.

There would have been no reason for Ezekiel Bingham to have chosen the longer route, Vincent argued, as both roads came to the same turnpike. Why, then, had the old lawyer gone to the left?

There was but one answer to the question. Somewhere between Smithers's garage and the turnpike, Bingham had turned off the road.

Going into reverse, Harry swung back to retrace his course. He had a hunch that the road he wanted branched off to the right. A little later Harry found such a road – a dirt lane that twisted off toward a woods.

Stopping the car, Harry alighted and examined the dust. The lane was dry; there were no tire tracks of the tread he sought, but it was possible that the marks had been obliterated. At least, the road was worth a look-see.

He drove along the road through the woods. Coming to a stream, Harry found a bridge to be crossed alongside of an old ford. A mile more and the road ran into a paved highway.

This perplexed Harry. Which way should he go? The road map offered no help in this quandary.

Before choosing his course, Harry decided that it would be wise to return along the lane.

He drove back to its starting point, stopping occasionally to search for traces in the dust, but none were visible.

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He continued along the lane until he came to the bridge again. At that moment he observed that the temperature had risen on the motor gauge until it had nearly reached the boiling point.

"Forgot all about the water in the radiator," he mused. "This bus has been traveling pretty fast lately. I must have boiled some out."

He peered over the edge of the rail on the bridge and saw the glint of a tin can.

"That will do," he thought. "It's pretty small, but I can get plenty of exercise."

Descending to the stream, he retrieved the can and filled it with water. As he stopped at the ford, he whistled with delight. At the edge of the stream appeared the mark of one of Bingham's tires – a mark pressed deeply in the muddy edge of the brook.

Disregarding the heated radiator, Harry backed his car from the bridge and drove down to the ford. He crossed the stream, and as he ascended the farther bank he could make out the marks of automobile tires that led to the right.

Harry piloted the car along a makeshift road, moving slowly to subdue the noise of the motor. The thickness of the trees and bushes made the pathway more evident, although it was merely two grooves along the ground. Branches brushed the top of the coupe.

The car arrived at a dilapidated fence, which was broken by an opening. There were no bars across, but Harry felt uneasy about passing that barrier.

Instead, he turned the car to the left and drove some forty yards along an open space beside the fence.

Pocketing the ignition key, Harry closed the windows of the coupe and locked the doors. With cautious step he approached the opening in the fence. He followed the tracks of Bingham's car to sight a house among the trees.

Caution was vital. Harry realized that as he moved onward.

A noise caused him to seek refuge behind a tree. He could see the house clearly from that point – an ancient two-story structure that looked like an abandoned hunting lodge.

A man was standing on the porch, blue smoke curling upward from his lighted cigar – an elderly man who looked very much like Ezekiel Bingham!

The man stood there a few minutes; then turned and went into the house. Coming from behind the tree, Harry obtained a new angle of vision. In front of the house stood an automobile – a car that he recognized immediately. There now could be no question of the man's identity.

Harry smiled with triumph.

His quest was ended.

He had trailed Ezekiel Bingham to his lair!

CHAPTER XXXI. HARRY'S MESSAGE

AS he stole back to the spot where he had parked his car, Harry realized that he had reached the emergency which Fellows had foreseen. Five miles from the nearest habitation, it would take considerable time for him to go and return. His watch showed that it was after five o'clock; perhaps Fellows had already left his office, and in that event, a trip to a telephone would be useless.

Furthermore, it was Harry's duty to watch Ezekiel Bingham. The car in front of the house suggested that the old lawyer might be ready to leave the building that stood in the woods.

Harry's first action was to turn the coupe so that it faced the crude roadway. If Bingham should drive from the house, Harry would then be able to follow without loss of time.

Harry unlocked the back of the coupe and found the mysterious box which Fellows had spoken of. It was a fairly large box, occupying most of the space in back, and it appeared to be clamped to the bottom of the car to prevent it from shifting.

Using the key which Fellows had given him, Harry unlocked the box and opened it. A flat inner lid met his eyes. Upon it lay an envelope. Harry tore the wrapper and read the message:

You have a knowledge of radio. Follow the instructions on the bottom of the inner lid. Send your message, using the special code that appears within the instructions.

Lifting the inner lid, Vincent discovered a complete and compact wireless transmitting set.

Satisfied that the car was far enough from the opening in the fence to be free from discovery, Harry set to work.

Following the instructions on the lid, he strung an aerial between two trees. He worked quickly but nervously. His message was important and urgent.

The sending key clicked beneath his fingers. He was following the strange code, forming his words slowly and carefully. His first words were these:

Am watching Bingham at house in woods.

Then, referring to the map, he described as best he could the location of the place, using the turnpike as his basis. That highway was easily accessible, and would be the shortest way to the old lawyer's hiding place.

He repeated the message again to make sure; then waited a few minutes while he checked the apparatus thoroughly. Then he sent his code through the air for the third time.

Would the message be received? Would it be understood? Would it bring The Shadow to this place?

These questions raced through Vincent's brain. He wondered also how The Shadow had discovered his knowledge of wireless.

The sky was growing dark. It was nearly six o'clock. What should he do next?

Harry decided that a cautious visit to the house in the woods might bring important results. Dusk was

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approaching; he could still see clearly, yet he himself would be difficult to detect if he kept among the trees. That was the best plan: to find out more and then to send another message.

Leaving the wireless apparatus in place, he went back to the improvised roadway and approached the house. Bingham's car was still standing there. Everything was silent in the gloom.

Harry circled the house at a distance. A glow appeared at the bottom of a window. The shade had not been fully drawn; the light of a lamp showed through.

Reaching the porch, Harry crept noiselessly forward and peered through the narrow space. The room within was furnished with plain chairs and a table, and was lighted by two oil lamps.

Ezekiel Bingham was seated in one chair by the table; opposite him sat a man whom Harry did not recognize.

The two were conversing, but Harry could not hear their words. He tried to follow the motions of their lips, but without success.

This was a vantage point, however, and as the darkness increased, Vincent decided to remain. The longer he stayed the safer would be his position, and the opportunity might arrive to learn something.

Time went by slowly as Harry held his gaze to the window. Then came the chance that he had anticipated.

Bingham's companion, a short, dark-faced man, with a sharp-pointed mustache, came to the window and raised the shade.

Harry ducked in time. It was now quite dark, fortunately. A grating sound marked the raising of the window. The sound of the man's footsteps indicated that he was walking back in the room.

Harry raised his head and looked in the window.

"Why open the window?" asked the old lawyer.

"To get some air," replied the dark man with a curling smile that featured a gold tooth.

"The light will show outside," protested the lawyer.

"Let it show. Nobody will see it except our men. Nobody else ever comes out here."

"That's true. Still, it's wise to play safe."

"Yes. When it's necessary."

"All right, Tony. It doesn't matter. The others will be here shortly."

"They'll be here by eight, sure. They've been waiting for this night. It's the biggest yet."

"Yes, and they deserve it. They've done some good work in the past. Every one will get his correct percentage, and I can tell you that this will be by far the best."

The dark-faced man licked his lips in anticipation.

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"Well," he said, "I deserve my share. I pulled the job."

The old lawyer chuckled.

"Yes," he said, "you pulled the last part of it – the easiest of all. You're a great one, Tony, to take credit for the job."

"Why did you pick me, then?"

"You know why. Because I have you like that." The lawyer snapped his thumb and forefinger together with an emphatic gesture.

"You're a wise man, Mr. Bingham," Tony said. "You have the goods on everybody. You could make them work for nothing, and they'd have to do it. Instead of that you give every one of us a fair piece of the swag."

"That's what counts, Tony."

"There's only one thing that gets me, Mr. Bingham. How did you fix Burgess?"

The old lawyer looked suddenly about the room.

"Say nothing about that, Tony," he ordered. "I only told you because you were afraid of the Laidlow house on account of the murder. I wanted you to be sure that I knew who did it."

"I know that. I'm keeping quiet, you bet. I just wondered how you fixed a guy like that."

"I don't tell my affairs, Tony. But I'll let you know about this one. You have a right to know, because you went in there three nights ago and brought me the box."

"I had been watching Burgess. I knew what he was doing. He had the combination to the safe, but he did not know that it contained the information regarding the place where the gems were kept."

"Knowing what I did about Burgess – that he had been talking money that belonged to his employer – I met him one day and told him that he had only one way out – to work with me. That's why he did it. The murder was his own idea. He was scared. I helped him out of it. Lucky for him I was waiting outside."

"How did you know that there was a note in the safe, telling where to find the stuff?"

"You ask too many questions, Tony."

"All right, chief. I won't ask any more."

"Well, I'll answer the last one, then. I handled a case for Geoffrey Laidlow a few years ago. In discussing his affairs, he mentioned that he was the only man who knew where the jewels were kept, but that he had a message in his safe that would tell the place – only no one would ever be able to puzzle out the message. I think Laidlow forgot that he ever told me that much."

"But you got the message and doped it out!"

"I learned its secret. That is sufficient."

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Harry could see that Tony would have liked to ask more questions, but the lawyer had leaned back in his chair and had closed his eyes, as though to shut off the questioning.

Tony rose from the chair and walked over to the window.

Harry slipped out of sight. The man in the room began to hum a tune in excellent voice. The melody was close to Harry's ears and sounded loud, obscuring other sounds.

Then something fell heavily upon Harry's back. It flattened him against the porch before he could even gasp!

A man had come upon him in the darkness.

With one hand free, Harry struck out at his antagonist. The man grappled in return. Then Tony jumped through the window and joined in the fray.

Harry rolled free and staggered to his feet. Battling in the darkness, his fist landed against a man's face. The fellow went down upon the porch. It was Tony who had fallen.

Ezekiel Bingham, aroused from his nap, had arrived with the lamp. He was holding it at the window. Its feeble light illuminated the space where Harry was now meeting the man who had attacked from behind.

The fellow's hand was pushing Vincent's chin upward. Then that hand slipped.

Hooking his wrist behind the man's neck, Harry gained the winning hold and cast his antagonist to the porch. The effort made Harry lose his balance, but he caught himself against a post, and made ready for the leap to the ground.

Then his triumph ended. Something smashed against the back of his head. Harry turned, half stunned, and was met by a pair of strong fists that rebounded from his face. Tony had come back into the fight. His first blow had been delivered with a piece of wood that he had snatched from where it lay on the ground.

"Good work, Tony," prompted Bingham. "Come on, Jake. Help him out."

The man whom Harry had thrown joined his companion.

It was inevitable that Harry should go down under their flailing fists – they were at him from both sides. As he fell, both men jumped on Harry. Under the double pummeling, Harry at length lapsed into unconsciousness.

"Found him here on the porch," panted Jake as he arose from Harry's inert form. "Tony and I have fixed him proper. Fetch a rope."

The old lawyer produced the required article. Harry's motionless body was trussed in the coils of a long, heavy clothes line, his arms and legs doubled up together.

"Bring him in," ordered Bingham. "Let me look at him."

The unconscious man was laid on the floor of the room. The old lawyer held the lamp above his face, which was bleeding and distorted.

"Don't know him," declared Bingham tersely. "Never saw him before that I can remember. Put him over there in the corner."

Jake and Tony obeyed. The motionless body of Harry Vincent was flung without ceremony on the spot that the old lawyer had designated.

CHAPTER XXXII. ENGLISH JOHNNY ARRIVES

OLD Ezekiel Bingham looked at his watch. It showed a quarter of eight. He was alone in the room with the captured interloper, who lay seemingly lifeless. The man had not moved since he had been brought in from the porch.

The door opened; Tony and Jake entered, carrying lanterns. Another man was with them.

"Here's Spotter," said Jake. "Just came up in his car. We met him outside."

The newcomer was short and thin, with a wicked-looking face and beady eyes. The top of his head was on a level with Jake's shoulder; and Jake, despite his broadness, was not over six feet tall.

"Hello, Spotter," greeted the old lawyer. "We just had some trouble here. Did you make a good search, boys?"

"We did," declared Jake emphatically. "There's nobody else around. This fellow we caught is probably some prowler who happened to be going through the woods. Did you ever see him before, Spotter?"

The short thin man stepped across the room and gazed at the face of the man on the floor.

"No," he said. "He ain't a crook; he ain't a bull. I can tell you that by lookin' at him. He's some fellow from town who must have been walkin' through the woods. Tony tells me he was lookin' in the window when you caught him. Anybody might come lookin' in if they was comin' by."

"That sounds logical, Spotter," declared Bingham with approval. "Your opinion is worth a great deal. You know every criminal in the business; and you know every detective on the force. You are a valuable man."

"Sure, I knows them all," said Spotter. "That's why they calls me 'Spotter,' ain't it? What good is a name if it don't mean nothin'?"

"Well, it's good business," declared the lawyer. "You see, Tony, there was a good reason to keep the window shut, with the shade down. I have taken that precaution while you were on your tour of inspection."

"Guess you're right, Mr. Bingham," admitted Tony.

"How did you happen to discover the man, Jake?" inquired the lawyer.

"Just luck," replied Jake. "I parked my bus at the side of the house and stepped up on the end of the porch. I saw him, and knew he didn't belong here. So I landed on him."

"Very good," commended the lawyer. "Come in from the door, Tony. Close it when you do."

Tony was standing, lantern in hand, on the porch before the door. Beside him was a long thin shadow that

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came from the steps and lay motionless in the light. No one noticed the peculiarly shaped blotch. It passed the shadow of the post beside the steps.

"You can take it from me," said Tony as he stepped through the doorway. "There's nobody within five hundred yards of this place. Jake and I did a real job."

"That was what you were sent out to do," declared the old lawyer.

Tony shut the door; and the shadow on the porch was obliterated. All was dark outside – dark and silent.

"Let us check up, first," declared the lawyer. "There is only one more coming. We can hear from him later. How did you come, Tony?"

"I laid around a little town out here for a couple of days. I didn't go back to the city after I left you the other night. No chance that anybody knows where I am."

"How about you, Jake?"

"I've been down in Philadelphia for a month. I cleared out after the last job. I wasn't in on this, and I've been working in a restaurant while I was away. I had my car down there and came straight through. I'm safe enough."

"Well, Spotter?"

"Youse guys know I'm always safe. I went up in Connecticut. Bought an old car up there an' came across the Sound in a ferryboat. Youse just know I looked 'em all over on that boat. Why should anyone be followin' me, anyway? It's me that follows other people; not them that follows me."

"Well," declared Ezekiel Bingham, "my own case is, of course, exceptional. I have very little to avoid; nevertheless I took every precaution. I came here two days ago, and have remained alone since then."

"What! Out here?" exclaimed Jake.

"Certainly. It is the safest possible place. Everything is arranged upstairs so that I receive an instant alarm when any one enters here. I am awake at night, and sleep during the day – and I sleep very little and very lightly."

With the door and windows tightly shut, none of the men heard the arrival of another automobile. It was a large sedan which coasted up directly in front of the house, its motor shut off.

A big man stepped from the car and looked at his watch in the light of the dash lamp. A grunt of satisfaction came from his lips.

"Eight o'clock," he said. "Just timed it right. Kennedy sure knows how to circle around in that plane of his."

He struck a match, and the glare revealed his full red face. He puffed away at his stogie as he stood by the car. Then he walked to the steps and stopped a moment.

"Nice place this," he chuckled. "No shadows out here."

He seemed to be enjoying the combination of night air and cigar smoke.

"Well, I'm on time," he observed. "Guess all the boys are here. Let them wait a couple of minutes for me."

The red glow of the cigar deepened and softened alternately, as indication of the smoker's puffs. Occasionally the glow disappeared for a few moments, as though it were subsiding in the hand of the man who held it and lowered it to his side. Two minutes passed; then the cigar light moved through the darkness toward the porch.

The boards creaked under heavy, solid footsteps. A large hand pushed the door open, and the man with the cigar stamped into the lighted room where the four men were seated.

"English Johnny!" exclaimed Jake.

"Hello, boys," greeted the big man with a grin on his beefy face. "I'm just about on time, ain't I?"

CHAPTER XXXIII. ENGLISH JOHNNY EXPLAINS

"WE are ready for business," declared Ezekiel Bingham, looking at the other men as they sat about the table. "Have you anything to report before we start?"

The question was addressed to the big man with the red face.

"Plenty," was the reply.

A look of interest flashed around the crowd.

"What's up, Johnny?" questioned Pete.

"Nothing, now," replied the big man with a broad grin. "I was up – up in the air. That's how I got here."

He paused and studied the effect of his words. His listeners silently awaited his explanation.

"It was this way," he continued. "Two nights ago a phony taxi driver tried to pull a fast one on me. I got rid of him quick enough. But that night I thought somebody came in my house."

"You thought some one came in!" exclaimed Ezekiel Bingham. "Why didn't you find out positively?"

"How can you find out?" questioned the big fellow. "How can you find out when you don't see nothing but a lot of shadows?"

"Shadows aren't people."

"Yes, but I saw one shadow – all by itself. It looked real."

Ezekiel Bingham's face showed his annoyance.

"Let me explain," English Johnny continued. "This shadow hung around my house. It was in my room. I says to myself: 'English Johnny, old boy, there's some one here with you.' So I wrote a phony letter and left it where anyone could read it. Then I took it to the mail box and faked putting it in."

"Nonsense!" cried the old lawyer. "This is ridiculous. English Johnny talking about living shadows."

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"English Johnny is right," declared Spotter solemnly.

Ezekiel Bingham stared at him in amazement.

"I mean it," Spotter went on. "Croaker seen The Shadow the night he was killed. Other guys have lamped The Shadow."

"Where? When?" came a chorus of voices.

"One night," said Spotter, "I seen a guy in a black cloak getting in a big limousine. I couldn't see his face, but he handed dough to the chauffeur and they drove off.

"I had a car around the corner, and Birdie Crull was waiting for me. I drove after the big car, but it got away from us. Then we picked it up again, just by luck, a half hour later.

"I tells Birdie that the guy in the big bus has a roll on him. So I gets past the car on another street and runs into it coming the other way. Up she goes on the curb, and Birdie opens the door and flashes a rod.

"Then, out of nothin', comes this big black shadow. It was a man, all right – but it didn't look human. It wraps around Birdie and shoots him with his own rod. He flops in the street, and The Shadow moves right across without a noise, and that was the last we seen of it."

"That's The Shadow, all right," declared English Johnny. "I was never quite sure he was real."

"I seen The Shadow again," said Spotter eagerly. "Down by the Pink Rat. This time I looked for his face. I saw nothing but a piece of white that looked like a bandage. Maybe The Shadow ain't got no face to speak of. Looked like the bandage hid somethin' in back. There was a young guy once who the crooks was afraid of – he was a famous spy in the War, and they say he was wounded over in France – wounded in the face. I think The Shadow is this guy come back – maybe he –"

Ezekiel Bingham interrupted.

"I heard about Croaker and The Shadow!" the lawyer said. "Once I imagined I saw a shadow. Imagination plays many tricks; even on those who have steady nerves. But what of it? Why talk of a shadow? Go on, Johnny, tell us the rest of your story. We may judge then."

English Johnny grinned with satisfaction. Evidently there was a surprise in store. But the big man restrained himself and continued in a casual manner:

"I'll make the rest of it short. Last night I ran into the taxi driver again. In one of my lunch wagons. I knocked him groggy when a new man behind the counter helped him get away. Some of the gang chased him but wrecked their car.

"So I was wise today. I says to myself: 'English Johnny, there's some guy on your trail.' Everywhere I went it was the same. So I hopped over to Newark, and got a friend of mine named Kennedy to take me up for a ride in his plane. Then I says to Kennedy: 'Go like blazes up above New York, and cut back to Long Island. You can name your price.' And Kennedy went like blazes. Even this Shadow couldn't have followed us. After we landed, I got a car from a place I knew about, and here I am."

Tony whistled.

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"Pretty smart, Johnny," he said. "You're safe enough. Are you sure the guy you got the car from was all right?"

"Sure enough," replied the big man. "He didn't even know me, until I proved who I was. He's the last guy in the world that they would look for to find out where I was."

"Then it's all right," declared Ezekiel Bingham. "Personally I think it is all your imagination, Johnny."

"Well, I'm not worrying now," came the reply. "All this didn't start until after I left the place where I had fixed everything. The Shadow wasn't anywhere around there."

"Then you're ready to take the gems?"

"You bet. Sooner the better. Do it quick."

The old lawyer went upstairs and returned with a large box. He opened it upon the table, and the eager eyes of the onlookers glittered as they saw the sparkling jewels that had been the pride of Geoffrey Laidlow.

"Look them over," said the lawyer briefly. "I have the complete list in my possession. I shall go over it with you and arrange your shares. Do you want to wait, Johnny?"

"I can't. It's nearly nine o'clock now. Two hours into the city if the traffic is heavy. Maybe more than two hours. I've got to get there before midnight."

"Quite right. Shall I send some one into town with you?"

The old lawyer looked around the group.

"Not me," declared Jake. "I want to go over that list. I'll bet it's a sweet one. We can figure just about what we're going to get when we check up the list."

"That's right," agreed Tony. "I want to see the list, too."

Bingham looked at Spotter.

"Let Johnny go alone," the little man declared. "He's done it before. Leave it to him. I'd like to look at that list myself."

"Agreed," said the old lawyer in a final tone.

The big man with the red face arose, and Ezekiel Bingham handed him the closed box that contained the collection of precious stones.

"Anything else, Johnny?"

"Yeah! What's that over in the corner?"

"Look him over before you go," said the odd lawyer. "It's a man who looked in the window before you came. Jake and Tony caught him."

The man with the jewel box strode across the room and moved Harry's bloody face with his foot.

"Say," he cried. "I know who this is!"

"Who?"

"That phony taxi driver I told you about!"

The men were on their feet.

"Maybe it's The Shadow!" exclaimed Jake.

"It ain't The Shadow," was the reply from the lips of English Johnny. "No, sir. It ain't The Shadow. But this fellow is a bad egg."

"What'll we do with him?" inquired Tony.

"Bump him off," suggested Spotter.

"One moment," interrupted Ezekiel Bingham. "This is serious business. Do not talk of murder. Let us say, instead, that it would be advisable to dispose of this man purposefully. Now, who will do it?"

"I grabbed him," declared Jake. "I've done my share."

"How about you, Tony?" "Swell, I can do it; but I don't have a car to lug him away in."

"Spotter?"

The little man shook his head.

"You're right," he affirmed. "This ain't no foolishness. I ain't no hand at bumpin' 'em off."

Ezekiel Bingham looked questioningly at English Johnny.

"So it's up to me, eh?" laughed the big man. "Up to English Johnny? Well, I'll take care of him. I ain't saying what I'm going to do with him. Maybe I'll give him a job in a lunch wagon – and maybe I won't."

"Now, I'll steer you fellows right. I'm leaving now. Lay him in the back of my car, leaning against the door. Now, I'm going by a road that goes over a long bridge, nobody there at night – and the water there is forty foot deep."

"It ain't too far from here, and it ain't too near. Now suppose I should happen to open that back door right where the bridge curves –"

He stopped. The others nodded in approbation of his scheme.

While the men had been discussing his fate, Harry Vincent had regained consciousness. He suppressed a groan as he opened his eyes and saw the leering face of English Johnny. His eyes shut again.

CHAPTER XXXIV. ENGLISH JOHNNY DEPARTS

THE men gathered around Vincent's body and openly expressed their admiration of English Johnny's scheme.

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"It takes nerve to do it, through," asserted Spotter. "English Johnny's got nerve, boys, and don't forget it."

The big man smiled at the compliment.

"Yes," he said, "I got nerve; and what's more, I got it in for this fellow. I oughta been here when you caught him. I'd like to pound him a bit, but it ain't no use now since you fellows finished the job."

Jake suggested that heavy stones be tied to the body of the prisoner. This was done, and more rope was employed to truss the body so that it would roll easily when released.

Harry had again lapsed into unconsciousness. His mind was spared the details of this scene.

"Outside with him, boys," came the order in the voice of English Johnny. "No lights, though. Put him in the car; lean him against the door on the right."

"How about in front?" questioned Jake.

"No. In back. Better there. I've got a long arm. I can reach it."

Tony and Jake lifted Harry and started to lug him to the door. The added weight of the stones caused trouble. They were removed, and Spotter carried the stones to the car, where they were attached again.

"I think he's dead already," whispered Jake, looking at Harry's face.

"So much the better," said Tony. "Just a case of dropping the body, then."

They saw Ezekiel Bingham coming to the car with English Johnny. The big man had the jewel case. He tucked it in the pocket of the front door.

"Right handy there," he remarked.

English Johnny entered the car, pressed the starter, and the motor began to hum. He turned the automobile on the grass, and the headlights gleamed upon the four men. English Johnny clicked them off again.

He stopped the car at the end of the walk that led to the front steps, and as his companions gathered close he leaned from the window so that his face joined them in the darkness.

"Leave it to me," he said. "English Johnny will do the work. This here in the back seat – one second does the trick. You forget all about it, because I'm going to forget it. Then I'll be in New York, and you can bet that those sparklers will be in the right hands before midnight.

"But I'm going to tell you something you don't know. I saved this to surprise you. Didn't want to start a lot of excitement while we had other things on our minds."

Even Ezekiel Bingham drew closer. The old lawyer sensed that he would hear amazing news. Something in the tone of English Johnny's voice indicated it.

"Listen," said the man at the wheel. "You know this Shadow we talked about? He's real, all right. He's real, and I know where he is."

"Where?" asked Spotter.

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"Right where you can get him." The voice of English Johnny was low and definite. "Bring a lantern, Tony, and follow me. Then I'll explain."

The man hurried to the house and returned with the light. It revealed English Johnny's face, grinning with a knowing, sinister smile.

"The Shadow is real, boys," repeated the man in the car, "and what's more, he was here to-night. But he's not the fellow here in back. He's laying up yonder by the house."

"Wait! Don't go yet! He's safe where he is. How he got here, I don't know. It was dark; I don't even know what his face is like. I know he was The Shadow, though, because he came out of the night just like a shadow; and he landed on me. But he met his match this time. Met his match when he tackled English Johnny."

"You got this fellow that we put in back. I promised to get rid of him for you. Well, I caught The Shadow. I'm leaving him to you. It's up to you to finish him. That makes it a bargain. Will you do it?"

"Sure," declared Spotter, bringing his face into the light. "What did you do with him?"

"Knocked him cold," was the sneering answer. "He may be dead for all I know. Strapped him with his own belt, and mine, too – it's a trick I can do quick. Gagged him with his own handkerchief. There he is, waiting for you, done up like a suitcase, right where I nabbed him. Take a peek at him, all of you. Tell me what he looks like. He's right there beside the steps; right where he popped out and tried to jump on me!"

Jake had run to the steps and found the human form.

"Here he is," he called. "Bring the light, Tony!"

Tony hurried with the lantern. Jake was holding the prisoner's body; the light shone down upon the muffled face. Spotter was leaning forward with eager eyes. This man who knew so many faces was anxious to recognize the one that he had never seen. Ezekiel Bingham peered from behind the others.

"Pull off the handkerchief," they heard English Johnny call from the car. "See what he looks like!"

Spotter's hand jerked the gag down to the neck of the huddled form. There was silence for an instant, then the lantern swayed in Tony's hand. None of the four men could speak.

The first cry came from Spotter.

"It's English Johnny!"

The realization of what had happened burst upon them. But as they stood stunned by their unbelievable discovery, the car at the end of the walk shot suddenly forward, whirled off along the makeshift road toward the lane that led to safety.

The truth had dawned upon Ezekiel Bingham and his crew of gangsters as they grouped about the limp bulk of their comrade, English Johnny.

The Shadow must have overpowered English Johnny before the big man had been able to enter the building. It was The Shadow, disguised as English Johnny, who had talked with them, and to whom they had given the box of gems. It was The Shadow who had agreed to murder the man they had captured at the window!

And it was The Shadow now who was driving away in English Johnny's car; The Shadow who had deceived them; despoiled them; and who was mocking them.

For from the swiftly moving sedan came a peal of taunting laughter; a long, loud laugh that echoed through the night and died away among the trees.

CHAPTER XXXV. AT HEADQUARTERS

"SATURDAY night," said Inspector John Malone. "The end of another week."

He emphasized each word as he spoke, sitting at the table, his eyes staring vacantly at the wall before him.

"And it's the last week, Malone."

The voice was that of Joe Cardona, the detective.

"Are you trying to make it harder for me, Joe?" asked the man at the table reprovingly.

"Certainly not, inspector. I'm with you to the last minute. But that last minute is midnight. You know that."

"You're right, Joe. I'm through, all right. One hour more and it's demotion – maybe worse."

Cardona moved slightly from his position near the window.

"It's all in the game," he remarked. "All in the game, Malone; but it's tough, just the same. I feel like I was responsible for it, too."

"Don't say that, Joe."

"I can't help it. This Laidlow case has been your finish. If we could have found anything at all, it might have worked out. But not a clue – not the trace of a clue."

"You were up against it, Joe. You couldn't help it. But it is tough to lose out this way."

"Well, there wasn't anything in that Chinese idea. You have my report. I went through the chink district and did it right. But I couldn't find a thing."

"Maybe the crook still has the jewels, Joe."

"Not a chance, Malone. No crook will hold onto them this long. Especially a small-fry burglar like the fellow we think cracked the safe. It isn't the murderer I've been after lately; it's the gems. If we could bring in those sparklers, we'd have something. You would be the big noise on the force, inspector."

"Why talk of that, Joe? Only an hour more and I'm through."

"Why don't you go home, old man? This is no place for you to-night."

"The boys know I'm through, Joe. I want them to know that I'm standing by to the finish."

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

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"If there was only some way, Joe," pleaded the man at the table. "Just some way to start something – I won't get the news until Monday, you know; but I go off duty to-night, and it's my last chance."

The detective began to pace up and down the floor.

"You know, Malone," he said suddenly, "I believe you were right about some big mind being behind this. That's just why we're up against it. If there is a big mind in back of it, Diamond Bert Farwell was just a beginner compared to this fellow. We can't get anything from either end. No clew from the murder; no trace of the stuff."

Malone eyed the detective thoughtfully.

"I figured that right from the start, Joe," he said. "There's more than one hand in this, but the stolen goods will reach the hand that's behind it. Do you know what I think? I believe the fellow is so clever that even if we found the gems on him, we wouldn't be able to convict him."

"Why not?"

"Because we'd have to prove how he got them. Like as not he's put himself in a position of an honest man. We could arrest him, all right; but he'd have some alibi – some way out of it."

"Probably. But why worry? It won't be your job to get him, Malone. I hate to talk this way. You're the best inspector we've ever had."

"Well, Joe, I'm here for the last night, anyway. It isn't the job that matters, though. Every one knows I'm here. The boys know I'm no quitter. But the hard part is that I've failed. I hope you never go through it, Joe."

The detective slapped his hand against his superior's shoulder.

"I'm sticking here, too," he said. "It may not mean much, because you're going to lose out and I'm not. But I'll be here to say good night when you leave at midnight."

Malone glanced at his watch. It was ten minutes past eleven. The phone bell rang. He lifted the receiver listlessly.

"What's that?... I can't understand you... Yes. This is Inspector Malone... You're in a hurry? Calling from out on Long Island, eh?"

He passed the telephone to the detective.

"Hello," growled Cardona. "What?"

His eyes glistened with interest. Sharp, quick words came from his lips. He glanced sideways at Malone. The inspector was resting his elbow on the table, his cheek upon his hand.

The detective was talking excitedly.

"Go on... Yes... Yes... I got you... Better tell me who you are... No? Well, I'll take a chance on it, anyway."

He slammed down the receiver and dived for his coat.

"What's up, Joe?" asked Malone in sudden interest.

"I can't wait to tell you," shouted Cardona, shaking his fists in wild excitement. "Can't waste time, Malone. It's a tip-off – a tip-off on the Laidlow jewels. It may have been a crank – maybe it wasn't. I've got the men downstairs. We've just got time. A long way to go and a short time before midnight."

He dashed from the room.

Inspector Malone slumped back in the chair. After all, why should he worry? He had been disappointed before on this case. Now, at the eleventh hour, there had been a tip-off – and it would mean nothing.

The Laidlow jewels! Perhaps Joe Cardona would find them some day, but Inspector Malone did not expect to be around when he did.

CHAPTER XXXVI. THE GEMS' DELIVERY

A MAN strolled up the street in front of Wang Foo's tea shop. Something bulged beneath his coat. He glanced cautiously right and left before he entered the building. The street was deserted; it usually was at eleven thirty, especially on a Saturday night, when most persons were occupied elsewhere.

Loo Choy stared without interest when he saw the big man enter. He had seen the man before; why should he be interested? Life was tiresome here at Wang Foo's; in fact, Loo Choy had been moping for two days because his cousin, Ling Chow, had gone back to the place called Yonkers.

The big man stopped at the counter and looked at Loo Choy. From beneath his coat he drew a box and set it in front of the Chinaman. Then he beckoned with his finger. Loo Choy advanced to see what was wanted.

The red-faced man extended his hands and clutched Loo Choy by the neck. With a powerful movement he swept the little Chinaman upon the counter. A piece of rope lay handy.

In less than two minutes the guardian of Wang Foo's tea shop lay helpless, with a gag in his mouth.

The big man lifted him with ease and deposited him in a convenient resting place, out of sight behind a stack of tea boxes. He walked calmly through the shop and found the door at the back.

He stepped back in the corner, and extended his long arm, rapped four times upon the door.

The panel opened. A face appeared – the face of one of the giant Mongols who guarded the stairway to Wang Foo's sanctum. The Chinaman peered through the door. Seeing nothing, he thrust his head through the opening. A firm hand slapped against the top of his head and pressed his throat against the bottom of the open panel. The Chinaman emitted a choking gasp.

The big man released him. The guard slumped inside the door. Then a hand reached in and found the latch. The door was opened and the visitor stepped in.

He walked boldly up the stairs and strode into the room of Wang Foo. The old Chinaman looked up from the desk.

"Ah," he exclaimed, in his evenly spoken English. "My friend. My friend, Johnny."

"None other."

"I note a box beneath your arm. Do I understand that you have brought me –"

"You're exactly right, Wang Foo. Take a look."

The arrival laid the box on the table and lifted the lid. The glittering array of jewels would have brought a cry of amazement from the most lethargic person; but not even an expression of interest appeared on the face of the Chinaman.

"Spread 'em out," said the visitor, removing some of the jewels and placing them on the desk. "What do you think of them, Wang Foo?"

"Excellent," replied the Chinaman, in expressionless tones. "They are very good. They are worth the price that I have agreed to pay for them."

"Thought you'd like 'em. The old boy got hold of them quicker than he expected. I got a note from him the same night I was here – after I'd gone home. So we got together in a hurry; and here they are."

"I trust your meeting was held in a wisely chosen spot," said Wang Foo with a faint smile.

"Don't kid me, Wang Foo. You know the old boy well enough to bank on that. Besides, I bet you know all about it. Where we got together, I mean."

Wang Foo did not reply. He was examining some of the precious stones.

"Well, I pulled the trick," said the big man. "English Johnny came through with the goods. Say, Wang Foo, where are your big chinks to-night? You oughta have them around with all those sparklers on your hands."

He strode to the curtained wall as he spoke and brushed the covering aside.

"One of my men was downstairs," remarked Wang Foo. "Did you not see him?"

"Sure, I saw that fellow. He knew me and let me come up. But you ought to have your other blokes with you."

"I do not need them."

"Why not?"

In reply Wang Foo pushed a button on his desk. A portion of the wall revolved on a pivot, five feet to the Chinaman's right.

"That leads up into the house," he said with his thin smile. "Before any one could enter this room, I would be gone."

The big white man marched across the room and glanced through the curtained doorway. Then he turned as though making an entrance, and looked at Wang Foo.

"You're right," he said. "Nobody would have a chance to get you. You could hop out all right. But what about the jewels? You couldn't take them with you."

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"Step forward, Johnny. Come this way."

The red-faced man obeyed.

"Now look behind you," said Wang Foo.

The big man saw the Celestial reach to the side of the desk and press another button. He turned quickly. The floor had opened downward at the very spot where he had stood. A double trap was ready for intruders.

The hole closed, just as mysteriously as had the panel in the wall. The big man walked back and tested the spot with his foot. With the trap shut, he could not detect an opening in the surface of the rug. He stood beside the doorway for an instant. Then he walked over to the desk.

"Say, Wang Foo," he said as he took his position at the right of the old Chinaman. "I've found out something. A very strange thing, too. Something useful to our game."

"What is it?"

"I've found out what happened to a certain man who used to be a shrewd worker. Did you ever hear of Diamond Bert Farwell?"

The eyes of English Johnny stared into those of Wang Foo. The Chinaman's gaze was steady as he stared unblinking through his thick spectacles.

"Diamond Bert Farwell is dead," he asserted.

"His brother is dead," came the response. "His brother – the man they thought was Bert. But Diamond Bert is still alive, and I know where he is."

"Where?"

"Here! Before me!"

With one quick motion, the big man reached toward and plucked the spectacles from Wang Foo's face. Before the astonished Chinaman could move, his wig had been snatched from his head. He sat there, a blinking, baldheaded American whose face was dyed with yellow stain.

The sound of stealthy footsteps on the stairs had been drowned by the voice of English Johnny as it had poured its message into the ears of the erstwhile Wang Foo. The man behind the desk leaped to his feet, as he saw the curtain of the doorway swing aside.

Detective Joe Cardona entered the room, a revolver gleaming in his hand. Wang Foo's hand slipped quickly to the button on the right side of the desk. There it was trapped by the knee of the big man beside him. The pretended English Johnny was holding both hands in the air.

"Up with your hands," cried the detective.

The big man's knee pushed Wang Foo's hand back from the button. The false Chinaman was trapped. It was too late for him to operate the turning panel. He glowered at the man who had betrayed him, and raised his hands in the air.

THE LIVING SHADOW

Three other detectives were with Cardona. They covered the two men at the desk with their automatics.

"Diamond Bert!" exclaimed the Italian as he approached the corner of the room. "Diamond Bert – fixed up like a chink! Old Wang Foo is Diamond Bert! And with the Laidlow jewels, too!"

He looked at the other man.

"English Johnny, the lunch-wagon king! So you're in the racket, too. You bring the stuff; Bert peddles it. Well, we've got you, boys. This will be great news for Inspector John Malone."

Handcuffs clicked on the wrists of both men. Cardona made a quick search for guns. He pulled one from the big man's pocket.

"Got a rod on you, too, eh? That'll go against you, Johnny."

The detectives surrounded the prisoners, who stood in silence.

"Move along."

Cardona nudged Diamond Bert. In response to the detective's order, the former Wang Foo walked sullenly past the left side of the desk, toward the waiting detectives.

"You, too, Johnny."

Cardona's growl came as he surveyed the second prisoner who was following around the desk and was directly in back of it. A sharp exclamation came from the detective as he saw English Johnny stoop.

There was a click. Raising up, the prisoner flung the handcuffs on the desk, where they lay open. Before Cardona could realize the quickness of English Johnny's self-release, before a single detective could cover with a revolver, the prisoner pressed the button that controlled the wall panel.

The two detectives leaped toward him, but he seemed to shrink as he slipped between them, underneath their grasp. The panel was turning in the wall, and the escaping prisoner passed through.

Shots rang from Cardona's gun; they went wild, crashing against the wall beside the panel. The prisoner had gone; the two detectives were staring at the spot where he had been. He had passed through their clutches like a shadow!

And as the panel closed against the wall, a long, reverberating sound came to the ears of the astonished men. It was a laugh, a vivid, creepy laugh; a laugh that was real, and yet unnatural.

It was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXXVII. WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

THE front page of the New York newspaper amused Harry Vincent as he read it. He was seated in the club car of the limited that was carrying him westward.

He was going home for a short vacation; home to see his folks in the little town in Michigan.

THE LIVING SHADOW

There were startling statements in the paper. Some of them, Harry knew, were partially correct. Others were entirely wrong. For he knew facts that the reporters had not obtained, yet his knowledge of the affair was amazingly inadequate.

The startling revelation that Diamond Bert Farwell had been captured; that he had been living in the guise of a Chinaman while the police had believed him dead, was sensational news.

To Detective Cardona, the papers said, belonged the credit for the capture of Diamond Bert and the recovery of the Laidlow gems. Diamond Bert had been surprised at an opportune moment just after he had removed his disguise in the security of his room above the tea shop.

But Cardona had attributed much of this success to Inspector John Malone, whose keen, perceptive mind had ferreted out the secret of the master brain behind the Laidlow robbery. The inspector had received high praise and commendation from the police commissioner.

The discovery that Diamond Bert had been masquerading as the old Chinaman had led to a thorough search of the building that stood on the outskirts of Chinatown. A package containing other jewels had been discovered; they were the spoils of previous minor robberies – goods which, for some unknown reason, had not yet been unloaded by Diamond Bert.

The murder of Geoffrey Laidlow had been solved immediately after the news of the recovered gems had been flashed throughout the country. Howard Burgess, the secretary of the dead millionaire, had committed suicide in Florida.

The brief note that he had left had stated simply that he had assisted in the robbery of the safe; had killed Geoffrey Laidlow, and had wounded himself. He had given the box of jewels to a confederate, his account stated, and it was the other man whom Ezekiel Bingham had seen escape through the window.

Harry realized that this statement was only partly true. Burgess had evidently feared the consequences of his crime; at the same time, he had been careful to shield his actual associate. The police had accepted his note as true in its entirety.

The dragnet was out for English Johnny Harmon, the man who had been found with Diamond Bert, but; whose name had never before been identified with crime. English Johnny had escaped, the papers said, before the detectives had an opportunity to capture him.

It was believed that he was the accomplice of Howard Burgess – the man who had fled across the lawn in front of Geoffrey Laidlow's home. Some one had been the connecting link between Howard Burgess and Diamond Bert Farwell; and English Johnny was the logical person. The police were quizzing the employees of Johnny's lunch wagons.

Ezekiel Bingham, the veteran criminal lawyer, had refused to defend Diamond Bert Farwell. There was much speculation regarding this. One reason was that Bingham would be needed as a witness, should English Johnny be captured; the other was that the old lawyer had contracted a severe illness, and his physician had prescribed a rest cure.

Harry rubbed his face as he read these details. His cheeks were still sore from the punishment he had experienced. His shoulders ached, but no bones were broken. He had taken a severe beating, but with no serious consequences.

THE LIVING SHADOW

He was feeling fit now; but he had been greatly wearied and sadly weakened when he had awakened in his room at the Metrolite Hotel, the morning after his journey to the old house on Long Island. He still wondered how he had been rescued from the hands of English Johnny; for his last recollection of that night was the memory of a red, leering face that had leaned threateningly above his helpless form.

Then he had received his ticket to Michigan, with the Pullman reservations that accompanied it. He had taken the train without further orders.

Once more he glanced through the account in the newspaper, searching for something that did not appear in print. Strange, thought Harry, that in this long report there was not one mention of a man called The Shadow!

For the newspapers never learned that the man who had unmasked Diamond Bert was not – could not have been – English Johnny.

THE END