

# **MESSENGER OF DEATH**

Maxwell Grant

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# MESSENGER OF DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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## CHAPTER I. THE MIRACLE METAL.

GREGG GARLAND was impatient. He showed it by shifting in his chair, by the frequent flicks he gave his cigar, as if to dispose of imaginary ashes. But, most of all, Garland registered impatience with his glower.

When Garland glowered he did it most unpleasantly, in a manner that boded ill for the recipient. But there was no one present to witness Garland's current displeasure. He was alone in the large, old-fashioned reception room, directing his ugly glances at the door of the laboratory where Wayne Dunstan was at work.

As another door opened, Garland came to his feet and turned about.

In the mere act of rising, he wiped away his impatient expression. No longer were his heavy eyebrows knotted together; his under lip had lost its challenging thrust. Not that Garland was smiling; he never relaxed that far. Rather, his features simply lost their gross hostility and assumed a show of patience which Garland did not feel.

Four men were ushered into the reception room. All were business associates of Garland, but none were of his prepossessing type. These arrivals had timed their visit, expecting Garland to conclude the transaction

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with Dunstan before they appeared. It was plain that Garland hadn't done it.

"Sorry, gentlemen," declared Garland in a heavy tone. "For some reason Dunstan has chosen to seclude himself. I have been cooling my heels here for the past half-hour.

A servant pushed his way through to rap at the laboratory door. The visitors noted that the taps were quick, with pauses, like a coded signal.

"I offered a million dollars for glazite," continued Garland. "Cash on delivery for the full formula, all patents and rights. Dunstan asked me to wait here a few minutes and it's been an hour. If anything has happened to Dunstan—"

Nothing had happened to Dunstan. The lab door opened suddenly and there stood Wayne Dunstan. He greeted his visitors with a placid smile that befitted his elderly features and thin white hair. His hand waved a welcome, ending with a gesture for the group to enter the laboratory.

"This is an outrage, Dunstan!" boomed Garland, thrusting himself ahead of the others. "I would say that you deliberately kept me waiting until my friends arrived!"

"You are quite right, Garland," returned Dunstan, with a dry chuckle. "I did it deliberately. I was tired of having you come here alone to act as spokesmen for others who were entitled to an equal say.

"Furthermore"—Dunstan's eyes met Garland's challenge—"you made it definite that I must either accept or reject your offer; that there could be no compromise. I prefer to make terms of my own, to which your fellow investors may listen."

If the others intended to listen it looked as if they were going to do it with their mouths, which were all wide open. For Dunstan's laboratory was a place to excite the utmost wonder.

Except for its tiled walls and two stout wooden doors, the room appeared to be composed entirely of glass. There were glass workbenches, stepladders of the same transparent material, tables that looked like glass, with drawers of like substance. The lights in the room were set in glass lamps or sockets, which appeared to be cordless. Most curious of all, the room was heated by a transparent radiator through which hot water bubbled.

With another gesture that swept the entire room, Dunstan announced:

"This, gentlemen, is glazite, the miracle metal!"

THE visitors moved about the room, inspecting the astonishing items. Going to a corner, Dunstan opened a glazite tool box and produced a transparent monkey wrench, screwdriver and pliers. Looking about, he found a glazite sledge hammer and gave its transparent head a hard swing against a window. The sledge hammer stopped with a clang of metal against metal, the windowpane remaining intact.

"Some have termed glazite metallic glass," declared Dunstan. "Others prefer to call it transparent steel. Neither of the terms do justice to glazite. As well as being unbreakable, it is harder than glass. It is a good conductor of electricity, as is evidenced by the lighting system in this room, which is fed by wires composed of glazite.

"Yet glazite can easily be rendered a nonconductor. Its weight can be reduced to that of aluminum rather than steel. It can be woven in to fireproof cloth, like that curtain at the entrance to my inner laboratory, which you

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will notice has been colored to render it opaque."

Men went over to look at the curtain. The entrance to the inner lab was an archway in the tiled wall, with the curtain hanging from a glazite rod that stretched along the top. The curtain itself, soft textured, was a sea blue, its color suggesting that the watery glazite had simply deepened itself to a natural shade.

Garland's voice began another boom.

"I have told my associates all this," asserted Garland. "I showed them samples of glazite, which convinced them that the stuff is worth the price we offer. Apparently, Dunstan, you are trying to impress them with these exhibits so that they will raise the bid."

For a moment Dunstan's eyes showed an angry flash that would better have suited Garland. Then, containing himself, Dunstan slowly shook his head.

"I am not thinking of your associates, Garland," said Dunstan solemnly. "I am thinking of my own."

There were glances of astonishment which Garland did not share. He knew about Dunstan's associates though he hadn't mentioned them to his own backers.

"Glazite has a curious history," explained Dunstan. "One man happened to strike upon a formula that produced a most peculiar liquid. Another, experimenting with the substance, rendered it transparent. A third discovered its plastic properties; a fourth that it had tensile strength.

"Working with the combined product, I added the chemical treatment which produced glazite, a miracle material that possesses every quality of glass or metal, yet which surpasses both. Thus glazite is actually a five-man invention, the various steps in its development being known only to the individuals who supplied each portion."

With one exception, Dunstan's listeners were inclined to take him at his word. The exception was Garland, who took a doubtful attitude. Ignoring Dunstan, Garland turned to his friends and made a blunt declaration.

"I never mentioned Dunstan's so-called associates," asserted Garland, "because he has constantly refused to name them. There is no proof that any of them exist—"

"Except my word," inserted Dunstan sharply. "I have also stated why they prefer to remain anonymous. It is for their own protection."

"But if they do exist," continued Garland, as though Dunstan had not interrupted, "they have left everything to Dunstan. He is free to make decisions—"

"For the common good of all," interjected Dunstan. "Garland prefers to believe or doubt my statements as he chooses. I suggest that you let me present my whole case, gentlemen."

There was appeal in Dunstan's tone, so strong that it captivated his listeners. A few moments later, Dunstan held the floor, while Garland, retired to a corner, was glaring angrily through puffs of cigar smoke. Not only had Dunstan won the verbal skirmish, he was clinching the victory.

According to Dunstan, a revolutionary creation such as glazite required protection, along with its inventors. It could not be sold outright, for it was too valuable to the nation at large. In visionary fashion, Duncan pictured warships made of glazite; airplanes constructed of the same material.

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In both cases, visibility of such objects would be almost nil, giving them the prowess of secret weapons. Therefore the processes used in the manufacture of glazite could be delivered only to the government. Meanwhile, Dunstan was willing to let private investors manufacture glazite, under proper auspices, if only to popularize the new material.

"We will supply the finished substance," assured Dunstan, "but only on a royalty basis. We are not interested in selling outright. If a plant is needed for quantity production, we expect you to furnish it."

The listeners exchanged doubtful glances. Noting the turn of the tide, Garland thrust himself into the discussion.

"Suppose something happened to you, Dunstan," argued Garland. "How would we contact these other inventors who are guarding their individual formulae so closely?"

"The next man in line would become my successor," replied Dunstan. "As head of the group he would declare himself in due course. Such is our agreement."

Garland's heavy lips assumed a scoffing expression. Observing it, Dunstan showed his first trace of worry. It was plain enough that Dunstan was anxious to promote glazite, even though he refused to sell it outright. Something was needed to win back the investors, so Dunstan took an immediate step.

ENTERING the inner laboratory, Dunstan returned with a steel pan resembling an ice-cube tray from an electric refrigerator. He asked his visitors to give him some small coins, after noting the dates. If they preferred, they could supply him with finger rings or cuff links.

As men produced the items, Dunstan told them to drop them in the tray. Uncorking a bottle, he filled the tray with a colorless liquid that resembled glycerin in consistency.

"Glazite in liquid form," explained Dunstan. "I shall retire to my private laboratory and apply the final chemical process. In ten minutes this pan will contain solid glazite. Embedded in the transparent metal will be these tokens that you have given me, as proof of the rapidity with which glazite can be formed!"

Turning, Dunstan strode beneath the tiled arch. There he turned and drew the sea-blue curtain which hung from the rod within the doorway. Having thus secured himself from observation, Dunstan was ready to proceed with his remarkable experiment.

In the outer laboratory, Garland watched the faces of the men about him. They were strained, tense, whereas Garland's lips wore a half smile. He admired showmanship that Dunstan had displayed, but Garland was not paying the inventor a compliment. Rather, Garland was pleased by Dunstan's eagerness to prove the merits of glazite.

"Don't worry about Dunstan," undertoned Garland. "He will come to terms. Should he refuse, we shall make public our million-dollar offer. Those other inventors will hear of it and out-vote Dunstan four to one. I have dealt with enough inventors to know that cash is their main motive.

"Dunstan's case is merely a rare exception. Moreover, he is the least important of the five. His process is merely the finishing touch, based on the separate discoveries of other men. Should the rest get together and exchange their formulae, they would know enough about the combined product to duplicate anything that Dunstan can do."

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Though modulated, Garland's tone was strong enough to carry past the drawn curtain where Dunstan was at work. Perhaps Garland intended it that way. He was a man of crafty practice, whose purposes were difficult to predict, though Garland regarded himself as quite a prophet.

There was one point, however, that the listeners were going to remember. Garland's mention of the future did not include specific facts that were to occur within the next ten minutes.

Had Gregg Garland emphasized that particular period, he would have marked himself as a man of crime as well as foresight!

## CHAPTER II. BELATED RESCUE.

AT the moment when Wayne Dunstan was entering his inner laboratory, a large automobile was swinging a corner into the street that led to the inventor's house. As combined residence and laboratory, Dunstan had chosen an old brownstone mansion in a secluded section of Manhattan, hence he could be easily reached by the new visitors who were on their way to see him.

This happened to be the official car belonging to Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, the central man of its three passengers. On the commissioner's left was his ace crime hunter, Inspector Joe Cardona. On his right was a supercargo named Lamont Cranston.

When Commissioner Weston fared forth on unusual missions, he liked to invite his friend Cranston along. Of late, Cranston had not been accepting such invitations when crime was involved. Weston had gained the idea that his friend was becoming bored with criminal cases, but there the commissioner was wrong. He usually was, when he attempted to analyze Cranston's preferences or lack of them.

Cranston was not only interested in hunting down crime; he was a past master of the art. He preferred to let the police conduct investigations their own way, so that he could be on the job ahead of them. In resorting to such speedy tactics, Cranston dropped his customary pose: that of a bored and leisurely club man. He became another self, a being cloaked in black, known to friend and foe only as a weird master of the night: The Shadow!

As Cranston, The Shadow could afford to be indulgent toward Weston, since the commissioner supplied him with many worth-while leads to cases that The Shadow could personally crack. Tonight, however, Cranston was putting up with a great deal from his friend. So far, Weston had said very little regarding the trip that they were taking, hoping thus to whet Cranston's interest.

"All right, commissioner," spoke Cranston in a calm tone. "Your riddle baffles me. You say that a man phoned you asking for a revolver permit; but instead of granting it you intend to lend him your own gun. What is the answer; has suicide secretly been legalized?"

Weston's crisp laugh showed that he was really pleased. Turning to Cardona, the commissioner said:

"Give him the details, inspector."

"They don't amount to much," gruffed Cardona in a deprecatory tone. "Some guy just wants us to test a new kind of bulletproof glass, that's all."

"You will pardon me, inspector," returned Weston testily, "but Wayne Dunstan happened to define glazite not as a bulletproof glass, but as a transparent metal."

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"If it's metal," argued Cardona, "it ought to be bulletproof anyway, so what's the good of testing it?"

Either Weston couldn't answer that argument or thought it beneath his notice. Ignoring Cardona, the commissioner emphasized further facts to Cranston. He explained that this evening Dunstan was demonstrating glazite for a group of buyers headed by Gregg Garland; that, as a final test, Dunstan wanted to prove that the miracle metal was impervious to gunfire.

MENTION of Garland's name brought a sharp glance from Cranston's usually calm eyes. To Cranston, Garland symbolized all that was ruthless in the world of finance. It was Garland's habit to pile fortune upon fortune, by acquiring and promoting every invention on which he could lay his hands.

Invariably, Garland let other investors share such good things, claiming that large-scale operations were necessary. Somehow they always became so large that they couldn't be handled and the companies went broke to have their assets sold at a song.

How much Garland managed to write off to himself was always the big question. He had never been convicted as a swindler, even though he often profited through organizing his ill-fated enterprises wherein others took the burden. Indeed, even the astute Mr. Cranston, whose mind was actually The Shadow's, was disinclined to term Garland an outright crook.

Through all Garland's checkered operations there ran a definite thread of logic; namely, that Garland was playing for an opportunity that would actually go beyond his own vast ideas of financial expansion. Any profit that Garland made from flopping enterprises might be just enough to write off his own losses. Then he could promptly gamble on something else that might exceed his enormous expectations.

This new substance called glazite might be the very proposition upon which Garland was really ready to stake everything!

Such was Cranston's opinion as the commissioner's car pulled up in front of Dunstan's. The old brownstone house looked gloomy as a morgue except for lights that showed through drawn curtains in a rear extension of the second floor. Alighting from the car, Cranston noted that an alleyway ran past the rear wing, but Weston turned toward the front door instead.

"Dunstan said to ring the front bell," explained Weston. "If the servant doesn't answer we can try the side door. Those lights in the rear wing are Dunstan's laboratory."

"It must look like a nut joint," put in Cardona. "Especially if he's made up a lot of those glass hats he talked about."

"Glazite helmets," explained Weston. "You see, Cranston, when I told Dunstan that I'd oblige him by making the bulletproof tests personally, he began to talk about equipping the police with special headgear made of glazite.

"He said they'd be particularly suited to air-raid duty, because the wearers could look up through the rims of the helmets and still be protected. If the police found them satisfactory, the army would certainly want them for combat helmets. There would be millions ordered because steel helmets would become obsolete—"

Weston broke off as the door opened, revealing the bowing servant who was to show them to Dunstan's laboratory. The group crossed the main hallway to the stairs leading up to the second floor. Cranston's lips framed a smile that he still wore when they walked through the reception room.

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In Cranston's opinion, Dunstan was quite as good a promoter as Garland, considering how the inventor had roused Weston's interest. Certainly those two, Dunstan and Garland, would go far if they worked together. The question was: would they work together? Considering that Garland was finding Dunstan his own mental match, Cranston doubted that they would.

Something would surely happen to break relations between such a pair, particularly if Dunstan proved as honest as Garland was known to be ruthless. Trouble was due; of that, Cranston was certain. What The Shadow didn't divine was how soon that trouble would happen.

THE thing was instantaneous. As the servant bowed the new arrivals into the laboratory, before the newcomers could begin to appraise their surroundings, all eyes were riveted upon the curtain beneath the tiled arch leading to the inner lab.

A wild face appeared there, accompanied by hands that were clawing at the sea-blue drape, ripping it from the glazite rod above. The face was Dunstan's, demoniac against a hellish background of green flame and purplish smoke that came from a crucible standing on a glazite table behind him.

Something had gone wrong with Dunstan's experiment. The emulsion had ignited and was filling the inner lab with sulphurous fumes. More than that, those hideous green flames were threatening to set off other chemicals with which the inner lab was stocked!

A few feet more and Dunstan would have reached safety. Instead, he brought up suddenly, just past the ripped curtain. He clawed about wildly in midair, as though some invisible monster had seized him and was holding him in its unseen clutch.

It was Garland who bawled for someone to aid the stricken inventor. Two men sprang forward, reaching the archway side by side. There, less than half an inch from Dunstan, both jolted and came bouncing back, landing half stunned and totally astonished.

Some time after Dunstan had entered the inner lab, an invisible barrier of glazite had slid across the archway on the near side of the curtain. It was blocking off Dunstan's outlet from the room where he now was trapped!

The existence of such a barrier sped home to two minds: those of Lamont Cranston and Joe Cardona.

Singularly, it was the police inspector who took the most direct method. Dunstan sagged beyond the archway, sinking into the cloud of purple smoke that was swirling against the unseen barrier. Cardona drew a revolver and blasted shots above the inventor's head, hoping to crack an opening.

All Cardona did was supply the bullet test.

The barrier wasn't glass; it was glazite, and the stuff lived up to Dunstan's claims. Cardona's slugs mushroomed against the transparent metal and fell like harmless pellets!

Dunstan was trying to get to his feet. He was flapping his hand feebly along the tiled wall within the arch, trying to find the switch that controlled the barrier from the inside. Apparently he clicked it, but nothing happened, because when Dunstan reeled into the archway he jounced right back again.

By that time, Cranston had completed quick preliminaries toward reaching Dunstan. While Cardona was firing the useless shots, Cranston, already conceding that the invisible barrier must be bulletproof, was gathering the items needed for more efficient attack. One object was the glazite stepladder; the other, the sledge hammer of the same material.

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Reaching the arch, Cranston planted the ladder up to the top. Cardona stood in profound amazement as he saw the commissioner's friend swing what seemed to be a most fragile instrument: a sledge hammer with both head and handle that resembled glass. The results, however, proved the strength of glazite.

What Cranston sledged was the tiled partition above the archway. Though stout, the tiles gave like dried putty, cracking further under every stroke. A human engine of destruction, Cranston seemed a mighty piston, battering things apart in a titanic effort at rapid rescue.

The partition gave and through the gap swirled masses of the purple smoke. Another stroke widened the hole and the gush of fumes increased. Cranston was taking their fury. The smoke almost enveloped him, but, in so doing, he was relieving Dunstan from the fumes.

Another crash and the space above the arch was wide enough for Cranston's head and shoulders. Pitching the sledge hammer through, he prepared to follow with a dive that would enable him to join Dunstan and work from the inside. The purplish cloud was completely engulfing Cranston; how he stood it, coughing men could not understand.

They did know that in two seconds more, Cranston would be through those devastating fumes, down to the floor level where Dunstan lay free from the murderous vapor that his rescuer had released.

What no one took into account were the green flames that still formed a licking back drop deep in the inner laboratory. At the very moment when Cranston began his daring lunge, the green tongues gave a rapid leap that reached a beaker standing on a higher shelf.

There was a yellow liquid in the beaker. With one touch of the flame it was gone, with a mighty puff that enveloped the doomed laboratory. With the hollow explosion came a great crash. Tiled walls, glazite shelves and all their contents tumbled to the floor of the inner room.

Chemicals spurted everywhere, bringing a muggy smoke that enveloped everything in sight beyond the arch. Dunstan was gone from view. So was Cranston, in a horrendous cloud that writhed like a horde of jinn expanding from their bottles and mingling within confines too small to hold them.

Swift though Cranston's rescue attempt had been, it was too late. Like Dunstan, the victim, Cranston, the rescuer, seemed doomed amid that chemical hell.

Whether this was accident or crime, it seemingly would stand as the event that permanently ended the career of a master of adventure called The Shadow!

### **CHAPTER III. THE CHANCE TRAIL.**

DRIVEN back by the acid fumes, the witnesses to the final disaster had retreated to the reception room by the time the brownish smoke cleared. Gregg Garland was wheezing to his companions, urging them to make a new attempt at a rescue that now seemed useless. Commissioner Weston was blinking his eyes as he pointed helplessly toward the glazite barrier, where he thought that Cranston lay with Dunstan.

It was Joe Cardona who saw differently, but the ace inspector wasn't pleased. Through the glazite panel, Cardona saw only Dunstan, lying amid a pile of debris, under the light of rising flames that were beginning to sparkle with many hues.

Cardona's first impression was that Cranston had been obliterated by the explosion. The only trace of him

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was the glazite ladder, which had fallen to the floor and was lying in front of the arch. Then, chancing to look upward, Cardona saw something that inspired him with hope.

Met by the blast, Cranston hadn't continued his lunge into the room of doom. He was hanging over the archway, sprawled at a crazy angle, his evening clothes torn ragged. In short, Cranston was wedged in the very opening that he had smashed with the colorless sledge hammer.

On second thought, Cardona decided that Cranston's plight was all the worse. Up where he was, Cranston must have taken the full gush of the vicious, murderous fumes that had choked and blinded men who were more distant. It seemed impossible that he could have survived the ordeal.

Even when guised as Cranston, The Shadow had a habit of accomplishing the impossible. While Cardona stared, Cranston stirred in very agile fashion.

His first act was to claw his way through the gap above the arch, something that totally puzzled Cardona, since the space was already open. Then Joe observed that Cranston had encountered an actual obstruction.

Hurled by the blast, a glazite shelf had struck the gap and jammed there. Its outward angle gave it the property of a funnel and Cranston was below the rim on the near side. The pour of ugly fumes had gone over and above him, leaving Cranston in better shape than any of the witnesses!

This dawned on Cardona when he heard the sheet of glazite clatter under Cranston's hard shoves. Next, Cranston was continuing his course, through the gap and down to Dunstan's aid, though by this time the inventor was in the throes of final agony. Flames darted at Cranston as he dropped, whereupon Cardona snatched a glazite fire extinguisher from the wall of the outer laboratory. Without bothering to use the ladder, Joe tossed the extinguisher up through the gap, shouting that it was on the way.

Hearing the call, Cranston caught the object when it arrived and made short work of the flames. After that he turned to learn what was left of Dunstan.

Reaching Dunstan was still a problem. Shelves, tables of glazite were among the debris that covered him and the stuff was tougher than steel. Glazite simply wouldn't twist, but it had a pronounced tendency to jam. The chunks of the unbreakable material were wedged in a puzzle pattern as difficult to crack as it was to trace.

To get at Dunstan better, Cranston pulled the ripped curtain completely aside. With the action, a curious thing occurred. Dunstan's form rolled into the outer laboratory, followed by clanks from the debris of glazite.

Cranston's pulling of the curtain had released the unseen barrier that originally trapped Dunstan within the fatal room!

MEN reached Dunstan while Cranston was clambering over the wreckage. It was Weston who spoke to the dying inventor, while Garland was lifting Dunstan's head. Cardona was also close at hand to hear the words that Dunstan coughed.

"Find Youstaf—" As he pronounced the name, Dunstan choked; then with a valiant effort tried to continue. "Youstaf—"

That was all. With a spasm, Dunstan slumped dead.

Who Youstaf was, whether murderer or friend, Dunstan could not, did not specify. It was Garland who voiced an opinion for the dead man.

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"Youstaf must be the next man in line," declared Garland. "The second of the five inventors that Dunstan told us about. He's the head man on the glazite proposition, now that Dunstan is dead. Sounds like a Turk, or some such nationality.

"And if you ask me"—Garland was looking to his friends for corroboration—"I'd say this fellow Youstaf framed the death trap for Dunstan. You ought to find him, commissioner, and question him right away. Maybe he's trying to take over a million-dollar proposition because that's what glazite is worth!"

There were times when Weston was quick on the uptake and this was one of them. Coldly, he asked Garland how he knew that this was a death trap. For a moment Garland hesitated, then argued that the circumstances justified such a definition.

By then, Cranston was proving it. Examining the archway, Cranston was finding evidence that might have baffled investigators other than The Shadow; at least, few would have discovered it so soon.

The glazite barrier operated electrically from the wall switch in the inner laboratory. Obviously, Dunstan used it to isolate himself in his private workshop. Someone had disconnected the wire and attached it to the curtain.

Thus Dunstan's act of drawing the curtain had made the barrier slide silently across the arched doorway. He'd wanted it closed, for he had pressed the switch afterward; he hadn't known that the invisible panel was already in place.

When Dunstan's experiment went wrong, due to some inflammable substance that an enemy had added to the emulsion, he tore the curtain instead of hauling it wide. First he'd forgotten the barrier, then he'd remembered it, but when he pushed the switch it did no good.

This would have been very simple to discover had the wiring been of a normal pattern. But all of Dunstan's wiring, including its insulation, depended upon types of glazite, all absolutely invisible. Thus not a trace of the work could be seen!

Cranston's discovery was the result of sheer logic. Applying it, he traced the wire's course by sense of touch and explained the arrangement to Weston. By then Cardona had rounded up Dunstan's servant, who answered to the name of Jennings. Horrified by his master's death, Jennings could just about answer the questions that were put to him.

It developed that Dunstan often received visitors that Jennings did not meet, doubtless the four inventors who shared the secret of glazite. They always came through the side door, straight to the lab, through an entrance that Jennings pointed out. This door was latched on the inside, as Dunstan always kept it. When Dunstan had last received such a visitor, Jennings did not know.

When Weston asked sharply if Garland ever used the private door, Jennings shook his head. The servant said that Garland always came by the front way. On this particular evening, Dunstan had kept him waiting in the reception room.

Taking that statement as a complete vindication, Garland swelled importantly and assured Weston that he, more than any other man, was anxious to uncover the real killer. Though admitting that Dunstan was not ready to sell the rights to glazite, Garland argued that the deal was still under discussion. Gradually, Garland's friends backed the statement, which left the commissioner where he had been at the start.

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"There's one thing certain," decided Weston. "We must find this man Youstaf. His very name marks him as an eccentric inventor, the kind that might be crazy enough to go in for murder. Now if anyone can think of any way to help—"

The right way came of its own accord in the form of a sudden interruption. A telephone bell was ringing from the reception room. Jennings made a start to answer it, then hesitated. Cardona gave the servant a prompt shove.

"Answer it," ordered the inspector. "Find out who it is and tell us."

JENNINGS went to the reception room, Cardona with him. Crowding after the inspector, Weston and Garland blocked off Cranston, but he was close at hand when Jennings answered the call. But though the servant did his part well, it didn't work out.

After a few words, Jennings turned, keeping his hand over the mouthpiece of the telephone.

"It must be one of the other inventors," said Jennings. "He won't tell me who he is. If I insist, he'll certainly suspect something."

"I'll talk to him," decided Cardona. "I'll tell him I'm one of the investors; that Dunstan is busy."

"Better let me do that," began Garland, pushing forward. "Whoever it is, he may know me by name and—"

"But we don't want names mentioned!" inserted Weston. "Stay out of this, Garland. Let the inspector handle it."

"But it might be the murderer, commissioner!"

"All the better. We won't tell him that Dunstan is dead."

Unwisely, Weston and Garland were indulging in their repartee while Cardona was taking the telephone. Behind the disputing pair, Cranston was unable to reach forward and clap a hand on the mouthpiece that Cardona held. Every word spoken by Weston and Cardona passed over the telephone.

Before he could speak a word, Cardona heard the receiver clap its hook at the other end of the line. Whoever was calling had learned all he wanted to know.

"That ruins it," growled Cardona, slamming the telephone aside. "There's no way of tracing back that call unless we can learn Youstaf's number. Our one bet is the telephone directory."

Consulting the telephone book, Cardona looked through the list of Y's. There weren't any Youstafs listed there, so Joe tossed the book aside and called headquarters, telling them to make a search among unlisted numbers in their files. While waiting for a return call, the inspector decided to look for fingerprints in the laboratory.

Everybody went along, except Lamont Cranston.

He could have told Cardona that there would be no results. Whoever had switched the wire in the archway would certainly have used gloves. Wiring made of glazite was very tricky, on account of its invisible insulation, which might not be there at all. Gloves would have served the double purpose of insulation and eliminating fingerprints.

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Rather than waste time with a useless clue, Cranston decided to play an odd one that might bring a chance trail. Standing alone in the deserted reception room, Cranston spoke in a low, whispered tone.

His voice was weird, for the whisper was The Shadow's. Coming from lips that scarcely moved, it seemed like a curious echo from another world, heard only by the mysterious personage who uttered it.

All that The Shadow spoke was a single word, the name that Dunstan had twice uttered during his last agony.

"Youstaf."

The Shadow's whisper became a laugh; low, repressed, yet significant. Still in the guise of Cranston, The Shadow stooped and picked up the telephone directory that Cardona had tossed aside.

The pages to which Cranston turned were those containing names that began with the letter S.

### CHAPTER IV. DUNSTAN'S SUCCESSOR.

SLOWING as it reached the proper column, Cranston's finger paused upon the name "Staffert." There were several in the book, but the one that Cranston picked was unquestionably the right one. Listed after "Staffert" was the man's first name. It happened to be Hugh.

Youstaf.

A most unlikely name, one that was too unlikely. Furthermore, it was odd that Dunstan hadn't tried to give Youstaf's first name, a point that had occurred only to the keen mind of The Shadow.

With that same keen mind, the man who posed as Lamont Cranston was taking it for granted that Wayne Dunstan had tried to utter the full name of the inventor who had become his successor in the glazite proposition.

Youstaf certainly couldn't be a first name, but there was part of it that might be, the first syllable. Considering it to be "Hugh," the man who answered to that name had another, that began with Staff. There were Staffs in the phone book, but none who had the first name Hugh. The same applied to Staffords and a few others. But there was a Hugh Staffert.

According to the directory, Hugh Staffert lived at a considerable distance from Dunstan's residence, which meant that a prompt trip would be imperative. About to leave, Cranston paused, listening to voices from the laboratory. He was faced with a decision that came up frequently: whether to inform the law of his chance discovery.

This time The Shadow decided in the affirmative. Picking up the telephone, he called his contact man, Burbank, and gave a few brief orders. Among them was the instruction that Burbank was to tip off the police regarding Hugh Staffert, after allowing his chief fifteen minutes to reach the man in question.

Going out from Dunstan's front door, Cranston ignored the commissioner's official car. Around the corner was a waiting taxicab, piloted by The Shadow's own driver, Moe Shrevnitz. Entering the cab, Cranston named Staffert's address and therewith vanished.

To put it more simply, Lamont Cranston simply obliterated his personality. He did it with the aid of a black cloak and a slouch hat that he drew from a special drawer beneath the cab's rear seat. He blurred with the

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

cloak as he slid it over his shoulders. The hat, when placed upon his head, completed the transformation.

An added touch was a whispered laugh, louder than the one that Cranston had suppressed in Dunstan's reception room. That weird mirth told fully that Cranston had become his other self, The Shadow!

HOWEVER rapidly The Shadow had moved along the chance trail, there was another man who was taking even quicker advantage of facts that he had learned. That man was Hugh Staffert, who was soon due to hold an interview with a mysterious visitor cloaked in black.

Hugh Staffert was seated in the living room of a finely furnished apartment, probably the best of its sort in the rather disreputable neighborhood that Staffert, for some reason, preferred. He was a singular man, Staffert: thin, stoop-shouldered, yet very quick of action, particularly in the way he turned his eyes, and let sharp expressions fix upon his pointed face.

At present, Staffert was behaving true to form. He already had a visitor, a young man who was also something of a paradox, being inclined to the brawny type, yet sleek in manner. The visitor's name was Chet Ferris, and he cut a rather handsome figure in the tailor-made Tuxedo that he was wearing.

In contrast, Staffert was attired in slippers and smoking jacket. He preferred a pipeful of rank tobacco to the expensive cigars that Chet liked. But of the two, Staffert was the more important. He happened to be employing Chet Ferris.

"Let's get right to the point, Ferris," suggested Staffert in a quick, sharp tone. "I hired you once for an important job that you did quite well. I'm afraid I'm going to need you again."

"Afraid is a nasty word," remarked Chet with a bland smile.

"What is it, another case of blackmail? If it is, don't worry. I settled that last bunch for you."

"Blackmailers don't worry me," returned Staffert. "Just because I once sold an invention that wouldn't work, doesn't mean that I'm a crook. That thing has cropped up often, and I've always handled it myself, except the one time I hired you. No, this is something more serious. It concerns a real invention."

"One of yours."

"To a degree, yes. Five of us created it, a remarkable plastic called glazite, that looks like glass, but isn't."

Chet gave another smile as he flicked the ashes from his thin cigar.

"There are quite a few of those on the market," he remarked. "In fact I could name them for you."

"None like glazite," corrected Staffert. "It is actually a metal, with limitless possibilities. We developed it separately, each picking up where the other left off, never anticipating the final marvelous result."

"Which you produced?"

"No." Solemnly, Staffert shook his head. "I was No. 4. The final process was developed by a man named Wayne Dunstan."

"I never heard of him."

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"You will have, by tomorrow morning. Dunstan has just been murdered. I learned that from the telephone call I made."

Instantly, Chet Ferris was agog. He'd noticed a change in Staffert's manner ever since the phone call. He wanted to hear more facts as quickly as Staffert could give them. As for Staffert, he was already deciding to waste no further time.

"Each of us knows a secret process," explained Staffert rapidly. "We put everything in the hands of the final man, who was Wayne Dunstan. It was with the understanding that if anything went wrong, I would take over."

"So something went wrong," nodded Chet. "What was it?"

"Dunstan began to dicker with a man named Gregg Garland," replied Staffert. "Have you ever heard of him?"

"I'll say I have!" exclaimed Chet. "Why, Garland is famous for getting anything he wants. He'd stop at nothing short of—"

As Chet paused, Staffert's lips framed a grim smile. In a sharp tone that rang with accusation, Staffert added:

"Nothing short of murder. Only you can amend that statement, Ferris. Dunstan is dead. How it happened, I don't know, except that Garland was present at the time."

AS Chet stared stolidly, Staffert arose and stepped into a bedroom, where he peeled off his smoking jacket and kicked away his slippers. Getting into coat and shoes, Staffert picked a heavy suitcase from the closet. Apparently it was already packed.

"Fortunately, we are prepared for this emergency," declaimed Staffert. "I am going into hiding and so will the others. Such was our agreement in case danger threatened."

"A good idea," agreed Chet. "But what's going to happen to your combined invention? How will you promote glazite if you aren't around?"

"That has all been planned," returned Staffert glibly. "Each of the three remaining men will deliver his process to me. Working in a hidden laboratory, I shall be able to work out Dunstan's final formula. He was working blindly when he discovered it. Working from known formulas, I shall have a great advantage."

Tossing his cigar in an ash stand, Chet reached for his hat and coat.

"I suppose my job is to go the rounds," said Chet, "and bring back all the formulas. All right, Staffert, tell me the route."

Poking his head from the bedroom door, Staffert gave it a quick shake.

"If it would be as simple as that, I would go around collecting the formulas myself. But I might be spotted, and I can't have that happen. Nor can I risk having anyone connect you with me—or you'd face the same danger. You've got to be absolutely clear in this; we've got to be doubly careful. Where can you be at midnight?"

"Anywhere," replied Chet. "How about the Club Malibu? That's one of my favorite hangouts. If anybody tails me around there, plenty of others will inform me."

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"Good," decided Staffert. "I shall call you at the Club Malibu at midnight. If all is well, I shall then state where you are to go and who you are to see. By the way, you may find this useful."

Staffert flipped what Chet thought was a coin, the size of a half dollar. Catching it, Chet found that it was nothing but a glass disk. He was saying so when Staffert told him to bounce it on the table. To Chet's surprise the disk clinked like a coin.

"Why, it's like metal—"

"It is metal," assured Staffert. "A transparent metal called glazite. The men you are to visit will recognize it as a token sent by me. So be on your way, Ferris. I shall leave here as soon as I gather a few important papers."

LEAVING Staffert's apartment house, Chet looked for a taxicab. He was quite sure that no one had followed him to Staffert's, because Chet made it a practice to shake off any possible trailers when calling on clients.

During the past year or so, Chet had built up a neat business as a private investigator, almost by accident. Handling a job for a wealthy friend who hadn't wanted to hire private detectives, Chet had been amply rewarded for work well done. His friend had recommended him to another. That had led to his first meeting with Staffert, who wanted similar services in getting facts on certain blackmailers.

There had been other customers in between. Now Staffert was on the list again. So far, Chet wasn't licensed or listed as a private investigator. This made it all the better, though certain crooks were beginning to become wary of him.

Taking a cab from Staffert's was a normal procedure, if Chet could find a cab in his neighborhood. Fortunately, Chet had luck. A cab was pulling up across the street. Striding over, Chet paused momentarily, thinking the cab already had a passenger. Then, seeing that he was wrong, he continued.

Chef Ferris was both right and wrong.

This was The Shadow's cab. It did have a passenger the first time Chet looked, though all Chet noticed was a closing motion of the door that made him think someone was getting in, not out. A closer look convinced Chet that the cab was empty, which it happened to be—though Chet wouldn't have seen The Shadow had the cloaked passenger still been inside.

At this moment The Shadow was giving whispered instructions to Moe. Recognizing Chet, The Shadow linked him with some special investigations and saw a possible connection between Chet and Staffert. Moe was to take Chet wherever he wanted to go and continue the trail from there. A call to Burbank would bring other agents as needed.

Though Chet Ferris didn't begin to realize it, he was going to be trailed by a crew of experts who picked up and left off with clockwork precision. Agents of The Shadow, who neither looked like it, nor acted it. Just as Chet was placing himself in Moe's hands, for a start, so would he do with others. Whenever possible, The Shadow's agents accompanied people, instead of trailing them.

As for The Shadow, he became a gliding shape that crossed the street to the apartment house. He entered like a film of smoke and disappeared without a trace. He arrived at the door of Staffert's apartment like something out of this world, and his treatment of the door lock was so silent and swift that it seemed uncanny.

THE dim lights of Staffert's living room failed to reveal the weird invader whose footfalls were lost against the texture of the rugs he trod. Always, The Shadow kept to the fringes of light. Only the merest trace of a

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silhouetted head and shoulders moved along the floor and walls.

Reaching the door of the bedroom, The Shadow paused. That room was better lighted, but The Shadow used the fact to his own advantage. One glance of eyes that alone were visible in cloaked blackness convinced The Shadow that the room was empty. Entering, he began to look for traces of Hugh Staffert.

In so doing, The Shadow moved into the light.

There was a picture on the far wall that The Shadow specially wanted to study, for he took it to be Staffert's, which it was. The photograph was life-sized, set in a heavy frame with a glass front. Though hand-tinted, it didn't flatter Staffert, as most such pictures were wont to do.

All the sharpness that characterized Staffert's features, even to the shrewd look in his eyes, were portrayed in full detail. The Shadow was face to face with the image of a man who deserved watching, to say the least. However, The Shadow could see no purpose in watching a mere picture, once having absorbed its facial details for future reference.

Turning away, The Shadow blocked off the light, so that the picture became somewhat clouded. The curious thing was that the portrait did not lose its sharpness; instead, it began to take on a depth, even to its background, that gave it a more realistic look.

Then, as The Shadow moved from the light, the strange illusion remained. As the cloaked investigator was about to turn, motion added to the remarkable portrayal. Staffert's lips gave a peculiar smile that might have passed for a photographic oddity, but for the sharp chuckle that accompanied the motion.

Added to that was the action of Staffert's folded arms. The left dropped, the right twisted its hand into sight, showing a fist that aimed a revolver straight between The Shadow's eyes, as he swung in answer to the chuckled challenge.

The portrait of Hugh Staffert had come to life, confronting The Shadow with its original in the flesh! At the same time the glass front had vanished from the picture frame, giving Staffert's gun an open path of aim toward the cloaked avenger who had come here to find him!

## CHAPTER V. TWISTED FLIGHT.

SELDOM was The Shadow caught entirely off guard, but this happened to be one of those very rare occasions. As facts stood, Hugh Staffert could have fired with impunity the moment that The Shadow turned about. The cloaked fighter would have taken bullets without a chance to deliver any in return.

After studying Staffert's picture, The Shadow had taken it for granted that there could be no danger from that quarter. The room being otherwise empty, The Shadow had no gun in hand at the moment Staffert gave the clucking challenge.

Another oddity figured in this instance.

So sudden was the picture trick that The Shadow was actually lost in admiration of it. Indeed, the thing so intrigued him that he momentarily forgot the threat of Staffert's gun.

The trick, like all good ones, was simplicity itself. The picture frame appeared to be hanging on the wall; actually it was built to it. What gave the hanging illusion was the slight forward tilt of the frame, natural

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enough if the picture had been hung.

That same tilt accounted for the rest. It enabled the glass front of the frame to slide down into the wall itself. Staffert's life-sized portrait was attached to the glass and went with it, leaving the man himself in a cube-shaped cavity that resembled the box of a camera.

There must have been tiny peep-holes in the portrait's eyes, through which Staffert observed what was happening in the room, and let the glass drop silently at the most timely moment. Perhaps Staffert had rehearsed the trick often, for he had certainly sprung it on The Shadow in clever style.

At present, The Shadow's hands were rising, gloved but gunless, under the threat of Staffert's aimed revolver. Yet even in this predicament, The Shadow was showing the same skill that had carried him safely through scores of tight situations. There were times when negative measures were the best and The Shadow had a remarkable instinct for picking such occasions.

That Hugh Staffert was dangerous went without saying. Why he happened to be dangerous was a debatable question.

Either Staffert had murdered Wayne Dunstan and was therefore ruthless; or he was actually trying to preserve the secret of glazite for its inventors and could accordingly consider himself the next victim after Dunstan.

If a murderer, Staffert would play smart.

Whoever arranged Dunstan's death had done it cleverly. It wouldn't do for Staffert, as a murderer, to kill a new victim on his own premises. To cover his previous crime, Staffert would prefer to place the burden on The Shadow, making the cloaked entrant look like an intruder rather than an avenger.

Conversely, should Staffert be innocent, he'd realize that the finding of a dead man in his own apartment would put an undue burden on himself. In this case, as in the other, it would be better to put The Shadow in the wrong.

Escape, not murder, was Staffert's main motive, with one important proviso.

Should Hugh Staffert be innocent, he might think that The Shadow had slain Wayne Dunstan. Swayed by such conjecture, Staffert could justify shooting The Shadow on two counts: One, self defense against a killer who might be seeking a second victim; the other, proper vengeance for Dunstan's death.

A maddening situation, this, wherein The Shadow stood in greater jeopardy if the man who confronted him should prove innocent instead of guilty!

CANNILY, The Shadow chose the worse of the two evils; namely, he chose to regard Staffert as innocent, at least for the present. By that assumption, The Shadow was able to allow for all circumstances.

Showing his hands empty with a gesture conceding that Staffert held him helpless, The Shadow waited for the man to speak. Through the three-foot square that formed a gap in the wall, Staffert leaned forward and demanded sharply:

"Just what happened to Dunstan?"

"He was trapped in his laboratory," replied The Shadow in an even tone. "The inner one."

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"How?"

"By a sliding barrier of glazite that someone had tricked so it would not open."

As he spoke, The Shadow fixed his eyes steadily on Staffert. That burning gaze was all that Staffert could see of The Shadow's features. A clever statement, The Shadow's. It bore a note that was almost an accusation.

Such talk would make an innocent man hesitate at using his gun too freely. It was a taunt that a guilty party would not relish, but The Shadow had already decided that a guilty Staffert would not be too quick with the trigger unless in actual danger.

Again, Staffert pressed a sharp query:

"You were there when it happened?"

"I arrived later," replied The Shadow steadily. "Too late to save Dunstan's life, but in time to hear him gasp your name, something that the others did not quite catch."

"What others?"

"The police commissioner for one. He arrived about the time I did. But I am sure that Gregg Garland was at Dunstan's before either of us. He was present when Dunstan died."

Mention of Garland was a neat touch by The Shadow. It brought an expression to Staffert's face that could be described as both bitter and shrewd. Following one canny deed with another, The Shadow acted as though he thought Staffert's malicious glare was meant for him. Lifting his hands higher, he retreated until Staffert gave a sharp command to halt.

"How long was Garland at Dunstan's?" queried Staffert. "Can you answer that question?"

"He was there before his friends arrived," The Shadow replied. "How long before, he did not state."

"But he was alone with Dunstan?"

"He could have been, though he denied it."

Again, The Shadow was making a retreat, but so slowly that Staffert scarcely noted it. Imperceptibly, The Shadow was maneuvering to the open doorway that led out to the living room. He was hoping that Staffert would resume the quiz when something intervened.

From outside the building came the long wail of an approaching police siren.

It always happened that way.

Not that Commissioner Weston was to blame, nor even Inspector Cardona. Both had learned long ago that a silent approach was sometimes the best. But invariably there was some loophole, such as a patrol car being ordered to a scene with instructions to get there in a hurry.

That, to the driver of a patrol car, meant that the siren was a necessity.

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The Shadow had put himself in a very bad spot by instructing Burbank to tip off the police regarding Hugh Staffert. This was the sort of thing that could drive a nervous man berserk, whether he was innocent or guilty. The moment that Staffert caught the siren's wail he cocked his head in an insane manner that was accentuated by the hunted expression which swept across his face.

It was a bad break for The Shadow, because he hadn't quite receded to his goal, the doorway to the living room. But The Shadow, quite as keyed as Staffert, was able to turn the bad break into a good one. With an eccentric whirl back toward the doorway, The Shadow started a dart toward its right. Then, reversing like a whippet, he dived in the other direction, beyond the left side.

The ruse tricked Staffert.

Opening a frenzied fire, Staffert directed his gun stabs toward the right. It was where The Shadow should logically have gone, because if he turned around from that position he would be able to fire back from beyond the door edge, using his right hand.

Being ambidextrous, The Shadow always picked the left on occasions such as this. In the midst of Staffert's wild shots, The Shadow jabbed an answer from the spot where his opponent didn't expect it. That shot from the left side of the door whistled past Staffert's ear.

THE SHADOW purposely avoided a hit, hoping to first bait Staffert into emptying his gun. But Staffert dropped from sight as though the slug had clipped him. He was down in the box beyond the wall. A moment later he popped up again, and The Shadow dispatched another bullet, inches wide.

This time Staffert didn't flinch. Or at least his picture didn't. In dropping, Staffert pressed the switch that sent the glass front up again, bringing the portrait with it. That front wasn't glass, however, it was glazite. The Shadow's bullet flattened.

Possibly, Staffert intended to surge from the wall itself. Momentarily, The Shadow paused; then, hearing a muffled rolling sound beside him, he sprang through the doorway just as a glazite barrier came shut, exactly as at Dunstan's. In this case Staffert had released the panel by a remote switch.

As The Shadow went through he heard shouts behind him. A patrolman had reached the main door of the apartment, accompanied by Gregg Garland, who was bawling for him to fire at the fugitive. In the background, Cardona wasn't in time to stop the shot meant for The Shadow, but it didn't matter. The bullet met the closing sheet of glazite and stopped.

Hearing Cardona yell to hold his fire, the patrolman lunged after The Shadow's fleeting figure and ended with an abrupt bounce when he hit the invisible obstruction across the doorway. By then The Shadow had reached Staffert's picture and was finding the hidden catches that controlled it.

The whole frame came down on a hinge. Twisting through the opening thus gained, The Shadow pulled the frame up after him. It locked again and through tiny peepholes of Staffert's portrait, The Shadow saw Garland and Cardona staring from the blocked doorway, above the bewildered patrolman who was seated there.

From their faces, both Garland and Cardona were equally bewildered by viewing the life-size replica of Hugh Staffert where The Shadow should have been.

Finding that Staffert's lookout box was the beginning of a passage, The Shadow started on the fugitive's trail. The route was simple enough; it led to a little-used stairway, down to a rear street. Along the way were doors that Staffert had hurriedly barred behind him.

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Cracking through was easy in each case, but The Shadow lost time doing it. When he reached the rear street there was no trace of Staffert; nothing but police cars, gathered as if in parley. Since their occupants hadn't spotted Staffert, it was obvious that the fugitive inventor must have made good his escape.

Gliding into darkness, The Shadow personally eluded the notice of the assembled police. All they heard was a whispered laugh that drifted back from the night, a tone as evasive and untraceable as the cloaked personage who uttered it!

### CHAPTER VI. MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS.

CHET FERRIS was correct about the Club Malibu. The fancy night club was stocked with a variety of customers, who liked to keep an eye upon one another. The way to find out if a person happened to be looking at you was to watch someone else and see if he began a suspicious stare in another direction.

It was easy then, to take a quick glance along the line of gaze, and spot somebody turned your own way.

In applying this rule, Chet had a great deal of luck, which meant that he learned he wasn't being watched. So Chet let his own gaze rove and in the course of it discovered only one man whose presence at the Club Malibu annoyed him.

That man was Dash Thermer.

To all intents, Dash was a character actor who played minor parts in Broadway shows, on occasions too few to be really profitable. Long ago, Chet had analyzed Dash's interest in the theater as twofold.

First, it gave Dash a chance to claim an honest occupation; second, it enabled him to keep in practice for his real job. Dash worked for a group of swindlers headed by a very dangerous leader named Whip Nelbin. Though of a rough-and-ready sort, a hangover from the days of big shots, Whip demanded technique on the part of his subordinates. Hence he found Dash a very valuable worker.

Trained in dramatics, Dash Thermer could post as about any type of person, from a stodgy bank president to a loud-whooping cattle king. He'd been known to get crooks out of custody by impersonating some well-known lawyer and furnishing a forged writ of habeas corpus. He'd even doubled as a ghost in a fake spirit seance, making up as a deceased person who had departed to the land of spooks.

It wasn't surprising that Dash should be at the Club Malibu, since it was one of his favorite hangouts whenever he had enough cash. Hence Chet took it that Dash was working on some swindle or blackmail scheme arranged by Whip Nelbin. That point was further emphasized when Dash was called to the telephone. After a brief conversation he left the night club, with only a passing glance at Chet.

DISCOUNTING Dash as a possible factor in the Dunstan case, Chet joined a party of friends who called to him from a corner. Among them was a girl that Chet had met before, a very attractive brunette named Margo Lane.

Now Chet happened to know that Margo was a friend of Lamont Cranston, who in turn was a friend of the police commissioner. According to account, Cranston took an interest in crime cases only when his friend the commissioner insisted. Crime bored Cranston, so he never bothered Margo with the details when he met her afterward.

It might be that Cranston was along on the Dunstan case. If so, Chet hoped to meet him later, provided it

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

occurred after midnight, which wasn't long away. So Chet felt pleased at joining Margo's party. He also felt sure that he would be able to pump Cranston on the Dunstan matter, after Margo's friend joined the group.

Analyzing his own thoughts, Chet began to wonder why he wanted to learn more about Dunstan's death. He suddenly realized that he wasn't quite satisfied with Staffert's explanation of the case. The talk about five inventors was solid enough, but Staffert's quick effort to pin crime on Garland gave Chet some doubts.

However, that was neither here nor there. This case would clear itself, as most cases did, the longer Chet proceeded with them. Everything was serene here at the Club Malibu. Stopping at other night spots, Chet had experienced the vague sensation that he was being trailed, but it had vanished completely when he reached this place.

Of course, Chet Ferris was totally unaware that a certain gentleman who called himself Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow. By the same token Margo Lane was secretly an agent of the weird investigator who moved by night!

Midnight arriving, there was still no sign of Cranston. Glancing toward the bar, Chet caught a nod and a gesture from the man behind it. It was the barkeeper who received calls for special customers like Chet. He was nudging toward the phone booth in a rear passage leading from the Club Malibu.

Leaving the chatting group, Chet threw back a glance and saw that everyone was fully occupied. He reached the booth, glanced toward the rear exit and saw no one amid its darkness. In fact, Chet made out the outline of the door itself, but he decided to keep watching it while he phoned.

Hugh Staffert was on the wire, as Chet expected.

Nervously, Staffert told of his encounter with The Shadow and asked how Chet had been making out. When Chet declared positively that all was well at the Club Malibu, Staffert seemed much relieved. He decided to give Chet the necessary instructions.

"Tomorrow you will go to a town in Pennsylvania," ordered Staffert. "The name of the town is Tulpahannock. You will stop at the local hotel. Is that plain?"

"Tulpahannock," repeated Chet. "Local hotel."

As he spoke, Chet stared along the passage and made sure that the rear door had not moved. He didn't bother to look the other way because he could hear the babble of voices from the night club. All seemed quite normal there.

"Late tomorrow afternoon," proceeded Staffert, "you will receive a letter, or rather you will pick it up. The letter will be addressed to you, care of general delivery, at the Tulpahannock post office."

"General delivery," repeated Chet. "In my name at the Tulpahannock post office."

"Go where the letter tells you," completed Staffert. "Be sure you carry the identifying disk. Do you still have it?"

"Of course I have it." Chet clanked the glazite token so that Staffert could hear it. "I'll show it to anybody who asks for it."

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The statement satisfied Staffert, for he hung up his receiver. Still watching the rear door, Chet pocketed the glazite coin and eased from the phone booth.

Very abruptly, he halted.

PRESSING the back of Chet's neck was the muzzle of a small automatic. Close to his ear, a girl's voice was telling him to stay right where he was. Though he could scarcely believe it, Chet fancied that the tone belonged to Margo Lane.

The girl had overheard everything, at least all that counted, because Chet had so obligingly repeated Staffert's instructions aloud. What she intended next, Chet did not know, but he was sure that the longer he waited the more difficult his predicament would become.

Indeed, as Chet looked toward the back door he thought for a moment that he saw it move. His mind flashed back to the cab trip, beginning with the illusion of a passenger that had perplexed him outside of Staffert's apartment house. Chet decided that the cold pressure of the gun was overtaking his imagination, which had already tricked him.

Maybe the gun itself was imaginary. The girl could be bluffing, whoever she was. If she happened to be Margo Lane, Chet couldn't picture her handling an automatic. Maybe she was trying to scare him with the end of a glass swizzle stick.

On sudden impulse, Chet swung about and grabbed for the girl.

It was Margo, all right, and she had a gun, which was going backward with her hand. Before she could level the weapon again, Chet grabbed for it. There was a moment when Margo regained her aim and could have fired, but she didn't.

That far, Margo was actually bluffing. She didn't intend to shoot at all. Her own self-limitation worked to Chet's advantage. As the girl struggled, he wrested the gun from her. He locked his arm around her neck, with a twist that brought Margo to her knees. Chet saw the girl's pained face looking up at him; then all went suddenly black.

Chet's quick handling of Margo was trivial, compared to the force that overwhelmed him. The rear door had actually moved to admit a new factor that came with the speed of a living hurricane. In one mighty sweep The Shadow completely suppressed Chet Ferris.

Margo's gun was gone from Chet's clutch, taken by a gloved hand that had the force of an iron vise. Chet's head was enveloped in the folds of a cloak that smothered his effort to shout. Yet the cloak itself was a help to Chet. It softened the necessary blow that The Shadow delivered with an automatic about three sizes larger than Margo's gun.

Though the impact was padded, it jarred Chet thoroughly. The back of his head seemed to shove forward and shake his teeth loose. Chet's senses faded into a mass of blackness of which the cloak was only a minor part.

For a while after that, Chet's impressions were of a very snatchy, disengaged sort.

There were moments when Chet heard a whispered tone that sounded sepulchral, though he couldn't distinguish the words. There were bits in Margo's voice, repeating the things that she had overheard Chet say across the telephone.

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There were other voices, one much like that of the cabby who had brought Chet from Staffert's neighborhood. But always, The Shadow's weird whisper formed the main theme of the discourse. At last blackness peeled itself away and Chet found himself stretched in an easy-chair. Strong arms gripped him on both sides.

CHET didn't look at the faces belonging to those arms. He was more interested in the countenance that directly confronted him. The face was Chet's own!

Weakly, Chet reached upward, expecting to encounter a mirror. There was none; the face belonged to another person. Lips resembling Chet's voiced a whispered laugh. This man who had taken over the prisoner's identity was none other than The Shadow!

"You will remain here." The Shadow spoke in a clipped tone that Chet himself used on occasion. "Do not worry; your mission will be carefully fulfilled—by myself."

Before Chet could dispute the point, his counterpart gave new evidence of The Shadow's skill at impersonation. Adopting a casual drawl that Chet used as part of his company manners, The Shadow introduced Chet to his two captors.

"This is Harry Vincent." The Shadow gestured to a smiling chap on Chet's left. "He is something of a man about town, like yourself. He crossed your trail at one of the cafés where you stopped before reaching the Club Malibu.

"Here we have Cliff Marsland." The Shadow introduced a rugged-faced individual on Chet's right. He frequents the tougher joints as they are aptly styled. These two will take good care of you while I am undertaking the task assigned by Hugh Staffert."

As The Shadow stepped away, Chet saw that his double was coolly tossing the glazite coin that Staffert had supplied as Chet's own token of identification!

"And this is Hawkeye." The Shadow paused at the door to indicate a wiry man with hunched shoulders and wizened face. "He is one of the best spotters in the underworld, where he works in my behalf. Hawkeye was trailing you between times, this evening.

"I wouldn't try to escape, if I were really you, Ferris. Not while Hawkeye is around. It would be too difficult. Besides, there are others that I have not yet introduced. You will meet them later, including the cab driver who first took up your trail when you rode with him."

As The Shadow stepped through the door, Chet rose angrily, fighting the hands that drew him back.

"What is this?" sneered Chet. "Protective custody?"

The Shadow tilted his head.

"I'm glad you used that tone," he said in a style that suited Chet's better nature. "I shall remember it, Ferris, during the course of my impersonation of yourself. Your sneer revealed another side of your disposition.

"Call this protective custody, if you wish, but use the term in an exact sense. As Staffert's messenger, you would be following a most dangerous trail, one that might result in further murder—like Dunstan's death—but with yourself as the victim.

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"The episode at the Club Malibu proved you to be over-impulsive. I doubt that you would have survived it if the person who pressed a gun to your neck had really intended to fire it in emergency. That is why I am doubling for you."

With a bow that fitted Chet's most courteous style, The Shadow stepped away. But the bow was not meant for Chet alone. The Shadow was turning as he finished it. Chet saw Margo step into sight beyond the door to receive The Shadow's arm.

The girl glanced back as Hawkeye was closing the door. Catching Margo's smile, Chet didn't accept it in the same friendly spirit. Subsiding in his chair, Chet snarled.

At that moment Chet Ferris was hoping that his double, The Shadow, would encounter all the ill luck intended for Chet himself—and more!

How far Chet's disgruntled maledictions would be fulfilled was something for The Shadow to learn as he moved along a trail where murder already lurked!

The murder of Wayne Dunstan was only a part of the scheme that The Shadow knew. To learn the rest of it he had to use himself as bait; had to walk into whatever trap was set ahead. Only in that way could he find the answer to one murder—but could he do it before more murders were committed, with a possibility that his own would be one of them?

## CHAPTER VII. INTO THE TRAP.

THE town of Tulpahannock wasn't the primitive sort of place that its name would indicate. Many sizable towns in Pennsylvania had old Indian names, and this was one of them. Indeed, the name itself was proof that Tulpahannock was long established.

Technically, Tulpahannock was neither a town nor a city. It was a borough of several thousand population, situated in a hilly region through which a river passed. The place boasted a few fair-sized industries. As a result it had a main street, well-stocked with stores, motion-picture houses, and the hotel. On its outskirts, Tulpahannock also had some very fine residences.

What interested The Shadow most, as he looked from the window of his hotel room, was a train that weaved along the railway line following the river. It was the afternoon limited, scheduled to stop at Tulpahannock. It was carrying the afternoon mail. In another hour The Shadow might pick up the letter that Hugh Staffert had promised to send Chet Ferris, care of general delivery.

That same train happened to be bearing more than a letter concerning Chet's mission.

In the drawing room of a Pullman car, three men were holding a last-minute conference regarding their plans in Tulpahannock. Or, rather, two were discussing such plans while a third sat by indifferently.

One man was Whip Nelbin, whose looks befitted his nickname. Whip was tall, thin, with quick eyes that had the speed of a whiplash. His gestures, too, were of a snapping sort; though he usually restrained them. Considering himself a big shot, Whip thought it good policy to act the part, which he did by adopting an iron-man attitude.

With Whip was Dash Thermer, who at present was impersonating a Pullman passenger, since he had no other part to play. Dash looked very much the tired traveler, relaxing back against a pillow, his smooth face a trifle

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saggy because his chin pressed his collar.

"It's easy enough, Dash," argued Whip in a hard tone. "All we have to do is knock this messenger off and take whatever he brings with him, after he sees this inventor guy, Louis Channey. What don't you like about it?"

"Only the business of knocking someone off," returned Dash. "It hardly seems necessary."

"That's where you're wrong. The big guy wants it that way. Because why? Because you're going to make up as the dead duck and go the rest of the rounds."

"And after that what do I do?"

"You just disappear, which makes it all the better. Listen, Dash: how will they know when we croaked the fellow, if he's seen in circulation after he's been bumped? Don't you see that the sooner we get through with it the better?"

Dash considered, then gave a slow nod.

"In a way, yes," he asserted. "Only don't dispose of him until I can study how he acts and appears in life. Your plan has merit, provided I have a good subject for impersonation."

Turning away, Whip Nelbin threw a pleased glance toward the third occupant of the drawing room, a drab-faced man who went by the name of Kipper. Being the only member of Whip's crew who looked presentable in public, Kipper had been brought on the train trip.

"We're pulling into Tulpahannock," said Whip. "Find the boys over at the old garage and have them bring the car as soon as it gets dark. We'll meet them outside of Channey's place."

Kipper nodded.

"All right, Whip," put in Dash suddenly. "Now that I'm willing to play along the hard way, tell me the rest of it."

"It's all in the newspapers, answered Whip laconically. "Last night, somebody croaked Wayne Dunstan. Another inventor named Hugh Staffert took it on the lam. Staffert is supposed to be contacting three other guys, so they'll deliver the dope on this glazite stuff."

"And a fellow named Channey is one of them?"

"That's right. Louis Channey. He ducked to his house in Tulpahannock, where nobody knows who he is. That is, nobody in these parts—but Staffert knows who Channey is, as well as where."

"Then we're working for Staffert?"

Whip didn't reply immediately. Instead, he hauled down a suitcase and handed it to Kipper. A porter was knocking at the door to tell them that the train was arriving in Tulpahannock. Sending Kipper out with the bag and a tip for the porter, Whip closed the door and buttonholed Dash.

"Whoever we're working for," stated Whip, "you've got a right to know. And you will know as soon as I find out. So far I've only talked to the guy by telephone, only I've seen the color of his dough and it ain't funny money."

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

"Then you're not sure that it's Staffert?"

"I've never met Staffert," replied Whip, "so how would I know? But there's another guy I've never met neither. His name is Gregg Garland. So pay your money and take your choice. Only we don't pay, the big guy does. As for the choice, since we're getting the dough, who cares?"

Dash didn't answer. As he alighted from the train he was still pondering on the probabilities, rating Garland as a master schemer as opposed to Staffert, an archtraitor. One of the pair was certainly honest, at least enough so not to engage in crime. But to find the honest man, Dash deemed it necessary to pick the crook, and he didn't know enough about either Garland or Staffert to be sure how each would rate.

WHEN dusk was settling over Tulpahannock, a strolling figure paused in front of a fair-sized residence on the outskirts. To all appearances, the arrival was Chet Ferris, but in actuality he was The Shadow. The fake Chet Ferris was carrying a brief case, but it didn't contain the letter that had arrived by the afternoon mail. That letter, together with an enclosure, was in The Shadow's inside pocket.

Approaching the front door, The Shadow rang the bell. A servant answered, and in Chet's tone The Shadow asked to see Mr. Channey. The servant hesitated, then asked if the caller had a card. In reply, The Shadow produced the glazite coin.

Receiving it, the servant kept eyeing The Shadow stolidly. Meanwhile the man clanged the coin on a table. When it rang he returned it and ushered The Shadow into a room where Louis Channey was seated at a desk.

Channey was a handsome man of middle age. He brushed back his shock of black hair, peered with frank eyes from a broad, well-molded face. His smile was pleasant but his lips showed a trace of anxiety until the servant gave a nod to indicate that the visitor was all right. By then The Shadow was producing the letter. He showed it to Channey, who waved for the servant to leave.

"So Staffert sent you," acknowledged Channey in a deep, rich tone. "Tell me, when did you last see Staffert—how long after Dunstan's death?"

"Immediately afterward," replied The Shadow. "He wasn't with Dunstan at the time of the murder."

"Ah! So Staffert thinks it actually was murder?"

"He seemed inclined that way." The Shadow reverted to Chet's clipped style of speech. "The papers gave Staffert a bad break today, but I can't say it was deserved. He told me he was supposed to duck out in case of trouble, so he did."

"Of course he was supposed to disappear," agreed Channey. "Even Dunstan agreed with such a plan. I disappeared, too, and so did—"

Catching himself, Channey gave his visitor a very close look; then asked:

"Did Staffert name the other men that you are supposed to visit?"

"Not yet," replied The Shadow. "His letter simply told me to come here to your house. But the letter contained this enclosure"—The Shadow drew out a sealed envelope—"addressed to you."

Opening a desk drawer, Channey drew out the first article made of glazite that The Shadow had seen in this house. Channey, like Staffert, apparently didn't care to make a show of the material that he had helped invent.

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The article that Channey produced was a long, thin-bladed knife that he used for a paper cutter. Slitting open the envelope, he read the message and handed it to his visitor.

"You're to pick up a telegram at the depot," stated Channey. "That's all it says, Ferris. Therefore I am not at liberty to name the other men that you are to meet. I presume that you will hear from Staffert in due course."

Swinging in his swivel chair, Channey leaned to a safe that stood behind the desk. Covering the dials with his body, he turned the combination and opened the door part way. He produced a large envelope which he tossed to The Shadow, after locking the safe again.

"This is the formula that Staffert wants," declared Channey. "Guard it well because it is a vital part of an epoch-making invention. What Staffert told you about glazite is absolutely true. It is a five-man creation, and with Dunstan dead we must place everything in Staffert's hands, so that he can experiment and work out Dunstan's final process.

"But tell me: how well equipped is Staffert in his present situation? Does he have a laboratory where he has gone? Have you ever been to the place where you are to deliver my formula and the others that you are to collect?"

Placing Channey's envelope in a section of the brief case, The Shadow shook his head and gave one of Chet's habitual smiles.

"I not only haven't been there," said The Shadow, "but I don't know where the place is. Staffert hasn't informed me as yet. I suppose that I shall hear from him further along the line."

"Of course." Toying with the glazite paper cutter, Channey finally clanked it into the desk drawer. "It was wise for Staffert to adopt such precautions, after what happened to Dunstan. I hope that Staffert will never make the mistake of dealing with a scoundrel like Garland."

One inventor at least was on Staffert's side, which didn't surprise The Shadow in the least. After all, Channey and the rest, whoever they might be, would not have named Staffert as Dunstan's successor unless they were willing to trust him.

HAVING completed his business as Chet Ferris, The Shadow allowed himself to be bowed out. It was Channey who personally conducted him to the door and took an anxious look up and down the tree-lined street. By this time it was quite dark outdoors, the only glow coming from Channey's house.

"It isn't far to the station," said Channey. "Cabs are difficult to obtain in Tulpahannock and I don't want to attract too much attention to this house where I am living incognito. However, if you fear that you may have been followed, I can send my servant along with you."

In brisk words, The Shadow decided that no convoy would be necessary. He shook hands with Channey and turned from the lighted doorway.

Of three missions assigned to Chet Ferris, The Shadow had completed the first with the utmost ease.

That was the very reason why The Shadow was anxious to make a quick departure. When crime threatened, easy sailing invariably promised rougher times ahead. Such had always been The Shadow's experience. He always believed that a safe past boded a hazardous future.

As he left Channey's house, carrying the precious brief case, The Shadow did not feel that he was walking out of something. Contrarily, he felt that he was stepping into it.

The Shadow's hunch was right. He was going straight into a trap, provided by a group of cutthroats headed by Whip Nelbin, men who looked upon murder as a pastime!

## CHAPTER VIII. THE VANISHING MESSENGER.

Two men, lurking directly across the street, gained a full view of The Shadow while he was shaking hands with Louis Channey. One of those watchers, Whip Nelbin, was gruffly undertoning that "the guy looked like a set-up" when the other interrupted.

The other was Dash Thermer.

"I know that fellow!" voiced Dash. "You ought to know him, too, Whip. He's Chet Ferris!"

"Don't know him," snapped Whip. "What's his racket?"

"He's a kind of private dick," informed Dash. "Goes after the con workers. He never pinned anything on me, though."

"Too bad he didn't," sneered Whip. "If he had, you wouldn't feel so soft about him."

Dash no longer felt soft about Staffert's messenger and lost no time in saying so.

"If you'd told me it was Chet," argued Dash, "you could have grabbed him before he got here. I could do a double for that guy any time. I saw him last night at the Club Malibu, just for example. Go ahead with your job, Whip. My part will be a set up after you're through."

Shifting behind a tree, Whip gave a signal that worked in two directions. At each corner was a crew of three men. Kipper was in charge of one batch; the other was headed by a thug named Moffrey, who had brought a carload of cutthroats to Tulpahannock.

Each group intended to make short work of the messenger. Which was to have the opportunity, depended on the direction the victim took. It happened that The Shadow started toward Kipper's group. Whip and Dash waited expectantly for the action that was to happen at the corner.

It didn't happen.

Part way along the street, the man who looked like Chet Ferris decided to cross over. That brought a corresponding shift from Kipper's waiting crew and The Shadow promptly spotted them. As if remembering something that he had forgotten, The Shadow turned about. He was fumbling with his brief case, as he started back to Channey's house.

Then, deciding that it wasn't necessary to return, he crossed the street again, this time toward the other corner. By that maneuver The Shadow produced unwary action from Moffrey's outfit and took tabs on them.

Whip and Dash were close enough to follow The Shadow's actions with the brief case, but they thought it unimportant. What The Shadow did was invert the brief case and pull a zipper at the bottom. From between two ordinary compartments, a secret one disgorged a black cloak and a flat slouch hat.

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Under the shelter of some trees, The Shadow hooked the brief case around him like a broad belt. With simultaneous action he slid the cloak over his shoulders and clamped the slouch hat on his head. He didn't have to worry about his automatics. They were already parked in holsters under his coat.

Next, The Shadow did a perfect glide. He was charitably inclined toward his enemies this evening, willing to give them the slip and let them worry over it without realizing how it actually happened. Of course, such policy was in keeping with The Shadow's part. He was willing to credit his getaway to quick work by Chet Ferris.

The trouble was that The Shadow had not located the two men directly opposite Channey's house!

EDGING forward, Whip and Dash were close enough to wonder what had become of the quarry that their companions sought. Kipper's crew was moving in from one flank, Moffrey's from the other, so Whip decided to use a flashlight. The glimmer came, only to be promptly blanketed.

In a trice Whip recognized the shape that intervened. The Shadow was so close at hand that Whip could almost grab him. But Whip didn't try. Recoiling, Whip sped his hand for a gun. At the same time extinguished the flashlight and snapped an order to Dash:

"There he is! Grab him!"

Not seeing the cloaked form as Whip saw it, Dash assumed that his companion referred to Chet Ferris. All that Dash spotted was a moving shape that was naturally gone when the flashlight blinked off. So Dash lunged, intending to show Whip's mobbies that he was a tough guy in his own right. With Dash forming a shield, Whip sprang to join the attack.

What happened was so sudden that the crooks never got it straight.

The Shadow snatched Dash from the ground as though the fellow were a thing of straw. A remarkable feat, considering that Dash was by no means a lightweight. That fact was proven when The Shadow gave Dash a fling that landed him squarely upon Whip Nelbin. To Whip it felt as though he had received the full force of a quarter ton of bricks.

As he flattened, Whip began shooting in the air. By the time he finished, his bullets were sizzling along the ground from a gun that was lying level with his head. Those daisy-cutters weren't harming anyone, least of all The Shadow.

Nothing was harming The Shadow. Two groups of thugs were surging at once, springing over Whip's sprawled figure and Dash's crawling form. They were after something that laughed, fiercely, weirdly, since The Shadow, once in action, could scarcely hope to conceal his dual identity. Converging crooks couldn't resort to gunfire since they were more apt to shoot their comrades than The Shadow. But they had revolvers in their fists, swinging them for the foe they wanted, intending to batter him into complete oblivion.

Slashing guns were met by slashing guns.

Deadly were The Shadow's automatics, even when used merely as bludgeons. Not only did they stop the weapons that sledged toward their owner, they drove those revolvers right back at the heads of the men who handled them. Crooks were reeling right and left, sprawling against each other, ready to make a shambles of themselves in their misguided fury.

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All that saved them was the sudden opening of Channey's front door. The shaft of light it cast formed a streak that showed The Shadow dodging from the horde of crooks that he had set upon each other. On hands and knees, Whip Nelbin saw the whirling shape of blackness and madly fired the last few shots in his gun.

Those bullets missed by yards, but they gave the rest a target. Since gunfire was the new motif, staggered crooks joined in it. Barking guns filled the air with slugs, all directed where killers thought the Shadow ought to be—but wasn't.

Amid that volley, Channey's front door slammed. By then The Shadow was completely gone and all that the crooks could do was charge upon him. They did, only to find themselves battering a tall oak tree that was the pride of Channey's front yard.

Angrily, Whip called off his crazed tribe of killers. The commotion from the house indicated that there would be a prompt call for the police. Sweeping their flashlights in huge circles, crooks took a last look for The Shadow and failed utterly to find him. Just as Chet Ferris had melted into The Shadow, so had the cloaked fighter blended into the invisible!

AT Whip's sharp-cracked command, crooks fled, most of them scattering at large, while a few, among them Whip and Dash, made for a car that was parked a block away. A deep hush settled over the recent battleground. The only motion was the slight sway of trees, stirred by the night wind.

Next door to Channey's was an old deserted house that looked like a haunted mansion. Its lawn was open, in fact, some of the crooks had swept it with their flashlights, then fled across it. Certainly, The Shadow wasn't on that lawn, unless he had kicked the ground and made it open, so that he could drop within.

There was a driveway leading into the house. On each side was a gatepost, each adorned with a large granite block, hewn to the shape of a crouching gryphon. Flashlights had brushed the nearer of those figures, then continued with their sweep.

While trees waved, the gryphons remained stationary. When one moved it literally uncoiled itself. The thing wasn't a figure graven from granite.

It was The Shadow!

Lying beyond was the stone carving that belonged upon the second pillar. The Shadow had grasped it in order to scale the wall beside the gate. When the loosened figure gave under his pressure, The Shadow simply let it thud the soft earth behind the wall.

He'd known that flashlights would be swinging his direction. A vacant pillar would have attracted too much attention. So The Shadow, having doubled for Chet Ferris as well as Lamont Cranston, saw no harm in duplicating a gryphon.

So old were the carvings that they were practically indistinguishable. A mere clamber to the pillar, a crouch, and the thing was done. Now that the crooks had been properly deceived and had accordingly gone their way, The Shadow was relaxing his statuesque pose.

Though battle had been violent, the local police were not yet coming to the scene. Hence The Shadow needed no special measures to leave this neighborhood. Instead of gliding away, he strode along, looking back until the lights of Channey's house had dwindled. Around a corner, The Shadow gave a whispered laugh as he divested himself of cloak and hat. Uncoiling the brief case, he parked his black attire in its secret compartment.

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TEN minutes later, a man who looked exactly like Chet Ferris strolled into the Tulpahannock railway station and inquired for a telegram. He had to sign for it, but that meant nothing, because the local ticket agent had no idea what Chet's real signature looked like.

After reading the telegram, The Shadow inquired briskly regarding the evening train from Tulpahannock. He learned that the Western Special was due in slightly less than an hour, so he bought a ticket and a lower berth.

Leaving the station, The Shadow went back to the hotel to collect his luggage. From the window he noted that Tulpahannock still lay quiet and unperturbed. Apparently a little gunfire could not annoy this staid community.

Leaving the hotel, The Shadow again read the telegram that had come from Hugh Staffert. This time a satisfied smile played upon The Shadow's lips, the sort of smile that suited the disguise of Chet Ferris.

Having successfully collected a vital formula from Louis Channey, The Shadow was on his way to meet another of the inventors who regarded Hugh Staffert as the proper successor to their murdered spokesman, Wayne Dunstan!

### CHAPTER IX. THE TRAIL AHEAD.

THE Western Limited was chugging out of Tulpahannock before Whip Nelbin could gather his scattered followers in the old garage that formed their local headquarters. Like The Shadow, the crooks had expected the police to arrive; hence Whip's crowd had traveled wide and far.

Whip was assembling them personally by the simple expedient of covering the outskirts with the car. Every time he saw a man dive into a thicket, he knew it must be one of his own tribe. Whip blinked the lights and waited until they figured out who the occupant of the car must be.

Bringing the last of the fugitives into the deserted garage, Whip was just beginning to express an unprintable opinion of Kipper and Moffrey when Dash Thermer interrupted.

"That telephone in the corner," said Dash with a nudge. "It's been ringing for the last ten minutes. Who do you suppose it is?"

Whip broke loose with a string of names that didn't belong in the telephone book. During the course of his expletives, the bell began to ring again. Picking up the phone, Whip snarled a "hello" and promptly changed his manner.

"It's the big guy," informed Whip in an undertone. "He wants to know what happened."

The rest left it up to Whip to relate the story, which he did, in terms that were uncomplimentary to everyone except himself. Most important of Whip's lies—though this one was not intended—was the statement that Chet Ferris had turned out to be The Shadow.

According to Whip, that explained all the trouble. Where The Shadow had gone was still a mystery, but the crooks were glad they had learned the identity of crimedom's greatest enemy. They'd settle with The Shadow in due course, but for the present they wanted to gather in the formulas that the messenger was supposed to acquire.

So Whip offered a suggestion. It was this: He and his crew would go to Channey's, and put the heat on the

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inventor. Whatever the formula he had handed to Chet Ferris—otherwise The Shadow—Whip was confident he could make Channey deliver the duplicate.

The call ended soon afterward. As Whip laid the telephone aside, Dash put the question:

"How soon do we start for Channey's?"

"We don't go there at all," replied Whip. "It would only be a giveaway. Suppose something happened to Channey. What would the other inventors think?"

Dash gave a shrewd grin.

"I wonder."

"Wonder what?" demanded Whip. "I'm wondering if Staffert isn't the brain behind this racket," returned Dash. "Him handing you talk like that sounds like a cover-up. Suppose Staffert is the brain, or the big guy as you call him. Why would he want us to muscle in on his own messenger?"

"Because the messenger muscled in on him!" snapped Whip. "We've found out that Chet Ferris is The Shadow."

"Staffert couldn't have known that in the first place," argued Dash, "or he wouldn't have used Chet at all. I'll tell you what the trouble is: Staffert is afraid those inventors just won't give. Channey came through, but that's no proof that the other two will. Staffert started by using Chet, but then he decided it wouldn't work, so he—"

"Cut the chaff," broke in Whip. "I say the brain is Garland. He was willing to pay a million bucks for this glazite stuff. The further we go toward helping him the more dough we get, and the sooner. So let's get at it."

Shrugging, Dash questioned:

"How?"

"Here's what the brain wants," explained Whip, "because he just said so. I told him you know who the messenger is; that at least he's supposed to be Chet Ferris. So the brain says you're to make up like Chet and see what you can learn."

"What will I do—go back to Channey's?"

"Try the depot first, the brain says. Find out all you can. Maybe The Shadow took a train. He could have picked up some baggage. The brain says to find out if he got any telegrams."

Dash gave a shrug to prove that he was willing. From a suitcase in the car he took out a make-up kit and began his business of disguise.

Up to that point, Kipper, Moffrey and their punch-drunk crew members hadn't credited Dash Thermer with being very smart, but when he finished his artistic efforts they stared in amazed admiration.

Detail for detail, Dash's face was the perfect image of Chet's. Though he didn't know it, Dash was proving himself to be practically The Shadow's equal in the art of disguise. Like the rest, Dash had come to believe that The Shadow really was Chet Ferris.

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"Good enough," approved Whip. "Take him down to the station in the buggy, Kipper. But before you go, Dash, I'll lay a little bet with you. Half a grand says that the brain will turn out to be Garland."

From the door of the car, Dash gave an admirable imitation of Chet's sneer.

"Maybe he's told you so, Whip."

"No, he hasn't," retorted Whip. "I'm taking a full Brodie on it. I'm betting on Garland, because if the brain was Staffert, he'd know where Chet Ferris went from here."

"Give me time to think it over, decided Dash. "I may take on that bet when I get back."

WHEN the car reached the station, Dash found people glancing at him as soon as he alighted. The man who gave him the most pronounced stare was the ticket agent. His eyes were unbelieving as he looked through his wicket.

"Say, mister," began the ticket agent, "I'd have sworn you went out on the special."

"Ever hear of anybody missing a train?" Dash took the cue like the actor that he was. "Well, I missed mine."

"But you got on it—"

"My baggage didn't. That's why I got off again. By the way, what about my baggage?"

The question puzzled the ticket man, so Dash begged it neatly.

"I guess it didn't get here in the first place," he grumbled. Then, remembering Chet's habit of brisk talking, he demanded: "Why didn't they wire me about it?"

"You only got one telegram," apologized the ticket agent. "That's the one I gave you. It didn't say anything about baggage."

"Better let me see a copy of it. I threw away the one you gave me."

The station man produced the telegram and Dash counted the words as though suspecting that some had been omitted. The telegram was addressed to Chet Ferris and signed by Hugh Staffert. The message read:

TAKE EVENING TRAIN TO MIDDLEDALE STOP AWAIT PHONE CALL AT HOTEL STOP

Repeating the message to himself, Dash jotted it down when he reached the car. While they were riding back to the garage, Dash remarked to Kipper:

"Funny that the brain told Whip to have me check on telegrams at the depot."

"What's funny about it?" inquired Kipper.

"Only that there was a telegram," replied Dash. "One for Chet that came from Staffert. It looks like another cover-up on Staffert's part. He was trying to pretend that he was only guessing about the telegram."

"Why would he pretend?"

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"Because he doesn't want any trail to lead back through us. We're not supposed to know that Staffert is the brain. But it's a cinch that he is. I hope that Whip won't renege on that bet he offered after he hears about the telegram."

At the garage, Whip read the telegram, but made no comment other than stating that they'd have to wait for another phone call. Twenty minutes later the call came through. After repeating the telegram to the brain, Whip received instructions as to the next step.

Finishing the call, Whip turned to the group.

"We've got to get to Middledale in a hurry," asserted Whip. "It will take us until tomorrow afternoon, but we can beat the train schedule by taking turns at the wheel. That's only half of it; the other part is to find a guy named Arthur Benn.

"That shouldn't be much trouble because Middledale isn't a big place. Maybe Benn's living there under some other moniker, but it shouldn't be tough to spot him. He's an old duck who goes around with a cane, and has a chauffeur who drives him everywhere. Chances are we'll reach him before The Shadow does."

Dash Thermer gave a smile that didn't fit the facial contour of Chet Ferris.

"We ought to win the race," said Dash, "considering that Staffert is handling both entries."

"My money is still on Garland," rejoined Whip. "Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it."

The bet arranged, the pair placed their cash with Kipper. That done, the whole crowd piled into the seven-passenger car to begin their trip to Middledale, a town several States distant. Again, crime was keeping pace with The Shadow.

As they settled in the rear seat, Whip turned to Dash and gave him a round disk much like a coin, except that it resembled glass.

"You may need this," said Whip. "The big guy said so. The Shadow carries one to show the inventors, and Benn belongs to that crowd. Have it handy when you meet him."

How the crooks were to fare in the present race, time alone would tell. Events were shaping in a fashion that would make it difficult for even The Shadow to predict the things to come!

## CHAPTER X. A QUESTION OF IDENTITY.

IF left to his own devices, The Shadow could have made short work of his stay in Middledale. The Midwestern town was little more than a village, even though it boasted a fair-sized hotel. From his window, The Shadow could count the houses in the surrounding area and he picked one that struck him as a likely place to find a missing inventor.

The house was situated on a hillside a few miles out of town, and it was scarcely visible on account of the trees surrounding it. Yet The Shadow was postponing his visit to the place until he heard from Staffert. In playing the part of Chet Ferris, The Shadow preferred to do it to the last detail.

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There was no telling when Staffert's call would arrive and it wouldn't be wise to be absent when it did come. Time did not seem to figure as an element, considering how completely The Shadow had eluded crooks in Tulpahannock.

Nevertheless, as dusk began to settle, The Shadow was gripped by a very rare sensation: that of impatience. He was actually considering how he could amend his earlier decision when Staffert's call arrived.

Over long distance, Staffert's voice was none too clear, but The Shadow recognized its tone. In turn he imitated Chet's voice to perfection and answered Staffert's queries regarding his visit at Channey's.

Casually, The Shadow admitted that there had been some trouble after he left Channey's, but that he had the formula safe and sound. As for trouble in Middledale, there simply wouldn't be any. The scene looked absolutely clear.

Staffert wasn't thoroughly convinced.

"You can't be certain of anything, Ferris," he declared. "Besides, Arthur Benn is a difficult man to handle. A very mistrustful type of chap."

"I take it that Arthur Benn is the man I am to see," observed The Shadow in Chet's best drawl. "Where will I find him?"

"At Hillside Lodge," informed Staffert. "It's a few miles out of town, so take a cab. Anybody in Middledale can tell you where the lodge is, so don't mention Benn by name. Just say you want to go to the lodge. While you're there I'll phone Benn so I can set him straight regarding you."

The big trouble in Middledale was finding a cab, because there were none. The Shadow finally made a deal with a local grocery man, who took him to the lodge in a truck. On the way, the grocer put a few pointed questions regarding the present residents of Hillside Lodge, but The Shadow simply ignored them.

The lodge was lighted when they reached it. Stalling at the front door, The Shadow waited until the truck had gone. He then pounded the big door knocker lustily.

The man who answered wore a chauffeur's uniform and he gave the visitor a very puzzled stare. Then, when The Shadow announced that he had come to see Mr. Benn, the chauffeur admitted him.

FOR a lodge, Benn's residence was most unusually furnished. The great living room was entirely equipped with glazite. Tables, book cases, even the andirons in the great fireplace, were all constructed of the marvel material.

The door leading into Benn's study was glazite, also, with a knob of the same substance. On that account the chauffeur shifted to the fore to block off The Shadow's view. Stepping into the study, the man gestured for the visitor to follow. At the same time the chauffeur announced in a very skeptical tone:

"A Mr. Ferris to see you, sir."

Stepping across the threshold, The Shadow saw Benn, a stooped man with a very wrinkled face, looking up from a glazite desk. But that wasn't the reason why The Shadow paused so abruptly. Benn already had a visitor. At sight of the fellow The Shadow realized that he had gotten ahead of himself.

Seated beside Benn's desk, looking up with a bland smile, was Chet Ferris.

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At least the visitor looked like Chet, though it took The Shadow only a few seconds to detect the difference. Actually, the man was an impostor, precisely as The Shadow was. The thing was something of a surprise. In the darkness of the night before, The Shadow had failed to identify Dash Thermer as the man who had lunged at the order given by Whip Nelbin.

There was a chair on the opposite side of Benn's desk, so The Shadow calmly took it. Across the desk, Chet's two doubles faced each other, both doing their best to imitate the man they represented.

This was a unique situation, and the man who relished it the most was Arthur Benn, though he only knew the half of it. With a crackly laugh, Benn suggested that both visitors look toward the door. When they did, they saw the chauffeur standing there with a drawn gun.

A nervous flinch came to the disguised face of Dash Thermer. The Shadow did not copy it, for he preferred to play Chet's part along stolid lines, a thing that the real Chet would have appreciated had he been on hand to witness it.

As for Benn, he regarded a flinch as natural as a poker-faced expression. Looking from Dash to The Shadow, Benn still could not make up his mind which was the real Chet Ferris.

"Put your gun away, Thornleigh," said Benn to the chauffeur. "I take it that both of these gentlemen are armed. If matters reach a crisis, we can let them shoot it out between themselves. And to produce that crisis"—Benn chuckled happily—"I am going to find out which is really which."

Simultaneously, two glazite tokens clanked the desk. Picking up the transparent coins, Benn could find no difference between them. This seemed to make him all the happier.

"What am I to do?" he queried cheerily. "Perform a judgment similar to Solomon's? Must I take my formula and tear it in half, giving each of you a portion, thus rendering the document useless? Perhaps one of you can help me in my quandary."

"Very easily," declared The Shadow. "All you have to do is wait for a long-distance call from Staffert. Then you can remember that I was the man who said you would receive one."

"Of course Staffert is going to phone," put in Dash hastily. "I just didn't think it was necessary to tell you."

"When Staffert does call," remarked The Shadow, "you can ask him to repeat the statements that he made to me at the hotel. I can give them verbatim. This impostor"—The Shadow gestured to Dash—"cannot."

For a moment Dash looked shaky. He went completely out of character, but Benn didn't recognize it, never having met the real Chet Ferris. Catching himself suddenly, Dash snapped boldly:

"Staffert didn't phone the hotel at all. This faker is trying to bluff you—"

With the words, Dash shifted and reached for his gun. Quick though his motion was, it could not begin to match The Shadow's. With a quick stab across the desk, The Shadow caught the other masquerader's forearm and gave it a wrench that not only whipped the gun in sight, but caused it to twist from Dash's tortured fingers.

As Dash sidelonged to the floor under The Shadow's expert handling, Thornleigh hurtled in from the doorway, shoving a drawn gun ahead of him. Pivoting from the path of the weapon, The Shadow released Dash and gave the chauffeur a double-arm grip that turned Thornleigh's dive into a somersault.

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The tableau that followed showed The Shadow standing with the chauffeur's gun in his own hand, covering Dash Thermer. In the duel between the counterparts of Chet Ferris, The Shadow had established complete supremacy.

Indeed, it was too complete, if such could be.

What The Shadow did not notice was the brief gleam that filled Benn's watery eyes. The old inventor hadn't noted the first part of the duel because it had begun so quickly. To Benn it seemed that The Shadow's thrust had preceded the reach that Dash made for a gun. Again, Benn was thinking in equal terms. It dawned on him that both these men might be impostors. Of the two, one was definitely more dangerous.

That impostor was The Shadow!

RISING, Benn gave a profound bow to the victor, as though acknowledging The Shadow to be the genuine claimant. Stepping over Thornleigh's stunned form, Benn picked up Dash's revolver and pocketed it. Letting The Shadow keep Dash covered with Thornleigh's gun, Benn navigated to a corner.

There, the hobbling inventor stopped in front of a most unusual safe. It was constructed entirely of glazite, except for its lock, which was of steel, like the combination dial close beside it. The safe was very large, coming as high as Benn's stooped shoulders.

Unlocking the safe, Benn opened it. The inside of the dial was smooth, for it was welded to the rest. In the fashion of a demonstrator, Benn gave the reason.

"A safe constructed of glazite is the strongest imaginable," declared Benn. "It has only one fault, namely its transparency. On that account, I have fitted it with a steel combination, welded on the inside, so the tumblers cannot be viewed through the back of the safe.

"There is one nice feature of a glazite safe, Mr. Ferris." Benn gave The Shadow a friendly smile. "If you don't color the glazite you don't have to open it to find what you want. For example"—Benn drew Dash's gun and gestured to the rear of the safe—"the envelope containing my formula is on the middle shelf at the back. It is the envelope with the red seal."

Stepping aside, Benn pointed the borrowed revolver at Dash, who was just beginning to rise. At sight of the weapon, Dash sank back again.

"I shall keep this culprit covered," assured Benn, addressing The Shadow. "We can decide what to do with him after we hear from Staffert. Meanwhile, Ferris, you will oblige me by bringing the envelope from the safe."

Pocketing Thornleigh's gun, The Shadow approached the safe. The shelves at the back were very narrow; to reach them it was necessary to step into the safe. The Shadow could just about get in, stooping slightly.

Hardly was The Shadow inside before he recognized what was coming. He twisted about, but this time his maneuver was too late. Benn was acting with surprising speed, making a quick turn of his own. With it the inventor slammed the door of the glazite safe and in the same action gave the steel combination knob a twirl.

The Shadow was imprisoned in a transparent box, made of a substance that even bullets could not dent!

## CHAPTER XI. THE FINAL WORD.

A TRIUMPHANT gleam upon his withered face, Benn spoke to Thornleigh as the chauffeur rose from the floor. All the while, Benn was keeping Dash covered with the crook's own gun.

"Two impostors, Thornleigh!" gloated Benn. "I have captured them both! The more dangerous one is locked in the safe. I have the gun belonging to the other, which renders him quite as helpless."

Passing the gun to Thornleigh so that the chauffeur could keep Dash covered, Benn continued to show high glee. Picking up his cane, the old inventor hobbled around The Shadow's prison, looking into it from all angles, making grimaces at the captive who looked like Chet Ferris.

How long this would last, The Shadow could not tell. He had an idea that his predicament would become worse unless he soon gained his release. Since glazite was indestructible, there was no way of cracking through the confining walls themselves. The Shadow tried to reason with old Benn.

They conducted a pantomime through the glazite barriers, but The Shadow's gestures were to no avail. Apparently Benn had hoped some day to trap an intruder in this contrivance and he was making the most of his triumph.

When The Shadow wagged the envelope with the red seal and nudged toward the door of the safe, Benn only laughed and shook his head. Next, The Shadow opened his brief case, which he had carried into the safe with him. He dropped Benn's envelope into one of the regular compartments, along with the formula that Channey had given him.

Benn's mirthful convulsions increased. What good were such formulas to a prisoner? When The Shadow exhibited Channey's envelope, he wrote the name "Channey" across it and held it against the glazite front. Benn merely laughed the more, for this convinced him that he had sprung the trap on the more troublesome of the two impostors who were posing as Chet Ferris.

Of what good were those stolen formulas to a prisoner?

Such seemed to be the burden of Benn's grimaces, whereupon The Shadow decided to throw a scare into the old inventor. Taking both envelopes from his pocket, he produced a cigarette lighter, as though he intended to burn his prize.

Benn's head shook a warning, but with it he retained his smile. Picking up a desk clock, he ran his finger around the dial; then used his hands to indicate a cube. Following that, Benn raised one hand to his throat and gave long gasps.

His theme was this:

The Shadow would have about an hour to live before the air in the tight-shut safe was exhausted. Shaking his head again, Benn nudged his thumb at the cigarette lighter. He was reminding The Shadow that its flame, plus the burning of the envelopes, would use up a considerable amount of precious oxygen. Moving his finger back around the clock, Benn estimated that the process would cut at least twenty minutes from the prisoner's remaining hour of life.

So The Shadow replaced the envelopes in the brief case and settled back to take things easy. Benn studied him a few minutes, then turned toward the desk to pick up a glazite telephone which had wires of the same

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material.

Apparently Benn intended to call the local authorities and have them take the prisoners into custody. Such a prospect did not please The Shadow. Nevertheless it promised an ultimate way out of the dilemma.

The Shadow would be more than willing to match claims of identity with Dash Thermer. Though they both looked like Chet Ferris, The Shadow felt that he could convince people that he was the man in question, something at which Dash would surely fail. If Benn had heard the argument through, The Shadow would have won it. In a sense, Benn had only postponed the logical result.

In another sense, Benn had done something far worse. In reaching for the telephone he precipitated a situation that to The Shadow could prove little short of fatal.

THE moment that Benn touched the telephone, Dash Thermer jumped Thornleigh's gun. It was a bold, desperate attempt on Dash's part, but the crook was probably inspired by his memory of the night before, when he had actually rushed The Shadow and survived.

Shoving the gun at Dash, Thornleigh started to tug on the trigger, but Dash was lucky. The chauffeur was still half groggy and he gripped a strange revolver. Thornleigh's own gun had a hair trigger; this one hadn't. By the time Thornleigh's finger took up the bit of slack, Dash had warded the gun muzzle aside.

The two began a struggle to which The Shadow was a mere spectator. Forgetting the telephone, Benn lunged into the fray, using his cane, but to little avail. The way Dash and Thornleigh wrestled there was no way of telling which head was whose.

In one way Dash was smart. He didn't try to wrest the gun from Thornleigh, a process which might have allowed the chauffeur a chance to insert a telling shot. All Dash did was ward off the weapon and let Thornleigh blaze away to his heart's content. Once emptied, the gun would be useless. Still, Dash seemed to be outsmarting himself.

All this gunfire was sure to bring outsiders, particularly when one wild shot smashed a window that didn't happen to be glazite.

That was where Dash was really smart, directing his adversary's hand toward the window. Once the glass pane was broken, the next shots were very audible outdoors and they brought rapid results.

Outsiders arrived, a crew of them:

Whip Nelbin, flanked by Kipper and Moffrey, with three other thugs behind them. In one surge they deprived Thornleigh of the gun, Benn of the cane, and planted the two residents of the lodge on a glazite settee. There, they could only stare in utter bewilderment.

Kipper and Moffrey wanted to slug the pair into oblivion, but Whip stopped them with a growl. Catching a quick look from Dash, Whip decided to let his stooge take over, which Dash did in dramatic style. He snapped his fingers at Kipper and Moffrey, who looked to Whip and saw him nod. When the thugs stepped away from the prisoners, Dash called for the empty gun and the cane. With a bow he returned them to the astonished men on the settee.

"My apologies, Mr. Benn," announced Dash in Chet's most polite tone. "Fortunately, I foresaw trouble from the impostor who is now in your safe. He tried to murder me after I left Channey's last night, but all he managed to do was steal the brief case containing the formula that Channey gave me.

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Benn was listening intently and Whip was staring at Dash in admiration. Noting Whip's attitude, the other thugs subsided to corners of the room.

"So I hired a crew of bodyguards," continued Dash, gesturing to Whip "I hoped that I would intercept the impostor when I arrived here—and I did. I knew it would be easy to prove my identity to you, but regaining Channey's plans was a problem.

"I'd hoped to manage it outside, thus saving you this inconvenience, Mr. Benn. Unfortunately, matters went awry, but I hope you will not mind, now that everything is settled satisfactorily."

In conclusion, Dash reached to his pocket and produced a cigar, one of the panatelas that Chet favored. Lighting the cigar, he coolly awaited Benn's reaction. It came.

"You have done well," acknowledged Benn. Then, a shrewd gleam coming to his eyes, he added: "I suppose that you would like to know the name of the next inventor you are to visit, the last man on your list?"

"Of course not!" expressed Dash with an indignation that astonished Whip. "These visits are strictly confidential. You forget that I am taking orders from Hugh Staffert. Suppose we await the call he promised."

Whip restrained a smile in recognition of the neat way in which Dash had handled the proposition. From the new gleam that showed on Benn's face it was evident that the old inventor now regarded Dash as the actual messenger sent by Staffert.

"When Staffert phones," suggested Dash, "you can tell him everything, Mr. Benn, including the fact that I arrived here first. If he chooses he can then name the man I am to visit next and also tell me where to find him. I leave all in your hands."

Several tense minutes followed until finally the phone bell rang. Staffert was calling long distance. Benn poured his personal version of the meeting between the rival messengers. Finished with his story, Benn handed the phone to Dash.

"Staffert wants to talk to you, Ferris."

IT was an excellent start and Dash followed through to perfection. Forgotten in his glazite prison, The Shadow watched Dash's lips repeat words in an undertone. Next, The Shadow studied the motion of the pencil with which Dash wrote words upon a pad.

"Joseph... Tario... Lake... City—"

Those were the four words that The Shadow checked from lips and pencil. They meant that the final inventor's name was Joseph Tario, and that he would be found in a place called Lake City. There were other details that Dash jotted and The Shadow caught snatches of them.

One was the abbreviation of a State name, another a street address, of which The Shadow learned enough to give him a promising clue. But the value of The Shadow's observations could be defined as zero, unless it could be conceded that he was finding some solace in getting his mind off his own plight.

If ever The Shadow had encountered a total predicament, this was it. If left alone he would have less than an hour to live. In Benn's custody he might expect some mercy, but it was plain that the inventor would soon wash his hands of the prisoner. Dash Thermer had convinced Hugh Staffert that he was the real Chet.

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It was Benn who brought up The Shadow's case.

"About the prisoner," said Benn, gesturing to the glazite safe and its occupant. "What about him?"

"Turn him over to the law, of course," responded Dash. "That's what Staffert would want."

"Did he say so?"

"He said to take care of the case."

Benn reached for the telephone. Before he could lift it, Dash stopped him with a gesture.

"If you're calling the sheriff," said Dash, "hold it until after we leave."

"But why?" inquired Benn. "He'll have to come here."

"It would waste too much time," replied Dash. "We must think of the prisoner's welfare, confined as he is. At the same time it would not be wise to release him here. I am sure the sheriff would prefer to open the safe in a cell of the county jail."

"Of course."

"So we'll take the safe there," assured Dash. "All you will need to do is call the sheriff and give him the combination. He can open the safe, take the prisoner into custody and deliver me the formulas."

Considering the proposition, Benn liked it.

"An excellent system," he approved. "I won't have to tell the sheriff who I am, nor where. I'll give him the combination and you can do the rest."

"Even to shipping the safe back here," added Dash. "Everything will be done to protect your identity and your whereabouts, Mr. Benn."

Imperiously, Dash snapped his fingers. In turn, Whip gestured for his men to hoist the safe. Though impregnable, the glazite vault was not over-heavy, even with The Shadow's added weight. Four men were sufficient to carry the burden with a fifth opening the wide double doors for them.

Looking back from above the shoulders of the straining crooks, The Shadow gazed through the glazite wall of the safe and met Benn's stare. The words that The Shadow spoke were unheard, but Benn could have made them out by watching the prisoner's lip motions had he so chosen.

But Arthur Benn was not interested in any appeal that came from an impostor. He narrowed his eyes until they were almost shut and smirked a mocking farewell at the false messenger who had tried to dupe him.

The Shadow's last call for aid was ended, useless. Men of crime were carrying their superfoe to a doom already sealed!

## CHAPTER XII. DEATH'S MOMENT.

ALONG with their car, the crooks had parked a truck near Benn's lodge. The truck was a vehicle that they

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had acquired locally—without permission of the owner—on Whip's suggestion that it might prove useful on the next stage of their journey.

Already, the truck was coming in handy, for it could accommodate the glazite safe that contained The Shadow. So the safe was shoved into the truck and Whip Nelbin took the wheel with Dash Thermer beside him in the front seat. They detailed Kipper to ride with the safe, while Moffrey brought along the sedan with its quota of thugs.

Once clear of Benn's vicinity, Whip turned the truck away from the direction of Middledale. As he pressed the accelerator, Whip looked at Dash and asked:

"How long do we have to wait?"

"About half an hour." Dash glanced at his watch as he made the calculation. "Benn said the air would only last an hour and the time's half up."

"We'll be twenty miles away by then," laughed Whip. "I'd like to see that yap sheriff after he hears from Benn. Writing down a lot of figures without knowing what they're all about."

"I'd like to see those figures, though," observed Dash. "We've got to get into that safe after The Shadow croaks."

"We'll blow it."

"Not glazite. You're forgetting something, Whip. The same thing that is keeping The Shadow in the safe is going to keep us out. Nothing can crack glazite."

Whip gave an angry growl, then drove along in silence. Tactfully, Dash decided to switch the subject for a while.

"I guess I'll be collecting that bet," stated Dash. "The brain must be Staffert all right. If I hadn't been sure of it I wouldn't have let Benn talk to him. Staffert knows there are two of us posing as Chet Ferris, but that I'd be the first to reach Benn's place. That's why I had Benn mention it."

"You're nuts," snapped Whip. "What you say proves that Garland is the brain. The only thing Staffert knows is that somebody is trailing after the messenger he sent. When Benn told him you were the first guy to arrive, Staffert took it for granted you were the right one."

"I didn't have any trouble convincing Staffert."

"Why should you? You knew the score, didn't you? You talked just like Chet and that was enough."

They drove along in silence for the next ten minutes; then Whip reverted to his original theme. He was gaining a new idea, inspired by a hilly region which the truck was climbing.

"This glazite stuff can't have everything," argued Whip. "Suppose it does make steel look like putty. I'd like to know what a lot of rocks would make glazite look like."

"You can't crack glazite with rocks," objected Dash. "Talk sense, Whip."

"I am talking sense. According to Dunstan, airplanes were going to be made out of glazite, weren't they?"

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"That's right."

"Well, what happens to an airplane when it crashes?" continued Whip. "It really cracks up, doesn't it?"

"Right again."

"Then that's what this glazite safe will do when we dump it from the top of a cliff. Remember that one we saw on the way here? It's five hundred feet if it's an inch, and there's plenty of rocks at the bottom. We're almost to the place."

WHIP veered the car into a side road that led up toward the cliff in question. During the steady climb, Dash pondered over an idea of his own.

"Why not just wait?" he queried. "We can call Benn back and tell him he figured wrong about the air. Or we'll say the guy got nervous and used up all the oxygen trying to bust out through the glazite."

"And what would Benn say to that?"

"He'd give us the combination," assured Dash, "and thank us for staying clear of the county courthouse. Benn is in this thing as deep as we are, at least in his own way. He's not anxious to do any explaining to a hick sheriff."

Whip gave a snort as he brought the car to a stop near the brink of the cliff.

"You're counting too much on Benn," Whip told Dash. "All inventors are wacky, or didn't you know? Anyway, your idea will keep until after I've tried mine."

With that, Whip turned off the motor. He and Dash could hear the murmur of the sedan coming up the slope. As soon as it arrived, Whip intended to have the thugs carry the glazite safe to the brink of the cliff and poise it there.

"Only we won't take chances with The Shadow," added Whip. "Who knows—that glazite safe might crack all apart and let him out below the cliff. It's uncanny the way he gets out of things."

Dash sneered that The Shadow wasn't demonstrating any uncanny ability in his present plight.

"Anyway, we'll give him time to weaken," continued Whip, "because we ought to be down at the bottom to grab that brief case quick. We'll go down there in the car, around by another road. When we blink the lights the boys up here can shove."

As Whip spoke, the car lights did blink. The sedan had arrived behind the truck, and its driver, Moffrey, was turning off the glare that revealed Kipper sitting on the glazite strong box that contained The Shadow.

Nobody saw The Shadow amid the departing glow.

As Chet Ferris, the prisoner would have been quite visible in the transparent safe, but he was Chet no longer. From his special brief case The Shadow had taken his accoutrements of black and was fully cloaked, with the slouch hat planted on his head.

Seemingly, there was little he could gain by his change of guise. Crooks wouldn't be foolish enough to suppose that he had disappeared from the impregnable container. Indeed, The Shadow could not render

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himself invisible under a glow of many flashlights, once they would be directed upon the glazite safe.

Even if such a wild ruse should succeed, it would not help The Shadow. Crooks did not have the combination to the safe. Should they suddenly decide to let The Shadow live, the act would be beyond their ability. Less than ten minutes worth of air still remained in the safe that had become a death cell.

It would be impossible to reach Arthur Benn within that brief span of time.

There seemed only one explanation for The Shadow's decision to become himself again. Knowing he was doomed, he had decided to go out in heroic style. As a defiant figure cloaked in black he could show this tribe of enemies how to die, though on this occasion the act would be his own, not theirs.

To die as The Shadow.

SUCH, indeed, seemed the full intent of the prisoner in black when he drew a brace of automatics from beneath his cloak and placed them against the door of the solid glazite cell. So useless a measure could be but the last act of a desperate man. The Shadow knew definitely that glazite was immune to gunfire.

He had seen bullets bash the substance without even scarring it. He knew that his coughing guns would absorb the last cubic inches of remaining oxygen and bring quicker death within the confines of the cell. Maybe that was just another phase of The Shadow's mad heroics.

The Shadow pressed a gun trigger.

Seated on the glazite safe, Kipper couldn't hear the shot, but he saw its flash. Another followed, then a third, with more coming in rapid succession. Kipper popped to his feet as though he'd found himself trying the hot seat.

"Look out!" howled Kipper. "The guy is busting loose with fireworks!"

"Stop yelling, Kipper," rasped Whip as he saw the spurts within the safe. "Nobody can hear those shots, but you'll wake the whole county with those whoops."

"Let The Shadow have his fun," put in Dash. "Boy, can that glazite stop slugs cold. Seven—eight— nine—"

Shoving Kipper aside so that he could watch the gun flashes better, Whip tuned to Dash's mood and added the number:

"Ten!"

As if in answer, a muffled echo came from the glazite cube, the audible burst of a gunshot. For a moment Whip stared as though his imagination had betrayed him. Then, catching sight of Dash's startled face, Whip knew that it was real.

Yanking their own guns, the pair swung across the seat, both grabbing Kipper to push him from their way. It wasn't necessary to snatch Kipper. He was already getting clear, though not of his own accord.

What impelled Kipper was an invisible object, the great door of the glazite safe, swinging outward on hinges of the same material. Like a mighty bludgeon it kicked Kipper across the truck seat between Whip and Dash.

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Along with the stroke that knocked Kipper out of combat came the token of the fighter who delivered the blow. Though his final shots had been somewhat muffled, The Shadow's laugh was unrestrained. Fierce, strident, it filled the truck and spread through the night air.

Having miraculously shot his way from a prison made of stuff that bullets could not damage, The Shadow was surging forth in person to deal with crooks who had classed his doom a certainty!

### CHAPTER XIII. VENGEANCE POSTPONED.

ONE factor handicapped The Shadow in his surge. His guns were empty; he'd spent their full quota of bullets in making his impossible escape. Offsetting that disadvantage was the matter of the escape itself.

To Whip and Dash, the thing was incredible. They felt that they were meeting a fighter who couldn't be real. Nor did they know The Shadow's guns were empty. At these close quarters they feared that the mere attempt to dodge would bring them bullets of the super sort that had ruined the myth of glazite.

They grabbed for The Shadow to assure themselves that he existed. If solid, like themselves, he wouldn't be able to withstand their gunfire. The Shadow was solid enough as the lunging men found out, but so were his own guns.

Slashing his automatics crisscross style, The Shadow knocked aside the revolvers that his foemen brandished. Shots rang out, but they only damaged the sides of the truck. Again, The Shadow's laugh came strident, proving he was still in combat.

As clever as it was weird, that laugh!

Moffrey's crew was arriving from the sedan. Hearing the mirth tuned to gunfire, they took it that The Shadow was supplying both. Instead of piling into the truck to overwhelm The Shadow, which would have been possible in such cramped quarters, the crooks dodged to the sides.

As they did, they saw the flimsy sides of the truck split wide. From one split dived Whip, gripping a smoking gun; the other side disgorged Dash, similarly equipped. Madly, the pair yelled that The Shadow's automatics were empty. Moffrey and his crowd took the hint and surged toward the back of the truck.

From within came a rapid gunfire that sent the crooks dodging.

It wasn't another miracle on The Shadow's part. He'd simply acquired Kipper's revolver from its sagged owner. Guessing the answer, Whip and Dash began shooting into the truck from the sides, at the same time yelling for Moffrey to make another attack at the rear. Figuring The Shadow's fresh gun to be empty, Moffrey led the surge.

Guns blazed a barrage that crooks themselves followed. No fighter could have stood that volley. But The Shadow was shielded against it; his buffer was the glazite safe.

Though he himself had demonstrated that it wasn't bulletproof, he was using it at present to show that it was!

The great cube came tilting right at the gunners who were spattering it with flattening slugs. Heaved by The Shadow, it tumbled out among the crooks who were surging for the rear of the truck. Again, glazite was proving that bullets couldn't even scratch it, but crooks didn't care.

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Having turned his shield into a missile, The Shadow would be easy prey within the truck, having spent the fire from his borrowed gun. Over and around the glazite safe, crooks scrambled into the truck from the rear. Whip and Dash were entering the front, from each side of the driver's seat where Kipper still lay bewildered.

They met amid the gleam of flashlights that burned from both directions, only to find astonishment surpassing all that had gone before. Wagging their ready revolvers, gunners couldn't find their target.

The Shadow had completely vanished!

IN back of the truck a curious thing was happening. The glazite safe was making another tilt, apparently of its own accord. It was teetering sideward, like a box opening from its lid.

A whispered laugh came from within the cubical container. That tone was The Shadow's.

In pitching the safe from the truck, The Shadow had done so by throwing himself inside it. Turning over, the safe had landed with its door side down. Now The Shadow was hoisting the bulk of the safe in order to release himself.

It had taken four men to carry that safe, but two could have just managed to lift it. The Shadow was apparently showing a strength surpassing that of two men combined, but the situation was deceptive. To begin with, The Shadow wasn't lifting the door with the rest of the safe, and that reduced the weight by one sixth. He had an added advantage in the fact that he wasn't lifting his own weight as his bearers had.

The crooks didn't count those factors as they heard the safe slap to the ground. Whip realized that The Shadow must have gone out inside the thing, and shouted so, but Dash yelled with equal certainty that The Shadow couldn't be free with the door side on the bottom. Taking it for granted that The Shadow's effort had failed, the whole crew piled out and surrounded the glazite cube, playing their flashlights into it.

They didn't see The Shadow. He was no longer there. What they did view was the simple evidence that proved how The Shadow had made the incredible possible.

The amazing escape was explained.

All claims regarding glazite were true. The stuff simply couldn't be nicked by bullets. The walls, the door of the safe were intact and unscarred, as were the glazite hinges. But the same did not apply to the steel combination lock.

For reasons mentioned, Arthur Benn had used a lock of steel instead of glazite. The lock had to be opaque to hide its inside combination and Benn had ordered a very special job. What Benn hadn't realized was that the very lock which was to make his strange safe fool-proof, supplied the weakness that reduced the strong box to one of ordinary quality. He might have made the entire safe opaque and avoided this weakness, but he probably preferred the novelty of glazite's transparent property.

As a prisoner in the indestructible safe, The Shadow had recognized its overlooked weakness.

His time nearly up, the stopping of the truck presaging some new element of disaster, The Shadow had played his last resort. Pitting two gunloads of bullets against the steel combination lock, The Shadow had taken a long chance and won. Under the hammering of gunfire, steel had given where glazite wouldn't.

PUZZLED by The Shadow's disappearance from the safe into which he had briefly returned, Whip Nelbin ordered an immediate search of the terrain. Most thugs would have refused to chance meeting The Shadow in

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the dark, but this crowd brimmed with confidence. Twice they'd met The Shadow in combat without experiencing a serious casualty.

At Tulpahannock, The Shadow had preferred to give his enemies the slip. Here, near Middledale, his empty guns forced him to do the same. Crooks didn't realize that they'd just been lucky. They thought they'd exploded the myth of The Shadow. He was a good hand at slugging with guns, remarkably skillful in making quick disappearances, but he hadn't cut loose with any fancy or devastating marksmanship.

So Whip's men went in search of their cloaked adversary, though they were wise enough to keep within call of each other, in case any individual should meet The Shadow too suddenly.

The one place that the searchers ignored was the vicinity of the sedan that had followed the truck up the grade. The ground was too open thereabouts to afford a hiding place, even for The Shadow. Thoughtlessly, the crooks failed to include their own car as a potential hideaway.

As soon as the crew was well spread, the sedan's motor started. Immediately the big car was wheeling about, handled by an expert who managed the maneuver with quick twists of the wheel. Shouts arose from among trees and along the cliff edge. They were followed by frantic, wild shots.

Defying the echoing fire came a chilling laugh, new mockery for Whip Nelbin and his band. That taunt symbolized departure as did the wave of a gloved hand, from the window of the sedan. Guided by a cloaked driver who looked like a humanized segment of night, the sedan whipped to the straightaway and spurted down the sloping road. It dipped below the level of the first guns that managed to take proper aim.

The Shadow was away, leaving the crooks with the glazite safe and the stolen truck. Ignoring the first, Whip and his outfit sprang into the second and started a mad pursuit. To their own surprise they sighted the sedan as they reached the main highway, so they kept going after it.

For several miles the chase was even, though the pursuers couldn't gain enough ground to use their guns. Then, as it passed a fork, the sedan showed the very speed which had caused Whip to originally acquire it. It left the truck so far behind that the pursuers began to feel more foolish than they were.

Whip Nelbin had just this to say about it:

"Let The Shadow go. He thinks he's licked us, but he hasn't. What if he does still have that brief case, with the papers that Channey and Benn handed over? They're no good without the last lot, and Dash knows where to get them."

"That's right" agreed Dash. "Our next stop is Lake City, where we'll see a fellow named Joseph Tario. The Shadow won't hear from Staffert, because he's given the dope to me instead. I'm still Chet Ferris, as much as The Shadow is."

"That's about right," asserted Whip. "Maybe it's more than right. From what you've told me about this Ferris guy he's not important enough to be The Shadow. For one thing he hasn't been around long, while we know The Shadow has."

"You're talking sense," complimented Dash. "I was thinking the same thing, Whip. The Shadow is just doubling for Chet the way I am. This time we'll beat The Shadow to it."

Miles away, The Shadow was swinging the sedan into an old dirt road that led by devious routes to another highway. Purposely, he had let the truck follow him along the original trail to convince the crooks that he was

headed anywhere except toward Lake City.

However, his prowess had impressed them, crooks would not believe that The Shadow could have learned essential facts while confined in the air-tight, sound-proof safe. In observing the lip and pencil motions supplied by Dash Thermer, The Shadow had secretly picked up important information for the future that he was still living to enjoy.

A sibilant laugh came from within the jouncing sedan, The Shadow's pronouncement that he would be the first to visit the last man on the list of inventors, Joseph Tario.

### CHAPTER XIV. A MISSION FULFILLED.

MUCH though The Shadow regretted his postponement of vengeance upon men of crime, he considered it good policy. It was better to fulfill Chet's mission and settle crime's scores afterward. Such was The Shadow's constant thought all during the grueling drive to Lake City.

A twenty-hour stretch, that trip, with only a few brief pauses. Nor could The Shadow afford to ease his speed during the torturous journey that traversed many mountain regions, far to the southeast. He'd gained his head start and intended to keep it, which meant he must be constantly on the go.

For The Shadow knew that Whip Nelbin and his thieving crew would somewhere find a better vehicle than the truck. With a fast car and drivers taking turns at the wheel, they would burn the road in getting to Lake City, regardless of speed limits.

It was late the next afternoon when The Shadow reached Lake City and found it a town more sizable than Tulpahannock and Middledale combined. Working from an imperfect address, it took The Shadow a while to find Tario's house, but when he located it he knew that it was the right place.

Apparently, Tario wasn't as careful about keeping under cover as were the other inventors, because his front door had a knocker made of glazite. Rapping it, The Shadow heard the peculiar clang that proved the metallic qualities of the substance.

Admitted to the house by a bowing servant, The Shadow was treated to a mild surprise when the visitor inquired if he happened to be Mr. Ferris. Since he had again resumed Chet's personality, The Shadow naturally responded in the affirmative, whereupon the servant conducted him to a reception room quite as large as Dunstan's.

There was this difference: Whereas Dunstan had confined his display of glazite to a laboratory, much as Benn kept his specimens of the substance in a study, Tario gloried in the wonder material. All of the furnishings were glazite: not only tables, chairs and footstools, but even the grand piano that occupied a corner.

A deep-green curtain brushed aside. Its scintillating folds revealed that it was glazite, too. Beyond the emerald drape another servant was bowing through an open door to a second room equipped with glazite.

This scene was indeed amazing. However much the other inventors had contributed to the creation of glazite, Tario had far outdone them in the uses to which he had put the discovery. This inner apartment was actually a curio room, filled with replicas of antiques, done in glazite. Suits of transparent armor, old-fashioned weapons, such as battle axes, even an ancient throne, made of glazite, were among the oddities assembled.

Another curtain stirred and The Shadow was ushered into a final room as modern as the previous one was

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ancient. This could best be termed a display room. For variety of content it outshone Dunstan's laboratory, the place where The Shadow had first viewed glazite in plenty.

THOUGH it lacked a transparent safe like Benn's, this room had everything else. Walls, floor and ceiling were all of the invisible metal, the ceiling serving as a skylight because this was an interior room that had no windows. All about, on glazite tables and stands, were models made of the miracle material.

Many of these looked like toys, such as ship models and doll houses, but they were constructed with a nicety of finish. Among the assortment, The Shadow observed objects that appeared to be mere whims: a transparent radio set, a revolver that looked like a glass gun, a typewriter made entirely of glazite, billiard balls of the same material.

Most conspicuous, however, was a desk in the center of the room, equipped with glazite accessories, such as pens, paperweights, and even a wastebasket. At that desk sat Joseph Tario, a dark-haired man with blunt face and broad eyes against a sallow complexion. Tario was smoking a transparent pipe with which he gestured his visitor to a chair.

"I am glad to meet you, Ferris," said Tario, leaning forward. "You see, I have expected you—and so have these men."

As Tario waved his arm, two men appeared quite suddenly, each from a different stairway leading into the room. Like the rest of the place, the steps were made of glazite, hence the men seemed to arrive from nowhere. However, The Shadow's keen eyes were quick enough to detect the trick.

It was done with mirrors. The circular steps were silvered, giving the illusion that they were transparent like everything else. But The Shadow caught a reflection of the advancing men and therefore recognized that the spiral stairways were actually hiding places, neatly disguised. The two men had been lurking several steps down and around the turns of the descending stairs.

As they arrived, the pair flanked The Shadow. They had the look of local detectives, for they were carrying genuine revolvers and steel handcuffs. In producing those implements they showed their badges, along with their intent to take The Shadow into custody if Tario ordered it.

As Chet, it was The Shadow's part to show surprise. One dick relieved him of the brief case, the other searched him for guns and promptly found the brace of automatics that were parked beneath The Shadow's coat. The pair acted as though that established the visitor as a crook, but Tario thought otherwise.

"Of course Ferris would be armed," he explained. "Staffert said he would be. Do not arrest him; simply keep his weapons until he proves that he is the real Ferris. You see"—Tario's eyes studied The Shadow shrewdly—"I have heard from Staffert since last night."

The Shadow gave one of Chet's brisk nods.

"That doesn't surprise me," he declared. "What does surprise me is the fact you're advertising yourself so openly. Staffert said you'd be in hiding like the rest."

"I am in hiding," returned Tario dryly. "It simply happens that I prepared this house long ago. The things that you see here are not on public display."

"What about the glazite door-knocker?"

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"How stupid of me!" exclaimed Tario. "I must have it changed at once. You are right, it gives away my whereabouts."

"You've given yourself away completely," declared The Shadow, still using Chet's tone. "If you're really trying to keep out of sight why did you call these men in here?"

The Shadow gestured at the dicks, who were at present unloading his automatics. Tario promptly decided to explain their presence.

"I thought it wise to take the local authorities into my confidence," he stated. "I thought it would be for the good of all. Poor Dunstan was murdered, Staffert stands wrongly accused of the crime, while Channey and Benn have both been exposed to danger. These detectives have assured me that what happens here will go no further. You may speak freely, Ferris—if you are Ferris."

The Shadow gestured to the brief case, suggesting that Tario open it. The inventor did so and found the envelopes that The Shadow had collected from Channey and Benn. The Shadow thought that the discovery of those formulas would merely sway Tario in his favor; instead, it practically convinced the inventor.

Reaching to a shelf, Tario brought down a glazite box, and unlocked it with a key of the same material. He drew out a third envelope which he added to the others. Dropping them all in the brief case, he shoved it across the desk to his visitor and declared:

"I am fully satisfied. You are free to leave, Ferris."

THE SHADOW did not budge. If he had, guns would have prodded him from the hands of the detectives. This was Tario's final test, applied so subtly that it would have trapped an unwary impostor. From the corner of his eye The Shadow could see one detective edge forward, ready to pounce at the first move. But there was no move, except The Shadow's process of folding his arms to anchor himself deeper in the glazite chair he occupied.

"How can I leave?" he inquired in Chet's brisk manner. "This is as far as my trail leads."

"But you must return to Staffert."

"Of course," agreed The Shadow, "as soon as I know where to find him. But the last instructions that I received were those that brought me here. I'll have to stay until I hear from Staffert, otherwise he can never reach me."

"But Staffert said you'd know where to find him."

"He couldn't have said that. He's hiding out the same as you are. He wants to be sure I have all the formulas and am safely in the clear before he tells me where to go next. I want to deliver these formulas to Staffert, and the only sure way is for me to wait here until he remembers that he must tell me more."

The Shadow's tone was most convincing. He was basing it on logic, together with the facts that he had pieced. Of one thing The Shadow was certain: the real Chet Ferris did not know where this trail would end. As for Tario, he in turn was certain that a false Chet Ferris would have lost no time in leaving with the three formulas.

Therefore Tario regarded his visitor as bona fide. Across the desk, Tario extended a congratulating hand. With his other hand he produced a letter that was still sealed.

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"You have proven yourself, Ferris," commended Tario. "I made a misstatement, simply to test you. This letter arrived today from Staffert. It is addressed to you. Open it and learn your final instructions."

The Shadow opened the letter, read it, and calmly placed it in his pocket, an action which further pleased Tario. Then, in Chet's most confidential tone, The Shadow gave Tario an important warning.

"I've gone through a lot," explained The Shadow, "but now that I've fulfilled my mission of collecting the formulas, I'd better warn you that enemies have picked up my trail."

"Why warn me?" queried Tario with a smile. "They are on your trail, not mine."

"The trail lead here," informed The Shadow. "I'll be gone when they arrive, but you won't. So you'd better prepare to repel invaders."

"I'm already prepared," assured Tario, "so you have simply to watch out for yourself, Ferris. Since you may need your guns, they shall be returned to you."

Tario gestured to the detectives, but they stepped back reluctantly. To their way of thinking, Ferris wouldn't need his automatics. By bringing the law into the case, Tario had produced some technical angles. These dicks couldn't let a man walk out of here, carrying a brace of guns. There was a law in this State against carrying concealed deadly weapons.

The Shadow didn't want to waive the question. He preferred to have his guns because he was privately planning to remain in this vicinity until Whip Nelbin showed up with his full crew. The Shadow doubted that the local detectives could put up much resistance against that tribe, which meant that he would be needed.

Right here at Tario's, The Shadow could find the right time and place to deal with men of crime, though he didn't care to say so. While passing as Chet Ferris, he couldn't talk about his other self, The Shadow.

Fortunately, The Shadow had an ally in Tario. The inventor insisted that Staffert's messenger had a full right to bear arms. He began to argue the point with the detectives and Tario did it convincingly, but slowly. In quoting laws that he appeared to know quite well, Tario adopted a long-winded style. Easing back in his chair, The Shadow assumed an indifference that went well with the character of Chet Ferris. In fact, The Shadow acted the part so well that he overplayed it.

When Tario ended his speech abruptly it was a moment before The Shadow realized why. That moment was enough to put The Shadow in the same predicament as the others in the room. Coming up in his chair, The Shadow gave his head a quick turn and saw the reason for the new dilemma.

Newcomers were easing into the room from the mirrored stairs at either side. They were holding drawn guns with which they covered Tario and the two detectives who still had custody of The Shadow's automatics. In brief, the invaders were taking things over, and though newcomers, they weren't new to The Shadow.

Whip Nelbin was leading a thuggish group from one direction; Dash Thermer headed those who came from the other. Though they'd lost their race with The Shadow, these men of crime had made better time than he expected.

Like The Shadow, they were here to fulfill a mission; that of acquiring the glazite formulas and more. Their mission included a most discouraging feature:

Death to The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XV. A QUESTION OF GUNS.

ONE thing saved The Shadow's life at that crucial moment. The invaders spared their chief victim temporarily because they recognized that he was helpless. They heard Tario's arguments in regard to returning Chet's guns and observed that the detectives were about to do so. Sizing the situation thoroughly, including the fact that The Shadow was weaponless, Whip gestured for Dash to restrain himself.

Dash complied, very willingly. Like The Shadow, Dash was impersonating Chet Ferris, and his actor's pride made Dash believe that he was doing the better job. Taking their cues from the leaders, the other crooks concentrated on the detectives, and promptly deprived them of their own guns and The Shadow's. Yet all the while the would-be killers were keeping close watch on The Shadow.

Whip gave Dash the nod.

"I've just arrived in time," stated Dash, briskly, turning to Tario. "You've been deceived by an impostor. You'd better let us handle him."

The Shadow was thinking fast. Compared to his dilemma of the night before, this spot was far worse. Then at least he'd had the protection of a bulletproof stronghold even though its impregnability had threatened to turn it into his tomb. He'd been equipped with guns, at least for clubbing purposes.

At present there was nothing at hand for either defense or offense. If ever The Shadow had found himself totally at the mercy of criminal enemies, this was the time!

It was like being in a torture chamber, where the slightest motion of the victim would lead to his own undoing. Though standing free, The Shadow was as good as bound, considering that guns were beginning to concentrate upon him.

To inch in any direction would prove instantly fatal. What The Shadow needed was slack to relieve the tension. Mental slack that could give him a fighting chance. Moreover, upon The Shadow's survival depended the lives of others: Tario and the two detectives who had so stupidly precipitated this mess.

THERE was just one rift in the situation: the fact that the crooks weren't anxious to resort to slaughter if they could outwit The Shadow. This group was unique, being composed of thugs who had twice met The Shadow without losing any of their number. They were giving him a talking chance, if nothing more, so The Shadow relied upon a cool but rapid bluff.

Ignoring the rest, The Shadow addressed Dash Thermer.

"So you're the fellow The Shadow told us about." There was a pronounced sneer in The Shadow's tone, expressing the sort of contempt that Chet Ferris was prone to show. "It was nice of him to make the rounds ahead of me."

Dash gave The Shadow a puzzled stare.

"Only this time I'm ahead of him," continued The Shadow. "I had to be, because he didn't know where to go after he left Middledale. You talked to Staffert over Benn's phone; The Shadow didn't."

Using the argument that was in the minds of crooks themselves, The Shadow was convincing them that he was the real Chet Ferris!

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

"Staffert knew there was something phony happening." As he spoke, The Shadow strolled away from the desk. "He was lucky enough to get hold of me late last night and he sent me here by plane. So if you're after The Shadow, you'll have to wait until he shows up again—if he ever does."

The statements were telling on Whip Nelbin and the thuggish gentry who served him. Like Dash, they were giving The Shadow leeway, considering him reasonably harmless. In his pacing, he reached one of the display shelves where the glazite models were on exhibit. There, open-handed, The Shadow began a gesture typical of Chet.

"You see—"

Before The Shadow could continue, Dash saw. Struck suddenly with the idea that his attention was being diverted the wrong way, Dash ignored The Shadow's present stance and looked back to the place where he had been, namely Tario's desk.

There, big as life, rested the same fat brief case that had accompanied The Shadow in all his travels.

Since the brief case had arrived here, it was plain that The Shadow could have done the same!

The spell broken, Dash gave a quick shout to Whip and the others. Turning, they saw Dash pointing to the telltale brief case. Remembering The Shadow, Dash wheeled toward the personage in question, anxious to fire the first shot at crime's archfoe.

In that brief interval The Shadow was showing speed of his own. He'd wheeled to the display shelf, now he was around again, and in his fist The Shadow held a revolver that he swung in a wide semicircle to include the entire throng of crooks.

Though The Shadow still looked like Chet, his enemies knew him for his real self. They stiffened, their own guns frozen in their fists. Much though they outnumbered The Shadow, no one man was willing to bear the brunt of his attack. Seemingly, The Shadow had gained what he wanted, a fighting chance.

It was Dash who broke the spell again.

Forgetting that he, too, was supposed to be Chet Ferris, Dash became his triumphant self. He saw the shelf from which The Shadow had snatched the revolver. Being closer than anyone else, Dash also observed that the gun was transparent!

"That gat's a fake!" shouted Dash. "It's glass, or maybe glazite, but what's the difference? The thing is as phony as the guy himself. So why waste time? Let's croak him!"

Driving straight for The Shadow, Dash thrust his gun ahead of him and tugged the trigger. At the same time the crooks saw The Shadow perform a rapid twist, bringing the imitation gun to bear. That The Shadow's weapon was merely glazite proved only too apparent the moment that the gun stopped short.

It was one man or the other: Dash Thermer or The Shadow. No time to parry with either bluff or threat. Yet The Shadow was going through with his folly, for as Dash tugged the trigger of the steel revolver, The Shadow did the same with the glazite replica.

Two guns roared as one.

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

Thanks to The Shadow's twist, Dash's bullet missed him. But The Shadow's shot was point-blank. Dash took a long, hard dive that laid him prone at The Shadow's feet. It seemed that an invisible hand had come from nowhere to strike down a murderer before he could complete his ugly deed!

Even Whip Nelbin cowered away, like the rest of his astonished crew. Then, with bulging eyes, Whip saw the thing that told him this was no marvel, but a scientific fact.

A tiny curl of smoke was writhing from the muzzle of the revolver that The Shadow had acquired.

The glazite gun was real!

So closely did it resemble glass that Dash, like the rest, had forgotten the true quality of glazite. Only The Shadow had detected that this was a real gun. That was more than logical, considering that glazite was actually a metal, intended to replace steel. Tario was too proud of the wonder metal to waste it in constructing a mere imitation of anything that could actually be duplicated.

Like the revolver, the cartridges were glazite, and so were their bullets. As a final touch, Tario had added a colorless powder. A transparent gun with an invisible load!

On the floor lay Dash Thermer, dead, not living, proof that The Shadow's weapon could deliver. And now the fighter with the glazite gun was wheeling for a corner, still brandishing the amazing weapon, as though inviting all corners.

They came—a horde of them.

From the midst of a rapid shift, The Shadow jabbed shots at the few foemen who were quick enough to aim at him. The transparent gun blazed from deep within its barrel and its shots clipped the astonished crooks. Then the rest were springing like a wolf pack, thinking they could easily blast The Shadow, for he was still in plain sight.

In plain sight, but safe.

The Shadow was beyond the display racks which looked like glass, but weren't. Bullets couldn't reach him because of the shielding glazite. Maddened by their own inability, Whip and his murderous followers were making themselves open prey, not only for The Shadow, but others.

Tario was away from his desk, grabbing up the gun that Dash had dropped. Seeing Tario, Whip aimed a shot at his head. The bullet glanced away because Tario was wearing an improvised helmet, the glazite wastebasket, inverted on his shoulders.

The detectives were coming after the crooks, thrusting glazite chairs legs first. Thugs jabbed shots at them, but when the bullets hit the chair seats they flattened. It was wonderful stuff, this glazite, a perfect shield against gunfire and at the same time a substance that offered complete visibility.

Bowled back by the jabbing chair legs, Whip's men went into a panic.

Madly, they took to flight, by the nearest staircase. Whip went with them, and all four dived from sight beyond the mirrored steps. All four was the right number because of the original six, two were lying stiff, along with Dash.

## MESSENGER OF DEATH

One of that pair was Moffrey. Whip's other lieutenant, Kipper, escaped along with his chief. Odd that Kipper should be in flight, because The Shadow had scored a direct hit on the fellow. The answer came when Tario grabbed for Kipper only to have the crook twist from his coat and continue his dive down the stairs.

From the inside pocket fell the thick wad of bills representing the bets placed by Whip and Dash, on the respective merits of Garland and Staffert as the big brain behind crime. The currency was in small bills, hence the packet had been thick enough to stop the bullet from The Shadow's glazite gun.

In flight, the crooks had chosen the stairs across the room from The Shadow. Hence the pursuit was taken up by Tario and the detectives who all had guns in hand. Knowing that the trio would be in his way, The Shadow decided to use the other stairs. First, however, he sprang to Tario's desk, picked up the brief case and obtained his hat and cloak.

His guns were lying on a chair where the crooks had put them. Regaining the automatics, The Shadow made his departure, taking the brief case also. Tario's servants, arriving on the scene of recent battle, saw only a black shape that seemed to spread because of the mirrors at the far stairs. Then blackness dwindled into nothingness.

It was ghostly, the way The Shadow vanished. Adding to the uncanny fact was the shivering, trailing laugh that drifted back from the hidden stairs, like the departing token of a creature returning to another sphere.

Whip Nelbin and his remaining followers heard a repetition of that laugh as they sprang into a car outside the house and drove madly off into the night. It came from beyond the house and therefore signified that The Shadow was not in a position to halt the wild escape.

But that wasn't the way that fleeing crooks interpreted the mirth. Having witnessed The Shadow's vengeance, they took his mockery as an omen, a promise that The Shadow, like his laugh, would trail them to complete the unsettled score!

## CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW'S MOVE.

MORE overbearing than ever, Gregg Garland was making it his personal business to lay down the law to the law itself. He'd been doing it for the past three days, much to the discomfort of Commissioner Weston, who wanted to object but couldn't.

At present they were seated in the Cobalt Club, where the commissioner always went after office hours. Garland had taken it upon himself to invade Weston's private preserves and continue the harangue. Inspector Cardona was an interested but close-mouthed listener.

"Utter inefficiency!" stormed Garland. "If you had apprehended Hugh Staffert a week ago, matters could not have reached the stage they have. This affair at Lake City, involving Joseph Tario, is the outcrop of your own mistakes, commissioner.

"You're forgetting something," inserted Weston testily. "Lake City is a long way outside my jurisdiction. How could I control what happened there?"

"There and other places," sneered Garland. "Other places that you can't even locate. Tell me, where did this fellow Chet Ferris stop before he went to see Tario?"

It was Cardona who answered, reading from a report sheet that he brought from his pocket.

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"First, Chet saw a man named Louis Channey," stated Cardona. "Next, he visited an inventor named Arthur Benn. He picked up formulas from each of them."

"As he did from Tario," added Weston. "That's where Ferris had his run-in with Dash Thermer, who was trying to double for him."

"Positive facts," emphasized Cardona. "They came straight from Tario."

Garland supplied a broad smile. "But where is Tario at present?"

"We don't know," admitted Weston. "After what happened in Lake City he decided to go into hiding, like Channey and Benn."

"Not like Channey and Benn," objected Garland. "They've never come out of hiding. Wherever they were, they've stayed put. For all we know, they may be dead."

Weston gave an incredulous stare. "Here are the facts, commissioner," insisted Garland. "Five men worked to create the final product they called glazite. Dunstan was the spokesman for the lot. He was murdered."

It was Cardona who shot the sudden question:

"By whom?"

"By Staffert, of course," returned Garland. "He was next in line, so he had everything to gain. We know that Dunstan kept his side door open so his inventor friends could visit him whenever they wanted. So let's go on from there."

While Garland was talking, another man entered the grill room, where the conference was being held. So intent were Garland and his listeners that they did not notice the arrival. Calmly, Lamont Cranston took a chair and became a member of the group.

Garland's analysis of Staffert's actions was both simple and direct. What Staffert wanted was to acquire all the formulas, feeling sure that with four processes at hand he could easily work out the final one that Dunstan had added.

According to Garland, Dunstan himself had admitted it would be comparatively easy because he'd made his own experiments with the emulsion without knowing its exact contents or proportions. But Dunstan was likewise the man who refused to sell glazite outright. It was his idea to dedicate the miracle metal to the needs of humanity rather than gear it to profit.

"Staffert just didn't agree," concluded Garland. "Why should he? Dunstan's idea was crazy, anyway."

"Perhaps it was," observed Weston, "but it may have been shared by some of the others."

"Exactly," expressed Garland. "By Tario, Benn and Channey, more or less, but not by Staffert. By getting rid of Dunstan, Staffert threw a scare into the rest. Since they've delivered, Staffert has everything."

A calm tone inserted a question which made three men turn in surprise, since they hadn't known a fourth had joined them.

"If Staffert does have those formulas," inquired Cranston, "what will he do after he produces glazite?"

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"He'll try to sell it," returned Garland. "Probably to me, since I've offered a million dollars for it."

"And would you buy it?"

"Of course not!" stormed Garland indignantly. "I would not accept stolen goods. And, besides"—Garland's thick face betrayed its natural shrewdness—"I can obtain the same product elsewhere. Since glazite is a proven fact, every chemical experimenter in the country is trying to duplicate it.

"Someone will surely succeed. All modern chemists need is the knowledge that a thing is possible. Look here"—Garland brought a fat bundle of letters from his pocket—"all these are from chemists who tell me they are on the glazite trail. I have written them to keep on trying. My offer of a million still stands."

Rising, Garland stalked from the grillroom, letting the others mull over the hard-headed statements that he had made.

WITH Garland gone, the first to express himself was Inspector Cardona. From the vociferous way Joe spoke, it was evident that he had a hunch, for he seldom broke loose verbally except when so inspired.

"Call Staffert the killer," conceded Cardona. "But if Staffert is a crook, Garland is a fox. He'll buy glazite all right, or anything that comes up to it, and there will be no questions asked. But you know who will sell it to him, don't you?"

"Not Staffert!" exclaimed Weston.

"Who else?" demanded Cardona. Then, stiffening to his more stolid mood, he added: "But get this straight, commissioner, I'm not implicating Garland in Dunstan's death. I've studied that case closely and things hadn't reached the state where Garland would use murder to get what he wanted.

"Garland still had some cards to play. He didn't really believe Dunstan was serious, because Garland can't imagine anybody passing up a million bucks. So he was hoping to swing Dunstan around, Garland was. If he couldn't, he still could have insisted that Dunstan bring the other inventors into the conference. Being fair-minded, Dunstan probably would have."

Looking toward Cranston, Weston received a nod which proved that his friend agreed with Cardona's basic statements. Then, in his own quiet style, Cranston brought up an important angle.

"We know that Chet Ferris was Staffert's messenger," declared Cranston. "That being the case, why should Staffert have sent Dash Thermer to double for Chet? Rather redundant, wasn't it?"

"Maybe Staffert just wanted to throw a scare into the other inventors."

"Hardly necessary," observed Cranston, "considering that they were already in hiding. Moreover, two identical messengers must surely have caused serious doubts among the men who received them. You'll have to analyze Staffert's case more thoroughly, inspector."

Cardona registered the expression of a man conducting a mental analysis. Then:

"Forget Staffert!" said Cardona suddenly. "Let's get back to Garland. He could have doped the whole thing out ahead of time. Step one: to murder Dunstan. Next, a frame job throwing the blame on Staffert. Final: the business of a fake messenger to snatch the formulas that Chet went to get."

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It was Cranston's turn to bow himself out, which he did with a smile that neither Weston nor Cardona noticed. The commissioner and his ace inspector were burrowing into report sheets to compare the two theories and learn how many demerits they would charge to Staffert and Garland respectively.

Having provided the law with plenty to consider, Cranston made his slow exit. He lingered only long enough to learn if Weston and Cardona would begin with the basis he expected. They did. Both agreed that the vital formulas must have been delivered by this time to Hugh Staffert; whether he or Gregg Garland was the real brain of crime had no bearing on that angle.

Small wonder that Lamont Cranston smiled.

As he went through the foyer of the Cobalt Club, the commissioner's friend reached into his inside pocket and felt the three envelopes containing the very formulas that Staffert should have received to go along with his own. There was a smaller envelope in Cranston's pocket. It was Staffert's letter telling Chet Ferris where he could be found.

Entering a limousine, the leisurely Mr. Cranston settled back until the big car pulled away from the club. Then, pulling open a hidden drawer beneath the rear seat, Cranston produced the black regalia that symbolized his other self, The Shadow.

Moving through Manhattan's streets, the limousine looked empty as it always did when its passenger was a weird being whose black cloth cloak and slouch hat blended with the car's darkened interior!

## CHAPTER XVII. DOUBLE TROUBLE.

THE door of the farmhouse opened and Chet entered to greet the men who were seated there. Two of them had risen and were drawing guns, but when they saw the arrival they sat down again. Since he wasn't Chet, they didn't have to worry.

The real Chet Ferris was seated at the kitchen table. The men who had risen were Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland. They knew that the double in the doorway was their chief, The Shadow.

"You've had a rather troublesome week, Ferris," remarked The Shadow in Chet's own tone. "However, I can assure you that you avoided a great many complications. In fact, I rather doubt that you would have survived them."

"I agree with you on that," retorted Chet, his tone carrying a definite snarl. "Maybe you just forgot yourself and knocked off Dash Thermer because he looked like me."

"All to your credit," stated The Shadow. "You'll find yourself quite a hero when you get back in circulation. It's well established that Dash received what he deserved."

"And so will you," snapped Chet, "when I bring the police to this place and show them where your gang kept me for a week. Kidnapping is a serious offense, you know!"

Harry and Cliff made gestures to indicate that Chet had been acting in this unreasonable style all along. However, Chet's attitude didn't worry The Shadow. If Chet meant the things he said, he wouldn't be saying them. He was simply talking big, because he knew The Shadow wasn't the sort to do anything about it. Had Chet been in the hands of men who really dealt in murder and abduction, his words would have been his death warrant, something that he could not fail to realize.

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Nevertheless, The Shadow considered it good policy to have the last word. Chet's mood greatly pleased The Shadow because it meant that he was in proper fettle for a particular assignment that The Shadow had in mind for him.

"If you prefer it, Ferris," said The Shadow, "I can drop in to see the police and tell them that I was crooked all along. Of course I would be speaking for you, since I would wear my present disguise. But I wouldn't place myself in custody; I'd leave that for you to do when the police caught up with you. It would be rather difficult for you to repudiate your own confession."

"You win," snapped Chet. "All right, let me out of here and send me a bill for a week's lodging. Only I won't pay it. I'll keep my trap shut, that's all."

"It's not so simple as all that," The Shadow stated. He drew three envelopes from his pocket and spread them fanwise. "You see, I must first deliver these."

"The formulas!"

"Correct. Do you know, Ferris, I have an idea that they may be worth more to me than to Garland. Particularly after Staffert hands me over his."

This time, Harry and Cliff joined in Chet's stare. The agents actually wondered if this could be their own chief, The Shadow. Still, he couldn't be Dash Thermer, come to life, and still playing a crooked game. Then a slight glint from The Shadow's eyes revealed the truth to Harry and Cliff.

The Shadow wanted Chet to think that his double had turned crooked!

Why and to what avail, the agents could not conjecture. The most that they could guess was that The Shadow wanted Chet to play a special part in things to come and felt that Chet would do it all the better if he thought the action was his own idea.

"Get the car out, Vincent," The Shadow told Harry. "You and Marsland are taking Ferris on a long ride. Don't harm him, you understand. I simply want him to be far enough away when I am meeting Staffert."

"Give him these letters when you ditch him, sometime tomorrow morning. They belong to him, so I suppose he'd like to read them after it's too late to matter. Considering all the charges against me, I wouldn't want to run into complications with the post-office department, through failure to give a man his mail."

OUTSIDE the farmhouse, Harry brought the car from the barn, just as The Shadow stepped from the house itself. Within a few paces The Shadow abolished the personality of Chet's double by enveloping himself in cloak and slouch hat. Arriving beside the car, The Shadow flicked a tiny flashlight on a road map.

He showed Harry the course he was to take, leading westward from this place, which happened to be in New Jersey; then across the Pennsylvania border into the mountain region. It wasn't much more than an hour's drive to the spot that The Shadow dotted on the road map.

As he folded the map and handed it to Harry, The Shadow shifted a package that he was carrying with it, a long, narrow package that he slid beneath his cloak. As the flashlight blinked off, Harry listened to further instructions from his chief.

Those orders received, Harry heard a slight swish from the darkness. The next token of The Shadow was the low rumble of a smooth-running motor as a sleek roadster pulled away from the farmhouse. Again, The

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Shadow was bound upon a mission of his own choosing, leaving Chet's case to his agents.

SOON after that, Harry and Cliff put Chet between them in a coupé and started their journey. They rode along for half an hour before Chet inquired if they had any idea where they were taking him. Harry gave an indifferent shrug.

"Somewhere in the mountains," he answered. "Far enough off a main road so you'll have a long walk back."

"It's your own fault, Ferris," put in Cliff. "We'd have squared everything for you if you hadn't made that kidnap crack. After all, the chief is only human."

"Is he?" sneered Chet. "I didn't notice it."

"Probably because he was made up to look like you," put in Harry. "If he acted nasty, he was only trying to imitate your disposition. Before I forget it, here are those letters. Put them in your pocket."

At the end of another half-hour, Harry stopped the car at a fork in the road. The coupé had a spotlight, so Harry turned it on a road sign. Along with a large arrow appeared the legend: TULPAHANNOCK 3 MILES

"This road looks as good as any," said Harry in an indifferent tone. "I guess it will get us back to the route we want. We'll try it."

In Chet's mind the name Tulpahannock woke a startling recollection, for it was the place where Staffert had ordered him to go. Since Harry gave the name little attention, Chet assumed that he had forgotten it. Nor did Cliff show any interest in the place.

Actually, Cliff's cue was Harry's indifference. The Shadow's agents didn't travel willy-nilly as Chet supposed. In stopping the car and literally pointing out the road sign with the spotlight, Harry was tipping off Cliff to something special. Confident that Harry was working under orders direct from The Shadow, Cliff prepared to play along when the time came.

Driving right through Tulpahannock, Harry took a steep road on the far side of the town. It ended in a dirt stretch that crossed an old covered bridge over a ravine. Stopping the car, Harry grumbled that they were off the road and suggested that Cliff look at the bridge and see how safe it was.

As Cliff strode through the rickety bridge, Harry leaned out of the window and turned the spotlight after him. At that moment Chet was totally unguarded, with the door on the right side wide open, inviting him to make a break.

Chet took the invitation.

With one leap he was out of the car, slamming the door behind him. He heard Harry shout; across his shoulder, Chet saw Cliff turn in the glare of the spotlight. Without further hesitation, Chet flung himself across a rail beside the road and started a rolling trip down the steep slope beyond.

The ravine itself wasn't dangerous. Its slope was soft, not rocky, and there were plenty of trees for Chet to grab. The real danger lay above, at least so Chet thought, because Harry and Cliff did their best to make him think so.

They swept the spotlight down the slope and fired shots along its path. Luck was with Chet, for every time they picked a tree instead of him. It didn't occur to Chet that he was spotted several times by the roving light.

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Always it swept past him, purposely.

Crouched near the bottom of the gully, Chet heard the car roar away from above and took it that The Shadow's agents had decided that they must have clipped him with their gunfire. Coming to his feet, Chet followed the stream in the direction of Tulpahannock.

WITHIN the next half hour, a bedraggled young man arrived at Channey's residence and announced himself as Chet Ferris. As proof of his identity, he presented a letter which had been mailed to Tulpahannock a week earlier. After eyeing Chet closely, Louis Channey gave one of his friendly smiles and gestured Chet into a side room.

"I thought I'd met the real Chet Ferris," said Channey, seating himself at his desk, "but apparently I didn't. Tell me"—his face went serious—"does the wrong man have my formula?"

"One of the wrong men," replied Chet. "Not Dash Thermer, because he's dead. But The Shadow was pulling the double act, too. He has all the formulas and he's going to add Staffert's to his collection."

"I've heard of The Shadow. But I've supposed he was quite honest."

"That's just a cover-up. I ought to know, because The Shadow sent me on a one-way ride tonight. They slipped when they brought me through Tulpahannock. Knowing you lived here, I made a break for it."

Channey gave his head a worried shake.

"I don't know how I can help," he declared. "I haven't heard a word from Staffert. Evidently he is still in hiding, probably waiting to hear from you."

"That's just it," agreed Chet. "But take a look at this, Mr. Channey. It's another letter The Shadow picked up in my stead. One that came to Tario's. He let me have it because he thought I'd never get a chance to read it."

Opening the desk drawer, Channey took out the long paper cutter intending to slice the envelope. He paused when he saw that it was already open. Chet was spreading the final letter on the desk.

"Here it is in black and white," declared Chet. "Staffert is still in New York. He has a laboratory in the basement of the old Cairo Theater, which he owns, though nobody knows it."

"An excellent place!" exclaimed Channey. "Why, no one would ever think of looking in an empty theater for a missing inventor."

"No one except The Shadow," returned Chet. "He read this letter three days ago and he's just been waiting for things to cool before going there. I don't think he's in a hurry, considering the way he acted. But it's up to us to act quicker from now on."

Consulting a timetable, Channey discovered that there was a train for New York within the next hour. He told Chet to brush up so they could start for the depot. As they left the room Channey was adding that he would pack a bag and come along.

As the door closed behind the two men, darkness stirred. From a corner that the door obscured when open, the gliding figure of The Shadow approached Channey's desk and paused, while a soft laugh came from hidden lips.

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The letters were gone, so The Shadow could not reclaim them; Channey had carried them along with the paper cutter. But there was still a way for The Shadow to while away the next half-hour. His flashlight began a series of glimmers, extinguishing itself whenever The Shadow paused to listen.

Channey did not come back to this room at all. When he and Chet were ready to leave, it was very nearly train time. Channey summoned a cab and The Shadow watched it leave with its two passengers. The Shadow made that observation from a corner of Channey's porch, having left the house by a window a few minutes before.

The Shadow's car was parked a block away from Channey's house. Reaching it, The Shadow started the smooth roadster purring toward New York, confident that he could clip the train time by a wide margin.

Having opened the trail to Staffert's, The Shadow was going there for a final showdown wherein witnesses would be present when crime revealed its hand!

### CHAPTER XVIII. INVENTORS AGREE.

THE old Cairo Theater formed as perfect a lurking spot as any that The Shadow had ever seen. Curiously, it had remained totally forgotten during the years since it closed. The Shadow had never come across it, during his many adventures in tracking down crime, though he knew of the theater.

This being the first time that he had entered the premises after dark, The Shadow realized what a remarkable opportunity crooks had overlooked. Side alleys, fire escapes, low roofs, all were made to order for marauders who wanted to come and go whenever they wished.

As for The Shadow, he was a thing invisible in surroundings such as these. Anyone glimpsing him would have mistaken his cloaked shape for an optical illusion, had they spied him at all.

There were a dozen ways of entering the abandoned theater, but The Shadow chose one mentioned in Staffert's letter. He stopped beneath a low roof that shrouded the old stage door and rang a bell that looked as if it hadn't been used for years. In pushing the button, The Shadow intermingled two long rings with three shorts.

Two minutes passed before a rusted barrier grated open. The door swung inward. In the glow of a dim light, The Shadow saw Hugh Staffert staring sharply from the dimness. Staffert's pointed face was as tense as his fist, which held a steady grip upon a leveled gun.

Staffert didn't see The Shadow. Instead, he saw Chet Ferris, for The Shadow had packed away his cloak and hat while waiting for Staffert to answer the ring. A gleam replaced Staffert's look of apprehension as he gestured for the visitor to enter. So The Shadow stepped through the doorway, bringing the brief case with him.

Leading the way downstairs through the property room, Staffert unlocked a hidden door and pointed to a compact laboratory. The place was thoroughly equipped with shelves of chemicals. It was obvious that Staffert wanted to begin his experiments, for he clutched his visitor's arm and inquired hoarsely:

"The formulas—where are they?"

The Shadow produced them and Staffert scanned their pages with enthusiastic nods. Every now and then he paused, a bit surprised by some detail that he hadn't expected. Then, with an expression of complete

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satisfaction, Staffert went to work.

"You are fortunate to be here, Ferris," declared Staffert. "You are about to witness a marvel of modern chemistry. With the data now at hand I can prepare a complete emulsion in less than ten minutes and then make tests to learn Dunstan's final process.

"We were at cross-purposes, all of us. Tario was after a new plastic, but his stuff wouldn't harden. Benn decided to convert it into a lacquer, but all he did was render it transparent. Channey's experiments gave it metallic qualities, but left it brittle. My treatment made it substantial, but unworkable.

"It was Dunstan who rendered glazite what it is, but he admitted he struck the process through sheer luck. If I can simplify the earlier stages I shall have no difficulty with the final. Already I begin to see improvements."

From bottles and beakers, Staffert was preparing a chemical broth, which foamed and gave off clouds of vapor. Consulting the formulas as he worked along he spoke again without lifting his head.

"Tell me, Ferris. Why did you wait so long to come here?"

"To make sure all was safe," replied The Shadow. "Some of those crooks are still at large. I didn't want them to trail me."

"Of course not. Still, you might have sent a messenger here."

"I understood that I was to be your only messenger."

Staffert gave a satisfied nod.

"You were right," he decided. "Still, I have spent anxious days here, fearful that you had fallen into the hands of those very men you mention."

During the course of his experiment, Staffert filled a test tube with a greenish liquid and set it above a Bunsen burner. Methodically, he glanced at a clock that was standing on a shelf. He seemed to have forgotten all about his present companion.

ACROSS the street from the old theater, Louis Channey and Chet Ferris alighted from a cab. Studying the building opposite, Channey gave a doubtful headshake.

"It doesn't look safe, Ferris."

"Why not?" queried Chet. "You could sneak a regiment into that place without anyone knowing it."

"That's just the trouble," returned Channey. "For all we know, the regiment may be there in the form of men set to trap us. I think we should call the police."

Chet gripped Channey's arm.

"Don't chance it," said Chet. "The Shadow may have heard of my escape. He may have called the police himself to raise false charges against me."

"I'll call the commissioner," compromised Channey, "just to tell him I'm in town. He'll be glad to hear from any of the missing inventors. I can give him an address a few blocks from here, so he will send men to the

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vicinity."

Looking across the rooftops, Channey could distinguish the name of a hotel on a dimmed-out sign twenty stories up. He pointed it out to Chet, who nodded.

"Have them come there," agreed Chet. "If we need help, we'll be able to get it in a hurry. While you're finding a telephone, I'll go over and contact Staffert. It's better that he should meet me alone, at first."

While Channey went to a drugstore to find a telephone, Chet crossed the street and navigated the old alley until he found the stage door. He gave the bell the same series of rings that The Shadow had used. The signal carried to the laboratory where Staffert looked up in surprise.

"That's odd," observed Staffert. "That's your signal, Ferris. I wonder who—"

Staffert stopped wondering "who" and began to wonder "where." For when he looked around he saw no sign of Chet Ferris. Staffert could have sworn that the messenger was right beside him, hence the disappearance seemed unfathomable.

Remembering the clock, Staffert glanced at it and grimaced. Ten minutes had passed since he started heating the test tube. It was time that he turned off the burner. Those same ten minutes accounted for Chet's disappearance. Doubtless Chet had become bored and gone outside; now he was ringing to be admitted again.

The signal was repeated from the bell. Though convinced that it must be Chet, Staffert nevertheless decided to take along his gun. Following the long route up through the prop room, he reached the stage door and opened it with a display of his previous caution. Seeing Chet, Staffert beckoned him inside.

"Wait a minute," suggested Chet. "I have a friend with me."

"A friend?" asked Staffert sharply. "Why should you summon one of your friends?"

"A friend of yours," corrected Chet, looking back along the alley. "Louis Channey."

As Staffert stared with an expression half puzzled, half hopeful, footsteps came rapidly from the alley. A moment later Channey was in the light, giving a brisk nod, which Staffert interpreted as a greeting, though Chet took it to mean that Channey had handled the call to the commissioner.

Leading the way down to the hidden laboratory, Staffert said nothing until they arrived there. Then, bluntly, he queried:

"Why did you come here, Channey?"

Instead of answering the question, Channey stepped forward and looked at Staffert's mixtures. Remembering his experiment, Staffert dropped everything else to continue it. Having followed the other formulas, he began to add his own, checking the necessary details from a typewritten sheet.

Seeing the other papers, Channey examined them, inquiring:

"What are these?"

"The formulas," replied Staffert as he poured two chemicals into a hydrometer jar. "Didn't Ferris tell you that he delivered them?"

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Hearing the question, Chet whipped out a gun that Channey had given him and threw a wild glance around the underground lab as he exclaimed:

"He's been here!"

"Who has been here?" Staffert put the query mildly, as he poured the mixed chemicals into the nearly finished emulsion. "I haven't seen anyone but you, Ferris."

Before Chet could denounce The Shadow, Channey gestured for silence. Together, they watched Staffert complete his test, though Chet couldn't restrain quick glances about the lab, expecting at any moment to see himself come popping from the floor.

What ended the tension was a sharp gasp from Staffert.

"It has failed!" exclaimed Staffert. "Look, Channey! This never happened before, with the preparation that you forwarded to me. This is not the emulsion that I used to furnish Dunstan!"

Hopelessly, Staffert gestured to as muggy a mess as could be imagined. He was right; it lacked the clarity of the easy-flowing liquid that Dunstan had always used when supplying the final process that produced glazite.

Channey was probing the formulas that lay on the workbench. Checking his own, he began to make quick surveys of those supplied by Tario and Benn. Eyes half closed, Channey was visualizing chemical reactions, something that was seldom done by Staffert, who worked by rule of thumb.

"Here is the trouble!" interjected Channey. "You have been duped, Staffert! These formulas are false!"

"False!" Staffert's tone came like a hollow echo. "How can you tell that, Channey?"

"My own proves it," replied Channey. "It isn't the one that I gave the messenger who posed as Ferris. It has been altered in its essential details. To correct it would be useless"—Channey gave a shrug—"because we can be sure that the same thing happened to the others.

"Some rogue has stolen three of our formulas: Tario's, Benn's and mine. He has given you these worthless papers instead. Forget your experiment, Staffert"—with a sweep, Channey gathered the entire stack of papers—"because these are useless, except as evidence of crime."

As Channey turned away, Staffert overtook him and began to pluck at the sheaf of formulas.

"Mine at least is genuine," reminded Staffert. "You do not need to take it with the rest."

"It would be better if I did," declared Channey. "The police commissioner may demand to see it, as proof that one at least is genuine. I shall plead your case, Staffert, and when you have been exonerated, I shall return the formula that proves you honest. By then I hope the law will have located and regained those that were stolen."

With an acknowledging nod, Staffert stepped aside to let Channey continue to the door. Ahead, blocky blackness came to life, materializing itself into a cloaked figure that barred the only outlet.

From lips unseen came the laugh of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XIX. BLADE OF DEATH.

IT was amazing the way The Shadow materialized from the gloom of the property room where he had lingered after finishing his masquerade as Chet Ferris. One moment there was space; the next a solid shape was in full view, solid to its very gun tip.

For in The Shadow's fist was an automatic that moved lazily from man to man, covering Staffert, his fellow inventor Channey and their go-between, Chet Ferris. All three were trapped, regardless of their merits. Upon those The Shadow would decide.

The Shadow's first act was to pluck the formulas from Channey's loosened grasp. Keeping his gun moving with his other hand, The Shadow displayed the precious paper sheets that had been the cause of so much ermine.

"Because of these," declared The Shadow in a tone so solemn that it seemed a knell, "Wayne Dunstan was murdered. Someone not only tricked the switch controlling the barrier to his laboratory; explosive chemicals were placed in the liquid glazite that was standing ready for his last experiment."

At The Shadow's words, Staffert thrust himself forward as though defiant of The Shadow's gun. Stopping short as the weapon centered upon him, Staffert exclaimed accusingly:

"It was Gregg Garland—"

"It was not Gregg Garland," interposed The Shadow calmly. "From all accounts, Dunstan mistrusted Garland and would not allow him in the laboratory alone. To assume that Garland could have learned about the glazite door; to believe that he knew enough about any of the formulas to plan the explosion, is stretching fact too far.

"Only a man completely in Dunstan's confidence could have arranged that double trap. Whoever planted murder did it during a private visit to Dunstan's laboratory. There, allowed to remain alone and unwatched, he prepared his automatic crime."

It was Channey who thrust boldly forward to clap a heavy hand on Staffert's shoulder.

"The Shadow is right," affirmed Channey. "Garland could not have arranged the trap. Besides, what could he have gained? Dunstan had not finally rejected Garland's offer; he would certainly have communicated with all of us before he did."

"Very true," agreed The Shadow, "and if you wish further proof of Garland's innocence, listen."

They listened, but not to The Shadow. What they heard were faint sounds he indicated by a gesture of the hands that held the papers. At first all was utterly silent; then came the noises that The Shadow's keen ears had detected.

Shuffling sounds were coming along the stage alley, filtering through the cracked foundations of the old theater. A strange creak sounded next, like the groan of a dying throat. The weird utterance was delivered by the hinges of the stage door, more than a floor above.

"We have visitors," confided The Shadow with a whispered laugh. "From their attempt at stealth, and their lack of it, I feel sure we can expect Whip Nelbin and the remainder of his mob. Yes, and more." The Shadow

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tilted his head as though counting guarded footfalls. "Whip has evidently replenished his crew.

"Probably he expects to find me here. That is well because I have been hoping for another meeting with Whip's aggregation and the sooner it comes the better. But to return to our subject: these invaders are themselves a proof of Garland's innocence. Knowing nothing of this place, Garland could not be the man who summoned murderers here!"

CHANNEY'S hand tightened hard on Staffert's shoulder. With a twist, Channey brought Staffert full about so their faces could exchange glare for glare.

"Your work, Staffert!" accused Channey. "The law was right all along! You have branded yourself a cunning murderer, and to top it, you exchanged the very formulas that The Shadow delivered here, thinking you could blame him for it!"

Again came The Shadow's laugh. Though low, its tone was cryptic.

"As a cunning murderer," defined The Shadow, "Staffert would hardly have tried to defeat his own game. True, Staffert could have arranged Dunstan's death, but to send Ferris on a fool's errand, planning to murder him along the way, would be folly beyond all credence.

"Staffert could easily have bribed Whip's crowd to make the rounds, with Dash impersonating anyone he chose. But the prime point in Staffert's favor is the fact that Chet was allowed to make one visit." The Shadow paused, then added: "Or, rather, that I was allowed to make it for him."

The Shadow was referring to his own arrival at Channey's, where crooks lurked passively until the visit was completed. That incident was the crux in the whole chain of crime. It was so plain in its significance that it was rather amazing that only The Shadow had analyzed its importance.

Until the messenger reached Channey's, crooks could not have known who he was, otherwise they would have intercepted him earlier!

That point was driving home to Chet Ferris. Looking at Staffert and Channey, Chet could tell that it was in their minds, too. Having planted the thought, The Shadow analyzed it.

"Since killers did not know the man they were to murder," emphasized The Shadow, "it is apparent that the brain behind them was equally ignorant of his identity. At least he was until the messenger arrived at your house, Channey."

The Shadow's burning eyes were concentrated upon the man from Tulpahannock. With a tone that drilled its accusing message, The Shadow added more incriminating points.

"You learned who the messenger was," asserted The Shadow, "and you questioned him, hoping to learn where the other inventors were. You also wanted to know Staffert's location, though you handled that query artfully. All that you learned was that the messenger was to pick up further instructions along the route.

"That was enough for murder. You let the messenger walk into a trap outside your house. When he escaped it, you told Whip Nelbin how to trail him through a telegram mentioned in a letter that Staffert sent you. Once you learned the town, you picked Benn as the logical man to be there, because he came from that general area.

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"The moment that crooks appeared in Middledale, your game was proven, Channey. Trouble began in your town and continued on to Benn's. You thought you deceived the messenger, but you were wrong. I know because I was the messenger in question!"

Handing Chet the stack of formulas, The Shadow disposed of cloak and hat with a single sweep. Again he was in Chet's guise, the absolute counterpart of the man whose place he had taken in order to travel along death's trail.

While Staffert and Channey stared, Chet stooped to catch a sheet of paper that had fluttered from the rest. The Shadow stopped him with another gesture. From his inside pocket, Chet's double produced another folded sheet of paper.

"This is the correct one," explained The Shadow. "Channey's real formula. I opened his antique safe and found it while he was packing to come to town with you. Add it to the others, Ferris, so the list will be complete.

"All the rest are genuine. I know because I met the men who gave them to me. One false process was enough to ruin everything, so Channey contributed a fake one. Tonight—"

An interruption came from Staffert. Madly, the stooped man was springing for Channey's throat. As they struggled, Staffert shrieked his indignation.

"So that was your game, Channey!" Staffert did not give his prey a chance to answer. "When my experiment failed you made me think all the formulas were wrong! You were walking out with Tario's and Benn's, even though they were genuine!

"And you even talked me out of mine with that bunk about proving our case to the police! So you were going to help me, you who would have murdered me as you did Dunstan—"

Staffert's outcry ended with a gurgle, for Channey's hands were gaining a return grip. There was murder in those tightened fists as they squeezed Staffert's neck between them. The struggle had shifted and it would have been short lived but for The Shadow. Springing to the rescue, he ripped Channey's hands loose and sent the man reeling to a corner. Turning, The Shadow caught Staffert as the exhausted man was sliding to the floor.

Chet yelled a warning, but not in time.

Channey had rallied and was lunging forward, his handsome features gone Satanic in his fury. In his hand was a weapon, the paper cutter that he had brought from his desk. Ordinarily it passed as something harmless, but Channey was proving it otherwise.

Made of glazite, that long thin paper cutter was harder than steel, and sharper. Narrowing to a point, it resembled a stiletto. That Channey was versed in using such a weapon was proven by the swift, hard thrust he gave it.

Encumbered with Staffert, The Shadow could not bring his gun about in time to parry Channey's stab. Chet saw the transparent blade travel beneath The Shadow's warding arm and find its mark. Reeling back against the wall, The Shadow stopped there with a jolt, pinned by the thrust that Channey had delivered.

One glance was enough to prove that the stab was fatal. Channey had placed it right to The Shadow's heart, driving the blade so deep that only the hilt of the knife remained in sight!

## CHAPTER XX. MURDER RECALLED.

MADLY, Chet Ferris was flinging the sheets of formulas aside and trying to draw the gun that Louis Channey had given him. Clever of Channey to lend his gun to someone else while all the time he was carrying a weapon that he could use with far more deadly effect.

For as Chet charged he saw Channey stooping beside The Shadow's slumping form, still gripping the glazite knife that had lost its blade in the victim's body. Hearing Chet's rush, Channey gave a snarl; with it, he twisted the knife hilt and tugged, hoping to release the deep-driven blade.

With his yank, Channey went over backward, landing flat on the floor. Not only did he surprise himself, he fooled Chet, too. Flayed by Channey's flying legs, Chet pitched headlong and almost lost his gun. Coming about on hands and knees, he saw Channey sitting up.

The murderer's amazement had increased.

In his fist, Channey was holding nothing but a knife hilt. The blade itself had disappeared. Looking about, Channey put his hand to the floor and came up with fragments of a glassy substance that was strewn all about.

No wonder his knife had released itself so easily. Its point hadn't penetrated The Shadow's vest!

This stuff wasn't glazite. It was a glass of the most fragile sort that would shatter—and had shattered—under the slightest stroke. When Channey stabbed, the flimsy blade had gone all to bits, leaving only the more solid handle.

Angrily, Channey threw the handle on the stone floor, where it broke into tiny pieces. His ugly snarl was overtopped by a whispered laugh that came from the wall.

"Is this your knife, Channey?"

Looking, Channey saw The Shadow toying with the very weapon that the killer wanted. It was Channey's own knife, brought here by The Shadow, who had replaced it with the fragile duplicate.

"You were wondering why I waited three days before coming here," remarked The Shadow. "One reason was a delay at the factory where I ordered the glass knife. I knew that your paper cutter was a murderous weapon, Channey, if only from the way you toyed with it.

"I wanted to give you a chance to use your glazite dirk, to prove yourself the killer that you are. But rather than sacrifice a victim, I supplied you with a harmless weapon. And now, Channey, shall we drop around and see the police commissioner?"

Though The Shadow was still Chet's double, his tone was his own. Equally characteristic of The Shadow was the way he handled the real knife. He was holding it near the point as though ready to give it an expert flip, straight for Channey's own heart. Rather than be on the receiving end of such a toss, Channey came to his feet with hands upraised.

Hardly had he risen before Channey let his eyes betray a gleam. The direction of the glance was enough to tell The Shadow what Channey saw.

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Whirling about, The Shadow flung the knife straight for the door. The whizzing blade met the shoulder of a man who was aiming a revolver point-blank. Jolted by the stroke, Whip Nelbin caved backward, his gun shooting upward. Amid the wild shots, Whip snarled to his men:

"The Shadow! Get him!"

FULL about, The Shadow dove for Channey, meeting the murderer's lunge. As they reeled across the room, The Shadow swung his antagonist about as if using him as a shield. Such, however, was not The Shadow's main motive. He didn't want Whip's crew to see his face until he drew his guns.

For the moment, the brunt belonged to Chet Ferris.

Spotting Chet, crooks took him to be The Shadow. Catching the idea, Chet blazed madly with his revolver as he sprang for shelter behind some workbenches across the room. One of Chet's shots clipped Kipper, who stumbled in the path of others, giving Chet a momentary respite.

Then, seeing that the benches wouldn't offer proper shelter, Chet changed direction right into the path of coming aim. Thinking they had The Shadow on the run, the crooks blazed away—at space!

The real Shadow was in action. His first deed was to fling Channey bodily across Chet's path. Tripping over the rolling murderer, Chet took a nose dive to safety just before the guns cut loose. Seeing him spill below their line of fire, the gunners would have gone after Chet if he hadn't bobbed up elsewhere.

He came surging right in among them, Chet Ferris, alias The Shadow. So sudden was the reappearance that the crooks could hardly believe it. One moment Chet was diving over to the left, the next he was swinging in from the right.

Whoever he had been before, he had certainly become The Shadow!

He was bouncing fighters back upon themselves, jamming them through the bottleneck from which they came, the door to the property room. A neat technique of The Shadow's, packing foemen so tight that they couldn't bring their guns into play. Crammed by the guns that clubbed them, they thought they were seeing double, in terms of The Shadow as well as guns, for Chet had arrived to team with his rescuer.

Massed crooks gave like an exploding cork. Popping all directions in the property room, they were promptly overwhelmed by another crew of arriving fighters—The Shadow's agents, ordered here by their chief. Their appearance was fortunate for the crooks, because it enabled The Shadow to withhold his fire. He let his agents complete the roundup and drag the sagging prisoners out to the alley where the police could find them.

Hardly a gun was fired in that brief, conclusive fray. Slugged back by The Shadow, Whip's tribe simply ran into another deluge of swinging weapons that battered them into absolute submission. The few who stubbornly attempted gunfire were promptly beaten to the shot. Among that minority was Whip himself, the most stubborn of the lot.

So stubborn was Whip that he received four shots for the one he didn't find time to fire. Stopping beside Whip's body, The Shadow reclaimed the glazite knife that the leader had yanked from his shoulder, before marking himself for a more permanent treatment.

STANDING in the prop room, Chet Ferris waved a friendly greeting to his old enemies, Harry and Cliff, as they dragged out Whip's crew. He was beginning to understand how mildly they had treated him, not only in the New Jersey farmhouse, but among the Pennsylvania hills.

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Chet noted that there were at least a half dozen of The Shadow's agents. Hawkeye, of course, was in the hard-hitting band, but the Goliath of the lot was a huge African named Jericho. He didn't swing guns because they encumbered his fists.

Having plucked the crooks as fast as he could grab them, Jericho was helping clear the premises by lugging away a pair of stunned thugs as if they were suitcases. The handles were their belts, from which the helpless hoodlums dangled and thumped the stairs as Jericho carried them up to the alley.

Turning about, Chet went back to the laboratory. He saw Staffert crawling from beneath a table, bringing the precious formulas, including the genuine one that The Shadow had brought from Channey's. Laying the papers on a bench, Staffert weighted them with a revolver that he had found and went right to work correcting his experiment.

Wondering how Channey had fared, Chet took a look about and was just in time to see the murderous inventor come springing from a closet. Channey must have thought that Chet was The Shadow, for he lunged with a fury that made his previous frenzy seem mild.

What Channey wanted was Chet's gun. Though he didn't manage to get it, he drove it back so hard and high that Chet's only shot brought plaster from the ceiling. What really stopped Channey was the solemn laugh that came from behind him, a token that he'd picked the wrong antagonist.

Turning, Channey saw The Shadow, again attired in black. Hurling himself full force at the cloaked figure, Channey was met by a leveled gun to which he paid no heed. More important to Channey was the transparent object that showed from a fold of The Shadow's cloak. It was Channey's favorite weapon, the glazite knife.

With a grab Channey caught the handle and sprang away, The Shadow close behind him. Much though the murderer deserved to die, The Shadow preferred to turn him over to the law. As Channey wheeled and attempted a hard stab, The Shadow's swinging automatic clanked the glazite knife.

Back and forth they parried in a strange fencing duel which threatened to keep on until one participant or the other dropped from sheer exhaustion. While Chet stood toying with his gun, Staffert kept working at the bench, eagerly mixing chemicals and consulting formulas.

Each clever twist or rapid parry brought an approving laugh from The Shadow, whether the stroke was his own or Channey's. The mirth maddened Channey, for it told that The Shadow was not beginning to tire, whereas Channey was. Slashing forward with his knife, Channey began to lay himself wide. With a side-step, The Shadow prepared to end the struggle by laying a well-placed blow to Channey's head.

It chanced that Channey stumbled. The Shadow's swing went wide. Catching himself against a bench, Channey came around with all the fury he could gather. Chet saw The Shadow perform a surprising fade from the path of Channey's sweeping knife. Therefore, he restrained his gun trigger, knowing that Channey's stab would miss.

Staffert saw it differently, being at another angle. He was looking up from his papers, annoyed by the joggling of the bench. About to turn a page, Staffert was lifting the revolver that was serving as a paper weight.

It really astonished Staffert to see Channey still in action. Staffert thought that The Shadow had disposed of this primary nuisance along with the horde of trouble-makers that Channey had summoned. Indeed, Staffert was so convinced that everything was settled that he regarded Channey more like a troublesome insect than anything human.

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Rather disturbed to see The Shadow dodging Channey's knife thrust, Staffert decided that the cloaked fighter was being overworked. Moreover, Channey really bothered Staffert, interfering with so important an experiment. Channey was becoming a detriment to science as well as a discredit. There wasn't a doubt that Channey was a blight to humanity in general.

So Staffert merely gestured his gun toward Channey, and pulled the trigger until the shots ran out. Turning his page, Staffert replaced his revolver as a paperweight, taking care that its smoking muzzle was over the edge of the sheet. Staffert read the paragraph he wanted and went back to his work.

The Shadow told Chet to get Jericho and have him take Channey's body along with the others that were going to the morgue. Two of Staffert's bullets had drilled the murderer squarely through the heart.

GRADUALLY, silence settled in the underground laboratory where Hugh Staffert was so deeply occupied with the problem of glazite. He had produced the emulsion that he wanted and was testing it with various chemicals without getting anything that approached the finished product.

Relaxing with a tired sigh, Staffert suddenly realized that a figure was standing beside him. Looking about, he saw The Shadow dangling the glazite dagger that had once belonged to Channey. The Shadow spoke in a reflective tone.

"A curious weapon, this," declared The Shadow. "It reminds me of the sacrificial knives used by the Aztecs. They were composed of a very peculiar substance—"

"Obsidian!" exclaimed Staffert. "A volcanic glass of remarkable strength. The only sort of natural glass that could in any way approach glazite. It was formed by the intense heat of volcanoes—"

Staffert halted. The Shadow's own thought had struck him. Staffert put it all into one word:

"Heat!"

"You have the answer," assured The Shadow. "Dunstan's only formula was heat. It will harden and temper your emulsion into perfect glazite. Dunstan talked in terms of chemicals merely to protect his secret. Channey must have guessed it when he made this knife from finished glazite that Dunstan gave him.

"By murdering Dunstan, Channey forced you into gathering the other formulas, knowing that he could trick them from you. Later he would have framed you for the Dunstan murder, so that he could privately sell the combined formulas to Garland. Meanwhile he was playing you against Garland, to keep everyone baffled."

The Shadow was generous in the term "everyone." There was certainly one person who should not be included, The Shadow himself. Hugh Staffert was thinking of that very point as he watched his cloaked friend merge with the darkness of the doorway and vanish with a swirling motion into the room beyond. Staffert waited intently until he heard the token that followed.

It was a departing laugh, a trailing peal of triumph that dwindled into throbbing echoes, seemingly a part of the outer night itself. Mirth that symbolized The Shadow's conquest over crime.

Death's trail was ended. Hugh Staffert's effort to rescue the glazite formula—according to the plans the inventors originally agreed upon—had very narrowly escaped disastrous results. Thanks to The Shadow, not only was the death of Dunstan avenged and the name of Hugh Staffert cleared, but the formula could be used in exactly the manner the inventors had originally agreed. As the mirth of The Shadow dwindled, Staffert realized that the messenger he had sent out to gather the formulas would have, indeed, become a messenger

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of death, had not The Shadow foreseen the danger and undertaken the task himself!

THE END.