

THE SCENT OF DEATH

by Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. QUEST OF GOLD

THOUGH dusk was settling in Manhattan's streets, the setting sun still cast its rays into the offices of Angew Co., importers, situated high up in the building they occupied.

There, Wilfred Angew, president of the importing company, sat in conference with two late-afternoon visitors: Preston Marr, an automobile manufacturer, and Hugo Brydan, a retired investment broker. The sun's glow cast a golden light upon that thirtieth-story scene, and the burnished tint was appropriate. Those three men had gathered to discuss a single subject: gold.

It was difficult to determine which man dominated the conference, Angew or Marr. The office belonged to Angew, and the importer was accustomed to ruling his own preserves. Angew was a long-faced, baldish man with steely eyes, and when he rapped his knuckles on his big desk, it meant for people to listen.

But Angew was going light on the raps, with Marr present. Marr had a way of compelling silence without becoming excited. His grizzled hair gave him dignity; his square jaw marked him as forceful. Most people even Angew preferred to let Marr do his share of the talking, so as to learn what was in his keen mind.

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It happened that Wilfred Angew and Preston Marr thought alike on this occasion; hence each was carrying part of the discussion. Their remarks were directed to Hugo Brydan, who drank in everything they said, with nods.

Drab and dreary-faced, with listless manner and hesitant speech, Brydan looked outclassed beside Angew and Marr. When the forceful man talked in terms of millions, Brydan brightened somewhat, but always shrank back into a phase of timid doubt.

"We three represent a group of five," announced Angew, rapping the desk for Brydan's benefit, not Marr's, "who hold equal claims, or options, on the North Star Mine. For a payment of sixty thousand dollars, one month from today, we can own that property outright."

"Should anyone fail to provide his share of the cash," added Marr, "the privilege will pass to the others. Of course" his eyes were steady on Brydan "any man could agree to exercise his option, and then transfer his share to someone else."

Brydan nodded, very wisely.

"Exactly what Philip Kreft told me!" he exclaimed. "Why, he actually offered to double my money, if I would sell out to him. He said he would advance the purchase money, if I needed it."

Angew and Marr exchanged prompt glances. Nods passed between them. Angew started to say something, then decided to let Marr be the spokesman. The grizzled man became emphatic.

"Angew and I have learned something important, Brydan," declared Marr. "The North Star Mine is worth millions! We want you to share in its full development."

MARR looked to Angew, who took up the tale from that point.

"You must work with us," insisted Angew. "Three of us, holding a majority of the stock when it is issued, can proceed without interference from Kreft."

Brydan stroked his sloping chin.

"Kreft said nothing about millions," he mused, aloud. "He simply stated that the North Star looked like a good speculation. He's always been a plunger, Kreft has, ever since he inherited his uncle's fortune."

By another exchange of glances, Angew and Marr decided it would be good policy to deal lightly with Kreft.

"Perhaps he plunged too much," observed Angew, sympathetically. "He saw North Star as his one chance to make a clean-up. Perhaps he thought he was being generous to you, Brydan."

"Maybe he doesn't realize how valuable the mine really is," soft-toned Marr. "If so, that is one reason why he should not control it. We need you, Brydan, on our side, because we feel quite sure that Kreft has already won over old Austin Delmont."

Again, Brydan nodded. There was a very good reason why Kreft might have influenced Delmont, the fifth of the option holders. During Brydan's nods, Angew and Marr mentioned the reason themselves.

"Kreft is engaged to Delmont's granddaughter Patricia," declared Angew. "It seems that all women, especially young ones, become infatuated over Kreft."

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"In her turn, Patricia can influence her grandfather," added Marr, "which is probably why Kreft has paid so much attention to the girl."

Having settled the status of the other camp, both Angew and Marr returned to their policy of establishing Brydan on their side. They showed him reports and surveys that they had been accumulating during the past few months, indicating that the North Star Mine would bring at least a half million dollars to each investor.

They assured the drab man that he would share equally with them; that any spiteful efforts on the part of Kreft would be rendered nil, with Angew, Marr and Brydan holding control.

That argument was a valuable one, because Philip Kreft, already wealthy, was also quite eccentric. He was just the sort who might spoil something for others who could not see things his way.

Nevertheless, Angew and Marr gave honest assurance that Kreft and old Delmont would be treated fairly and would receive their proper shares of the profits. As the conference concluded, Brydan was satisfied that his friends, Angew and Marr, were men of integrity.

"We have shown that honesty is our policy," asserted Angew, when Brydan had gone. "Therefore, we can depend upon Brydan to work with us."

"Success in any business venture," observed Marr, "depends upon giving an associate as much as you demand for yourself. We have done that with Brydan."

The two were going toward the door that Brydan had used, when a troubled thought struck Angew.

"Brydan does not look very healthy," said Angew. "If anything should happen to him, our plans would be ruined. The claims are not transferable, you know, until after the final date. Perhaps we should have had Brydan sign an agreement in our favor."

"Quite useless," objected Marr. "If anything should happen to Brydan, there would simply be four claims, instead of five. You and I would still be equal to Kreft and Delmont."

"But we would not hold control "

"I'm not so sure about that." Marr's squarish face wore a confident smile. "I think there is a chance that we can win old Austin Delmont. He is very conservative, you know, and I doubt that he fully approves of Philip Kreft as a husband for his granddaughter."

ANGEW'S eyes flashed with new interest, but his voice was undertoned, for they had reached the elevator.

"Can't someone press that point with Delmont?" he queried. "He ought to know that Kreft is nothing but a fop; that the fellow walks around like a living fashion plate, simply to gain the admiration of women."

"You've seen Kreft, Marr, wearing his top hat and fancy waistcoat, always with a little golden flower in his buttonhole. That walking stick of his and the swagger that goes with it bah! Kreft is nothing but a man about town, an habitue of the night clubs!"

Marr's squarish face showed a confident smile, as the elevator halted on the ground floor.

"Those facts have already reached Delmont," he confided, as they walked out to the street. "He and his granddaughter will be at the reception which is being held at my home tonight."

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"And Kreft?"

"When we sent out the invitations," smiled Marr, "I saw to it that Kreft's name was not included. Tonight, Angew, I intend to chat with Delmont, and you will have a chance to do the same."

The two stepped into a waiting limousine. As they did, another man alighted from a taxicab, and paused as he saw both Angew and Marr. He was close enough to hear their chuckles, although they did not notice him. He caught Marr's words to Angew:

"We are already sure of Brydan, and as for Delmont, I am positive that "

The slam of the limousine door cut off the rest. The big car pulled away with its passengers, Marr and Angew. Neither looked back through the dusk; hence they failed to see the man who had arrived too late to pay them a visit before they left Angew's office.

He was a youngish man, that late arrival, but older, probably, than he looked. His smooth-shaven face was handsome, friendly in its smile. There was something suave, however, in his expression, that betokened craftiness behind his carefree attitude.

His attire, though immaculate, was too conspicuous. He was a modern version of a dude, a streamlined Beau Brummel, with his fancy waistcoat crossed by a heavy gold watch chain; his gray spats and topper, to match.

The cane that he carried was slender, pliable as he leaned lightly upon it. His necktie, broad and fancy, was of the species properly termed a cravat. The detail that completed his fastidious garb was a tiny flower in the buttonhole of his coat lapel.

It was a golden-hued flower, that looked like a miniature carnation. It seemed to symbolize wealth, as well as individuality. Many persons could have identified the man by that flower, for it was a unique species that he alone wore.

The golden flower stood for Philip Kreft.

STANDING on the sidewalk, Kreft let his wise smile broaden, while he watched the limousine swing the corner. Then, turning back to the taxicab, he replaced a drawn wallet in his inside pocket, re-entered the cab and gave the driver another address.

Unlike Marr and Angew, Kreft had no one to whom he could confide his thoughts as he rode along in the dusk. But the occasional mutters that came from his lips told that he was considering the same subject that Marr and Angew had discussed with Brydan: the matter of the North Star Mine.

Words that Kreft had heard were conclusive proof that the present set-up was three to two against him, with the chance that it might later become four to one. Such opposition made it seem impossible for Philip Kreft to ever obtain the North Star Mine as a speculative venture all his own.

Kreft, with all his carefree habits, was a man who sometimes fought to the limit for the things he wanted. Often, though, he was canny enough to toss certain schemes overboard when the opposition was strong.

Whether Philip Kreft intended to fight or quit on this occasion, was a question so debatable that only future events could answer it. But such events would have to be drastic as well as rapid, to serve the man who wore the golden flower!

CHAPTER II. CROOKS IN THE DARK

THE taxicab carrying Philip Kreft came to a stop in front of an uptown flower shop which bore the impressive title: INTERSTATE FLORISTS INCORPORATED. Alighting, Kreft paid the taxi driver, added a dollar tip, and strolled into the florist shop, where he was greeted with affable bows by a very polite clerk.

"Hello, Oswald," returned Kreft, in a smooth yet casual tone. "Have the flowers arrived yet for Miss Delmont?"

"Not yet, Mr. Kreft," replied Oswald, "but they will be here in an hour. Positively, sir, within an hour. I just had a call from the greenery in New Jersey. They said that the truck had started."

Kreft stepped to a table, where a pile of order slips lay beside the telephone.

"The order is there, Mr. Kreft," insisted Oswald. "One dozen of our new Arden Bloom roses, to be sent with your card. I am leaving very shortly" Oswald glanced at his watch "but Talbot will attend to it. The roses will go by special messenger."

Mention of Talbot brought a smile from Kreft.

"Poor old Talbot," he remarked. "Pinch-hitting for Herkshire. By the way, how is Herkshire getting along after that operation of his?"

"He is still in the hospital," replied Oswald, "but we expect him back within a few days, at most."

With that, Oswald excused himself and went into a little office. Kreft glanced about at banks of flowers, eyeing some approvingly, others with disdain. Then, picking up the telephone, he dialed a number and began a conversation.

When Kreft talked on the telephone, he had a way of purring words into the mouthpiece, so that his voice could not be heard more than a few feet away. It was just another characteristic that showed him to be an extremist.

Usually quite talkative in ordinary conversation, Kreft always became guarded during telephone calls. Even unimportant chats that he held across the wire impressed witnesses as being something of great moment.

Kreft had finished his call when Oswald returned from the office. The clerk began to check over the order slips, nodding while Kreft remarked:

"If anyone should phone me here, Oswald, tell them that I am on my way to the Club Cabana."

Jauntily swinging his light walking stick, Kreft departed for his favorite hang-out. He had been gone for fully five minutes, when Oswald, anxious to get off duty, gave a welcoming gasp to a dapper but tired-looking man who entered.

"Herkshire!" exclaimed Oswald. "When did you leave the hospital?"

"An hour ago," replied the arriving clerk, with an attempt at a smile. "They told me not to work for a few days, but I preferred to come here. I called Talbot to tell him he would not be needed."

Before Oswald could protest, he saw that Herkshire's smile was becoming real. The sight of the flowers, their

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fragrance, were bringing back the man's spirits. Herkshire's heart belonged to the florist shop; for years, he had refused vacations, because he hated to be away from floral surroundings.

Oswald, leaving, decided that Mr. Kreft would be pleased to know that Herkshire was back. Herkshire was far more efficient than his doddering substitute Talbot.

Many customers Kreft included relied greatly upon Herkshire's judgment. But Oswald did not consider it necessary to telephone the Club Cabana and inform Kreft that Herkshire was again on the job.

The departing clerk simply told Herkshire that the greenery truck had left New Jersey and could be expected in three-quarters of an hour. Herkshire accepted the information with a matter-of-fact nod. Nothing ever delayed that truck long enough to cause complications in the florist shop.

In fact, Herkshire could picture the truck approaching the Holland Tunnel on its way to Manhattan, with a clear path uptown after it entered the limits of New York City. But it happened that the mental image did not include all factors.

NEAR the Holland Tunnel, on the Manhattan side, five men were clustered in a long, low-built touring car. Two, in the front seat, were holding a terse conversation, to which the others listened.

The men in the back seat had the look of thugs, and they always listened to the pair in front, on the chance of learning a great deal.

The front-seat men were a brace of highjackers, as capable as any in New York. Koko Yandel and Morry Cathlan had teamed together during the beer-running days. Later, they had highjacked cigarette trucks, and had even specialized in waylaying shipments of artichokes, along with various other odd commodities.

Their pals always said that Koko had the head, and Morry the brain, which made them excellent running mates. Koko had a head, certainly enough: a big one, with a skull guaranteed to bend a lead pipe. His features, too, were oversized, and ugly.

In contrast, Morry was small-headed, with a thin face and sharp-pointed nose. When he spoke, Morry scarcely moved his lips at all, whereas Koko went through a lot of snarling motions whenever he opened his big face.

Morry was doing the talking at present.

"That truck is due in a few minutes," he declared. "Get moving, Koko, as soon as I give the word. We'll have to show some speed to overhaul it."

Koko snorted as he shifted behind the wheel.

"Them armored vans is slow movers," he mouthed. "We ain't going to gain nothing by shoving along too fast. They'll only suspicion us."

"This isn't an armored truck we're after, Koko."

"How come? You said there was going to be big dough in it."

"There will be," assured Morry, "but it won't come from the cargo. The two grand that we divvy for the job will be paid by the guy that wants it done."

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Shifting toward the rear seat, Morry still managed to keep an eye toward the avenue ahead, so he could identify the truck if it passed.

"Koko goes after the driver," he told the attentive thugs, "and you birds go with him. Don't put the slug on him; just scare the hell out of him. I'll take the back, see. When I get through and I'm going to handle it quick I'll give you the high sign to lam."

While Morry was talking, Koko was counting on his fingers, muttering: "Beer, cigarettes, artichokes "

The big-headed man was trying to guess what the job would be tonight. Morry did not interrupt Koko's mumbles. Morry had other things to talk about.

"Watch for a wheeler that's going to tail us," he told the men in back. "It's bringing a cover-up crew, just in case. You'll know the car easy, because "

Morry cut himself off, as he saw a truck whizz past the crossing. Punching Koko in the ribs, he ordered:

"Get going! That's it, that just went past!"

Koko hadn't looked up in time to see what kind of a truck it was, but he had noticed the vehicle's speed. Swinging the touring car out to the avenue, Koko learned that Morry was right about the chase proving a fast one.

They pursued for a dozen blocks, before they were close enough to read the sign on the back of the fast-moving truck.

The thugs in back had been watching for the car with the cover-up crew. They noted that a taxicab was close behind them. One said to another:

"Wait'll I ask Morry if a hack is supposed to be tailing us." Then leaning to the front, he began: "Say, Morry, about that buggy in back of us "

The thug didn't complete the question that he started. Koko had read the sign on the back of the truck. His big mouth opened to eject a contemptuous bellow that drowned all other voices.

"Cripes!" howled Koko. "Flowers!"

"Yeah," returned Morry, crisply. "Flowers. What about it? Artichokes meant dough, didn't they? Why not flowers?"

RAUCOUS in his chuckles, Koko added a burst of speed to the pursuing car. His laughter caused the men in back to drop their questions about the cover-up crew.

"Four of us!" continued Koko, gleefully, "all piling on one poor simp that runs a flower truck. So you can crack the back all by yourself. Whatcha going to do, Morry?" Koko's laughter became convulsive. "Pick buttercups and violets while nobody's watching you –"

"Quit the clowning," snapped Morry. "What I said still goes!"

"O. K.," growled Koko, becoming serious. "But get it over with quick, Morry. I don't like flowers. They smell!"

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Hurling the touring car past the truck, Koko sliced over in front of the other vehicle. Brakes screeched, as the truck was forced to the curb Koko had passed the truck on the right and cut toward to the left, a rather unethical procedure, even among highjackers.

The occurrence left the truck driver shaky and astonished. He didn't even realize what was coming when he saw Koko and three other hoodlums pile out from the left side of the touring car. Then they had the truck door open on the right, and were taking long reaches to grab the stupefied driver, when Morry's yell warned them:

"Look out!"

Guns in their fists, the clustered crooks took dives in various directions, as a cab came slashing through the space between the truck and the touring car. The space was narrow, and set at a sharp angle, but the cab driver took it with inches to spare.

The cab was the one that the thugs had seen but failed to mention to Morry. Only their shrewd leader's yell prevented them from being mowed down en masse.

Koko managed to flatten on the truck step; another crook went under the truck itself. As for the other two, one climbed the hood of the touring car, while the last scrambled halfway in through the flapping rear door.

Finishing its swerve, the taxi skewed half about. Its rear door flew open before any of the scattered thugs could aim. They knew, instinctively, that they were pressed by a foe, but in those hectic moments they did not realize how formidable he was to prove.

Only Morry recognized the black-cloaked figure that bobbed suddenly from the cab. Through the windshield of the touring car, he saw burning eyes beneath a slouch hat brim. Then, as a pair of .45 automatics pointed their muzzles in the direction of Koko and the rising thugs, Morry shouted again.

His tone was almost a shriek, as he voiced the identity of the challenger who had arrived to battle crime:

"The Shadow!"

CHAPTER III. CRIME'S INTERIM

MORRY'S wild-voiced announcement was quite unnecessary. Drowning the mob leader's frenzied cry came a mocking laugh that was a proclamation of its own.

Crooks knew that mirth the taunting challenge of The Shadow!

Master fighter who hunted down men of crime, The Shadow had uncanny ways of picking up the trails of crooks, especially when they were bound on deeds of evil. Though their mission might be unknown to him, he invariably followed them and broke up their plans at the crucial moment.

He had done it again, The Shadow had. The cab that the thugs had supposed to be the cover-up car was The Shadow's own vehicle, hot on the trail, driven by Moe Shrevnitz, the speediest hackie in Manhattan – and a secret agent of The Shadow.

As he sprang from the cab, to aid the helpless driver of the beleaguered greenhouse truck, The Shadow saw the proper way to deal with the thugs who had scattered at Moe's juggernaut tactics.

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Too spread to be covered by The Shadow's guns, the four crooks were at least temporarily helpless, bewildered by their scramble. The thing for The Shadow to do was to take them in his stride while making for the touring car, which might hold a hidden marksman.

With zigzag course, The Shadow bowled over the crooks as he met them. He was sledging with the big guns that he carried, reserving bullets for later battle. His blows felled the dodging crooks, as they blasted messages with their revolvers. They might just as well have said it with flowers, of which there were plenty close at hand.

The Shadow was swifter than their aim. His gun strokes sagged the hijackers before they could bring their guns about. The shots that spoke from thug-handled weapons were wide of the cloaked target.

One man, the last, offered real fight. That battler was Koko. Having lost his revolver underneath the truck, the bulky hijacker went for The Shadow with hands that were bare, but big.

A lucky lunge brought Koko under the swing of a cloaked arm. The glancing blow that stroked Koko's head would have damaged an average hoodlum, but it didn't jar the hijacker's thick skull.

Grappling, Koko bowled The Shadow toward the touring car, roaring for aid.

"I've got The Shadow!" he bellowed. "Plug him, Morry!"

The howl was useless. In the first place, Koko did not have The Shadow. The real grip was the one that The Shadow had gotten on Koko. Twisted full about, Koko's big body was between The Shadow and the touring car. Had shots come from that quarter, Koko would have received them.

There was another reason why no shots were fired. Morry was no longer in the touring car. He had ducked out by the door on the other side. At the back of the car, he was yanking open a trunk, to haul out a long, light cardboard box.

Big headlights loomed up, revealing Morry. It was the cover-up car. He recognized it by the glare from the high-powered headlights. Pointing to the space between the touring car and the truck, Morry yelled:

"The Shadow's there! Go get him!"

WHINING in second gear, the car followed the indicated course. The Shadow saw it coming; he hurled Koko into the path, and made a headlong dive over the hood of the stalled touring car. He knew that the crooks would gladly run Koko down, if they could get him at the same time.

But Koko, alone, was a different proposition.

The car jolted to a stop as it thumped the big man. Though pitched headlong against the side of the florist truck, Koko was preserved for future action in behalf of crime. Leaping from their car, a rickety sedan, the cover-up crew went after The Shadow.

Swinging to meet the new attack The Shadow was firing across the touring car's hood with both automatics. Five crooks were ducking through the car, around the front of it, one even yanking up a side of the hood, to thrust a gun through the slats on the other side.

The Shadow's nipping fire was the sort that would nullify revolver aim, particularly because any hurried shots from opponents would mark their location. But these crooks were equipped to shoot in a hurry, and get

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results.

Morry had armed the cover-up crew with sawed-off shotguns, deadliest of weapons at close-range fire. A single blast from such a gun, delivered in the general direction of The Shadow, would cripple him. His present shelter, close to the far side of the touring car, could not serve him in case of a mass attack.

To leave that shelter, even with a rapid whirl, would also prove fatal, for the avenue was well lighted, enough for the crooks to spot him when he wheeled away.

It didn't occur to those mobbies that The Shadow would have originally headed for more distant shelter, if he had not held aces in reserve. He knew the kind of weapons that these murderous fighters carried. Proof of The Shadow's foresight came with a rapid fire from automatics that took the crooks in the flank.

Two of The Shadow's most capable secret agents, Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland, were in Moe's cab. They winged the thugs from longer range. When the staggering crooks responded with the shotguns, the spreading slugs merely scarred the cab's painted side.

Then The Shadow was over the top of the touring car's hood, taunting his foemen with his challenging laugh as he withered them with fire in their very midst!

During that delayed reversal, Morry Cathlan was busy at the back of the greenery truck. It was unlocked, and Morry wasted no time in yanking the handle that opened it. He didn't stop to pluck daisies, nor sniff the flowery aroma that greeted his nostrils.

Morry simply tossed his cardboard box in with the rest of the shipment and slammed the door.

His job was done, and with it came a luckier break than he expected. The truck driver had come to his senses and was starting to drive away. Morry leaped for the stalled sedan that the cover-up crew had left.

On the way, he ran squarely into the blundering figure of Koko Yandel, who was coming up from hands and knees after a crawl out of the danger zone.

Shoving Koko into the rear of the sedan, along with a couple of thugs who had already managed to crawl in there, Morry leaped to the wheel. The motor was still running, he yanked the car into gear. With a wide veer, he overtook the truck on its left, the side away from The Shadow, who was just settling the last of his antagonists.

With the truck as a moving shelter, Morry also managed to escape fire from The Shadow's agents in Moe's cab. Spurting ahead of the truck, he kept out of sight beyond it, even when the angle increased. Then, spying a convenient street to the left, Morry took it, nearly wrecking the sedan on a curb as he rounded the corner.

BY then, The Shadow was back in Moe's cab. The sharp-eyed taxi driver had spotted Morry's turn. The Shadow ordered prompt pursuit; he and his agents were ready with their guns. The few blocks that Morry had gained were not enough to serve him, even in a twisty chase.

Odds favored The Shadow and his agents in their effort to overhaul the fleeing crooks. Once overtaken, Morry, Koko, and their cowering pals would be easily subdued, for all fight was gone from them. But again, luck favored the highjackers.

As the cab followed the sedan northward on an avenue, a patrol car wheeled in between. Coming from a side street, the police made a bad mistake. They thought that Moe's cab was in flight, along with the sedan up

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ahead. They decided to block the cab's escape.

There was only one order that The Shadow could give. To avoid a clash with the misguided police, he instructed Moe to wheel full about and head southward. Moe did so, almost skimming the front of the police car. Zigzagging to avoid a barrage of police bullets, he sped the cab into the clear.

Other police cars harried The Shadow and his agents later, but Moe was used to dodging such pursuers. In half a dozen minutes, he was slackening his speed in the seclusion of a side street, while fading sirens told that the police were traveling elsewhere.

Though many blocks south, The Shadow did not consider the chase as entirely ended. Crime had gained an interim, but when the agents heard The Shadow voice a low, sibilant laugh, they caught the prophecy in the tone. The Shadow had obtained one important clue: the name on the truck that the highjackers had tried to waylay.

All that he needed was that truck's destination, something that could be easily gotten through proper inquiry. Once the place was learned, The Shadow would take it as his next objective.

If crooks had picked the same goal for another stroke of crime The Shadow would be present to deal with them again!

CHAPTER IV. AT THE FLOWER SHOP

AT the time of The Shadow's battle with the highjackers, there was only one customer in the Interstate Florists shop. Herkshire, feeling quite himself again, was trying to be very polite to a lady who called herself Miss Townley.

Herkshire had never seen Miss Townley before, though, in a deep contralto voice, she claimed that she had previously bought flowers in this shop. Moreover, Miss Townley did not look like the usual type of customer.

Though smooth-cheeked, she had heavy eyebrows that gave her a rather mannish look. Her features, sharply pointed, had a sly appearance. She was awkward, too, and her interest in flowers was so casual that it seemed almost coarse to Herkshire, who was very sensitive about the blooms.

Yet Herkshire, though pained, did not guess the entire truth, or anywhere near it.

His pretended customer was actually Goo-goo Jaffer, a very clever con man. Working with others of his ilk, Goo-goo had often posed as a woman to help along a swindle scheme. Usually, he called himself Miss Townley, but his associates had dubbed him Goo-goo because of the trustful way in which he could roll his eyes.

Tonight, Goo-goo was using that technique with Herkshire, and it was getting him by. Every time he made his eyes expressive, Herkshire forgot the less ladylike mannerisms of "Miss Townley" and became sympathetic.

"If you placed that order today, Miss Townley," insisted Herkshire, "it should be among the slips. I shall be quite willing to look through them; or" he bowed, as Goo-goo started to reach for the batch "you are quite welcome to look through them yourself."

It was during Goo-goo's slow search of the order slips that the flower truck drove up in front of the shop. Herkshire stepped to the door to meet the driver.

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Goo-goo promptly pilfered an order slip from the pile, slid it through a slit in his skirt, into a trousers pocket. Bringing out another slip of his own, he thrust it among the batch on the table.

"Lovely, aren't they?" volunteered Herkshire, as he and the driver brought flowers into the store. "Ah! You have finished going over the order slips. Good! We must get these orders off at once."

While Herkshire was boxing the various flowers, by referring to the order slips, the truck driver kept buzzing in his ear. Finally, the driver put in a phone call to New Jersey, told the greenery about the trouble that he had encountered; then he went out to his truck.

Meanwhile, Goo-goo kept strolling around the shop, trying to pretend real admiration over orchids, giving audible sniffs every time he smelled a bunch of roses. All the while, he was dangling a handbag that was small but quite heavy; and he kept tabs on Herkshire with sidelong glances.

His task almost finished, Herkshire lifted the telephone and called for a messenger. Then, pondering over the slips, he remarked:

"A special order, boxed at the greenery. Very peculiar. Very! This must be it" he picked up a long, flat box "because it is addressed to Miss Patricia Delmont."

Goo-goo side-mouthed a grin. He kept that lip twist on the side of his face away from Herkshire.

"A card should go with it," added the precise Herkshire. "A card from Mr. Philip Kreft. I suppose I shall have to open the box."

AT that moment, Goo-goo was peering through the front window. A car had stopped across the street. It was a coupe, and its lights had blinked out a signal. When Goo-goo turned around, Herkshire had already opened the box of flowers.

Goo-goo's hand sped into the purse he carried, stopped there, gripping a gun. He wanted to see what Herkshire did next.

"My word!" the clerk exclaimed. "Golden carnations! The sort that Mr. Kreft wears, but larger and finer specimens. I never knew that they grew them in the Jersey greenery."

"Perhaps they don't want anybody to know it," falsettoed Goo-goo, adding a smirk. "They have trade secrets in your business, don't they?"

Herkshire nodded, very solemnly. He noticed that Kreft's card was already with the golden carnations.

"I shall be very discreet," he declared. "Evidently they did not want me to open the box, as the slip is marked 'special order.' I doubt" he shook his head "that Talbot would have thought to open it, had he been here.

"Thank you for the advice, Miss Townley. I shall remember these wonderful carnations only as a special order. I would not think of mentioning them, even to Mr. Kreft. And yet" he lifted the flowers from the box "they are so gorgeous! Their fragrance actually intrigues me!"

With long-drawn breaths, Herkshire smelled the carnations, and Goo-goo came over to sniff them at the clerk's invitation. Then, regretfully, Herkshire replaced the brilliant flowers in the box, stooping for a last test of their aroma.

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The package was wrapped when the messenger arrived, a few minutes later. Herkshire delivered it to him, along with several other rush orders.

Goo-goo, meanwhile, was close to the table. There, he filched the fake order slip from a little pile the, Herkshire had laid aside, and substituted the original in its place.

Herkshire returned, gathered up the order slips, to take them into the office. Goo-goo, using a modulated tone, was beginning to remark that he intended to make a purchase, when Herkshire swayed beside the desk.

"I'm... a trifle ill!" gasped the clerk. "I... I've just come from the... from the hospital "

It was plain that Herkshire was ill. Otherwise, he would have noticed the forceful grip that the supposed Miss Townley used to propel him into the little office. Goo-goo helped Herkshire into a chair; as the clerk rested his head on his arm and slumped toward a desk, Goo-goo turned off the electric lamp.

Scudding out into the flower shop, Goo-goo also extinguished its lights, but he did so in a peculiar fashion, blinking them to imitate the signal that had come from the coupe.

In less than a minute, two men entered the door of the darkened flower shop. Goo-goo recognized the whispers that he expected. One belonged to Morry Cathlan, the other to Koko Yandel.

"What's the idea?" demanded Morry, savagely. "You were supposed to slide out and join up with us. Where's the guy who was in here? What does he think about you turning off the lights?"

"He isn't thinking about it," returned Goo-goo. "He went out like a light himself. Come in and take a look at him."

Leading the way with a flashlight, Goo-goo conducted Morry and Koko to the office. Viewing Herkshire's limp figure, they began to talk in mutters. While thus engaged, they did not notice something that occurred out front.

A CAB had pulled up near the parked coupe. It was Moe's cab, but being of a dark-painted type that was common in Manhattan, the highjackers would not have recognized it had they seen it from the store. Nor could they possibly have viewed the figure that emerged from the halted taxi.

The street had gloomy spots, and Moe had paused beside one. The Shadow, his black cloak close about his shoulders, his slouch hat drawn well down over his eyes, was like a streak of night itself as he chose a gloom-splotched path across the street.

Pausing a short way from the entrance to the florist shop, The Shadow gave the windows a brief scrutiny, then glided to a narrow passage between two buildings. He was choosing a route to the rear alley. Entry by the front of the shop was not the best course.

In learning that the Interstate Florists shop received shipments from the New Jersey greenhouse, The Shadow had also gained the information that the store stayed open until nine o'clock. With an hour and a half before that time arrived, the darkness in the flower shop indicated trouble there.

If crooks were inside, chances were that they had locked the front door, or were guarding it.

In the alley, The Shadow found a rear entrance to the shop, one that was very flimsily locked. Making an easy entry, he moved through a back room toward the main portion of the shop, mindful of the fact that several

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minutes had passed during his roundabout trip.

Halfway through the storeroom, The Shadow heard a stir in the shop itself. The sound faded. Approaching, he glided noiselessly into the shop; then stopped near an opened door. By the occasional blinks of a flashlight, he saw the interior of an office, where two men were stooped above the huddled figure of a third man.

The blinks ceased, but The Shadow could hear voices. Acquainted with characters of the underworld, his thoughts fixed upon two that he had recently met, The Shadow promptly identified the owners. His quest had brought the very results he wanted.

Those speakers were Morry Cathlan and Koko Yandel. The Shadow had picked up the trail of the thugs who had escaped him, to obtain some inside facts of the crime in which the two were engaged!

CHAPTER V. CLUES TO COME

IT was plain, even from their guarded conversation, that Morry and Koko were not at all pleased with their present job, whatever its purpose. They liked the open spaces, where getaways were rapid. The confinement of the little office worried them.

Morry had evidently cited certain facts to Koko, for the two were talking as if both understood matters perfectly. Unfortunately, that did not help The Shadow. He would have preferred to be on hand when Morry had explained the situation in terms that would penetrate Koko's thick skull.

Probably they had talked a lot while riding to the florist shop. At any rate, they brought up one point pertaining to that ride.

"Switching buggies helped," voiced Morry. "If The Shadow, or anybody else, shows up around here, they'll see a coupe instead of the sedan that we took when we lammed."

"That part's jake," agreed Koko. "But what about this guy we've gotta lug away with us? We can't take him out through the front. Some copper might spot us. You know the way those harness bulls come along just when you don't want 'em."

"All we need to do," returned Morry, "is wait a little while. I always figure things ahead, Koko. When we switched cars, back at the garage, I was thinking of The Shadow. So I told some of the boys there to bring along an old jellopy and park it in the alley back of this joint."

There was a smack of approval from Koko's big lips.

"Good stuff, Morry! Then we can take this guy out through the back and start him on his way."

"That's the idea, Koko."

The Shadow had shifted to a spot directly opposite the office door. He was close to a batch of potted rubber plants that formed a darkened background. Though the lights in the shop had been extinguished, a dim glow came through the show windows and the glass-paneled door, for there was a street lamp near the florist shop.

What The Shadow wanted was a view of the huddled man at the desk. The fellow certainly belonged in the flower shop. Whether or not Morry and Koko had slugged him into submission, was still a question. From his position, Herkshire looked as though he had collapsed of his own accord.

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The crooks were beginning to discuss something important while they waited. The Shadow drew closer, to catch their undertones.

"Goo-goo shoulda lammed," grumbled Koko. "From the way he talked, this guy" Koko thumbed toward Herkshire "was going to keep his lip buttoned."

"Maybe Goo-goo would have lammed," returned Morry, "if the guy hadn't passed out on him. That made it different, Koko. It would have looked bad, if any customer walked into the shop."

"How come?"

"Because "

A noise like a threshing machine interrupted Morry's reply. The sound announced the arrival of the old car in the alley. Morry and Koko stooped to lift Herkshire's frail figure from its chair. Turning on the flashlight, Koko swept it toward the doorway.

The sudden glare caught The Shadow directly in its beam. For half a second, the black-cloaked invader was brilliantly outlined against the background of rubber plants. But it wasn't necessary for him to wheel away, or get into action with his guns. Neither of the two crooks saw him.

Snarling for Koko to "go easy with the glim," Morry beat the flashlight downward in his pal's hand. Koko clicked the button that turned it off.

In darkness again, The Shadow shifted toward the front of the flower shop. Knowing that Morry and Koko would be carrying Herkshire out toward the rear, he was gaining a vantage spot from which to follow them.

AT that moment, everything looked perfect for The Shadow's plans. Morry and Koko, burdened with human baggage, could be dealt with, silently and effectively, in the storeroom.

With Herkshire rescued by such action, The Shadow could then attend to the reserve crew out back. But that moment brought a startling interruption.

A high-pitched shriek came from the front of the shop. Swinging full about, The Shadow saw a woman stagger back from a flower-banked corner. Quite visible against the light of the front windows, she was clutching a bag in one hand, making a wild claw with the other, as if to beat off an attacker.

Launching toward the darkened front corner, The Shadow was halfway there when Morry, leaping from the office with Koko's flashlight, threw a glare toward the front of the shop. In his hurry, Morry was in no position to take a shot at The Shadow, but another crook was.

Whipping his revolver from the handbag, Goo-goo Jaffer tongued shots straight for the black-clad shape that was shown by the flashlight. With the first of those stabs, The Shadow took a headlong pitch that carried him to the flower-banked corner.

Goo-goo, guarding the front of the shop, had seen The Shadow that time when Koko had carelessly flicked the light. The sly crook had played a clever trick, a ruse for which The Shadow had fallen. The garb of "Miss Townley" had enabled Goo-goo to bring The Shadow, and Morry's light as well.

Mistaking Goo-goo for a helpless female customer, The Shadow had gone after an imaginary enemy in the corner. The dive that the cloaked fighter took when Goo-goo fired, wasn't faked. Though it carried him

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below the level of the remaining shots, there was no doubt that The Shadow had been floored.

"It's The Shadow!" shrilled Goo-goo. "I'll finish him! You guys get out of here, like you're supposed to!"

Koko was hauling Herkshire from the office. Morry grabbed the motionless clerk from the other side. Together, they started out through the storeroom, while Goo-goo, chuckling in falsetto style, moved across to find The Shadow, hoping to sink more lead in him.

On the floor, Goo-goo made out the silent, blackened mass he sought. He figured that he had already settled The Shadow, but he shoved his gun downward to prod the cloaked victim's ribs and make sure of the job. If The Shadow still happened to be alive, mere instants lay between him and death.

Those moments brought another interruption, as startling as the one that Goo-goo had provided. Under the double attack of two men from the street, the glass-paneled door was shattered. Goo-goo, springing about, saw a brace of automatics thrusting toward him, each gun gripped by a different man.

Harry and Cliff had come from Moe's cab at the sound of Goo-goo's fire. They saw the revolver glimmer from the crook's fist, but they didn't note Goo-goo's garb, as he was against a darkish background. Too late to work his ruse again, Goo-goo darted for the back of the shop.

Guns blasted a pursuit. Goo-goo, pitching headlong, heard bullets whistle above his head. Oddly, he wasn't hurt, but he lost his gun in the sprawl. It went beyond the telephone table, and Goo-goo rolled to get it.

New guns talked. Morry and Koko had passed thugs coming in from the alley, also attracted by the gunfire. They had told those reserves to join Goo-goo in the shop. Coming through, the thugs began head-on battle with The Shadow's men.

KNOWING they had light behind them, Harry and Cliff took to cover at the sides of the shop. By that quick process, they obtained an immediate advantage. Away from direct fire, they could use The Shadow's own tactics of aiming for the spurting guns of their opponents.

Harry and Cliff were scoring hits; the crooks weren't. But the thugs were rolling for cover too, and the fight seemed in the balance. Goo-goo wanted to find his gun, so he could weigh the scales in crime's favor. He clutched the lost weapon, too late.

Another gun was already in the battle. A .45 automatic was booming from the darkened front corner. With the blasts of that mighty gun came a fierce laugh of challenge, a mockery that chilled crooks to the marrow.

The Shadow wasn't dead; in fact, he wasn't even wounded!

Dazed temporarily by his fall, he had gained a respite through the prompt arrival of his secret agents. Crime's formidable, relentless foe was taking over battle as his own!

Totally bewildered, Goo-goo was trying to disentangle his own guns from a snakelike thing that seemed to coil about it. As he got the revolver free, he identified the twisty tendril as a telephone cord, stretched between wall and table and caught around a leg of the latter.

Two events were explained: The Shadow's plunge and the one that Goo-goo had taken later.

Both had cut through the short route between the wall and the table. First, The Shadow had tripped; missed by Goo-goo's earliest shot, he had seemingly been clipped by a bullet. Floored, The Shadow had escaped the

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rest of Goo-goo's fire, also.

In his turn Goo-goo, headed in the opposite direction, had been saved from the fire of The Shadow's agents by a stumble over that same cord.

With luck equalized, Goo-goo didn't care to run further chances. Crooks were sprawling in the floral beds along the walls; the central route to the storeroom was clear. Goo-goo took advantage of it.

Reaching the alley on the run, he piled into the rear of the reserve crew's car just as Morry and Koko were starting away, with Herkshire slumped on the back seat.

Goo-goo's news that The Shadow had taken over, was enough to turn a mere departure into a rapid flight. By the time The Shadow reached the rear alley, the roar of the ancient jellopy was a mere rumble from a block away.

Morry and Koko had deserted their reserves, correctly figuring that the entire crew would be eliminated by The Shadow and his agents. They were away, carrying Herkshire, and Goo-goo had been lucky enough to go along. Pursuit was out of the question.

Harry and Cliff were hurrying through to tell The Shadow that police were already invading the wrecked flower shop. Moe would have to sit tight in his cab to avoid suspicion.

With no way to reach the front street, and no other car available, The Shadow picked a path on foot through other passages and alleys, taking his agents with him.

SOME twenty minutes later, The Shadow arrived alone near the exclusive Cobalt Club, which stood on a quiet avenue.

No longer cloaked, The Shadow carried his black garb over his arm. He was attired in evening clothes, which were quite smooth despite his recent activity. The light from beneath the marquee of the club showed a calm, hawklike face above the dress shirt's stiff collar.

The doorman recognized the calm-mannered arrival as Lamont Cranston, a millionaire member of the Cobalt Club. At Cranston's nod, the doorman summoned a limousine from the opposite curb. A slight smile on his masklike face, The Shadow stepped into the big car.

"Home, Stanley."

The Shadow put that order to the chauffeur in an even-toned voice. Having lost his trail, he was going to the New Jersey residence that he occupied as Lamont Cranston. After the police had learned what they could about tonight's crimes, The Shadow could map his future campaign.

Near the Holland Tunnel, The Shadow remembered an engagement. Through the speaking tube, he told Stanley to drive to an address on Long Island. The big car reversed its course. The Shadow had decided, as part of his role of Cranston, to attend a reception to which he had been invited.

It seemed a far stretch from crime's battleground in Manhattan to a fashionable function at the Long Island home of a wealthy man named Preston Marr. Though he expected clues to come, The Shadow was not counting on any tonight.

As yet, The Shadow had failed to link the deeds of criminals with the purpose they represented. Without

knowing it, he was headed toward crime's next objective!

CHAPTER VI. DEATH'S RIDDLE

AT the time when The Shadow's big car started for Long Island, most of the guests had already arrived at Marr's reception. In fact, the two who were approaching in an old-fashioned limousine regarded themselves as late.

"I'm sorry, grandfather." The girl who spoke was very earnest. "But I had to wait until my flowers arrived. Otherwise, we could have started sooner."

Old Austin Delmont gave a grunt. His face, withery and bony, seemed very set in disapproval. But Patricia Delmont let a smile illumine her attractive face, as she smoothed stray locks of her golden hair.

She knew her grandfather's ways. Behind his stern exterior, he was very indulgent, so far as Patricia was concerned. It was simply policy on his part to make himself austere. He regarded it as a duty, since he had taken over the task of raising Patricia after her parents had died.

"The flowers are beautiful, aren't they?" questioned Patricia. "Philip sent them, and they were such a surprise! Look, grandfather! I had been expecting roses, and instead "

Delmont interrupted. He wasn't looking at the cluster of golden flowers that Patricia wore in the sash of her evening gown. He was looking at the girl's face.

She was more beautiful than any flowers. Her profile was perfect; her ruddy lips and dancing blue eyes were an ideal combination with her burnished hair. She was the type of girl that all men would seek; and that was why Delmont decided to insert some statements.

"Patricia!" His tone was crackly. "I have told you to consider other persons beside this chap Philip Kreft."

"Why, Phil and I are engaged," laughed the girl. "And don't call me Patricia, grandfather. Call me Pat, like Phil does."

"Bah!" ejaculated Delmont. "I have heard too much about Kreft. Remember, Patricia, you are only twenty. Until you are of age "

"I must fellow your advice," said the girl, with a patient nod. "Yes, grandfather, I shall be a very dutiful child. But I expect to see Phil Kreft often and to regard myself as engaged to him, even though you have not given your final approval."

Austin Delmont laid his long, thin hand lightly upon the girl's arm.

"You have spirit, Patricia," he said, approvingly. "I am glad of that, very glad. I merely want you to show the discretion that goes with it."

"But you and Phil are friends, grandfather "

"Of course we are! We shall remain so. He would decide to break off matters himself, if your infatuation toward him should reach a ridiculous stage. But I should prefer that you show wisdom of your own and avoid future embarrassment."

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Pat bit her lips angrily, but said nothing more, for they had arrived at Marr's.

ENTERING, the Delmonts were greeted by Mrs. Marr, a very talkative lady, who had the appearance of a dowager and the manner of a playful kitten.

"How glad I am that you have come, Mr. Delmont!" she gurgled. "Do you know" her tone became a confidential one, that couldn't have been heard outside the forty-foot living room "Preston has been most obstinate. He hasn't wanted to leave his study.

"How he can stand that stuffy place, I don't know. It's business, of course" Mrs. Marr fluttered her hands as though financial matters could be dismissed like a flock of birds "but Preston said he would join us as soon as you arrived, Mr. Delmont. So I shall send for him right away."

She sent a servant upstairs to knock on the door of Marr's study.

Meanwhile, Patricia Delmont had disentangled herself from the reception committee surrounding Mrs. Marr. Standing near two men who were holding a low-voiced conversation, Patricia noticed that they were looking toward her grandfather.

The girl recognized the pair when she heard them call each other by name. She had seen them before, at her own home, though they had not called there often.

"Let Marr talk to Delmont first," said one, a long-faced, sharp-eyed man. "After that, Brydan, you and I can handle it."

"You had better do the talking, Angew." Brydan's speech, Pat noticed, was hesitant, almost timid. "I doubt that Delmont would value greatly my opinions."

They were drawing away as they spoke; from then on, Pat couldn't make out their conversation, although she caught such terms as "gold" and "mining property." Then Preston Marr, arriving from his study, stopped to say something to the pair. His tone was loud enough for the girl to hear.

"I was delayed by a call from Kreft," chuckled Marr. "When he asked how the reception was going, I made it quite plain that he wasn't expected."

Pat's fists went tight; a flush came to her face. She wanted to step up to Marr and demand to know why Kreft hadn't been invited. Finally managing to frown away her anger, she decided that she might learn the reason if she continued to listen.

"Kreft suggested a conference later," added Marr. "I told him it wouldn't be possible tonight. Of course, I had to be polite enough to ask him to drop in sometime, but I indicated that it would have to be a thing of the future."

When Marr went over to shake hands with Delmont and the other guests, Pat followed. Marr was all smiles when he saw the girl, and Pat tightened her lips to hold back the caustic remarks that she wanted to make. With her grandfather present, she knew it would be poor policy to squabble with Marr.

"How lovely you look, Pat!" exclaimed Marr, in a rich-toned voice. His squarish face was beaming at its best. "My word!" He was scanning the girl from head to foot. "What an excellent choice of flowers! Are they carnations?"

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Pat nodded. She wanted to say that the choice of flowers had been Kreft's, not her own; but she decided that silence would be better. Marr was touching the flowers, noting their fragrance. He took a long breath and beamed again.

"Exquisite!" he complimented. "Austin" he clapped old Delmont on the shoulder "your granddaughter has taste as well as charm. Don't let her marry too soon" he wagged a warning forefinger "because it will take a long, long while to find a man who really deserves her."

IN Pat's opinion, Marr was not very subtle. She knew that his interest in the flowers had been a build-up to the compliments he made about her. Those, in turn, were calculated to impress her grandfather.

Beyond that, Pat recognized that Marr was trying to undermine Kreft, for his final remarks were indirect references to the man she loved.

Marr was intimating that Kreft, thought not specified by name, was one of the suitors that Pat should reject. She noticed, too, that her grandfather looked quite pleased at the innuendo.

There was a way, Pat decided, to settle that matter once and for all. She went out to a large hallway, sat down at a telephone table, near a great floor vase that stood nearly five feet high. Knowing that she could probably reach Kreft at the Club Cabana, she called that number. Soon, Kreft was on the wire.

"I've been hearing people talk about you, Phil," the girl said, bitterly. "Mr. Marr has made it quite plain to certain friends of his that you were not invited to this reception."

"He made it quite plain to me, too." Kreft's voice was casual, as it came across the wire. "So I won't be seeing you this evening, Pat. Have a good time at the party."

"But aren't you going to do anything about it, Phil?"

"About Marr? Of course not! I could have told him off if I had felt like it, but what was the use?"

"There's plenty of use!" Pat's tone was violent. "Why why, if Marr poisons grandfather's mind against you, maybe we won't be able to announce our engagement."

"Sorry to hear that" Kreft's tone was purred "because I thought you had a mind of your own, Pat."

Too indignant to find words, Pat let a few seconds lapse. Kreft's voice resumed the conversation.

"Did you like the flowers I sent you, Pat?"

"I'm wearing them!" the girl snapped back. "But listen to me, Phil. I don't want to stay any place where you are being insulted. Come out here at once and take me into town!"

"Sorry, Pat" the girl could picture Kreft shaking his head "but I'm not invited to the party."

"Marr said you could drop in any time "

"But he made it plain that there would have to be a good reason."

"I'm the reason. One that ought to be good enough for you, Phil. I want to show Marr, and grandfather, too, just how we stand."

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"Let's keep that to ourselves, Pat."

Kreft's smooth tone didn't soothe the girl. She repeated her demand, and received a positive refusal. Angrily, she ripped the golden flowers from her sash.

"Here go your flowers, Phil!" she stormed. Rising with the telephone, she saw the big vase close beside her. "Since you won't come to get me" Pat flung the flowers in the vase "I'm going home, alone! You're almost as unreasonable as grandfather. This evening" her tone was scoffing "he said I was infatuated over you!"

"Perhaps you are," Kreft said softly. "Other women have been, you know."

Pat slammed the telephone on its stand. Striding violently toward the front door, she encountered one of Marr's servants, who tried to bow himself from her path.

"Speak to my grandfather," ordered Pat, haughtily. "He is the elderly man; Mr. Delmont. Tell him that I have gone home; that I shall send the car back for him."

The girl was gathering up her sash, as she snatched her cape from another servant's hands. She had torn the sash when she ripped away the flowers. At the door, she walked into a tall guest who had just arrived.

Pat was conscious of keen eyes that gazed at her from a masklike face. Then, side-stepping, she resumed her way out to the car.

WHILE announcing himself as Lamont Cranston, The Shadow heard the Delmont limousine start away. A servant bowed the new guest to the living room; while Cranston was shaking hands with Marr, he caught what the servant said to Austin Delmont:

"She left immediately after making a telephone call, sir "

Delmont was pondering, when he saw Cranston turn to shake hands. They had met occasionally, and Delmont, coming suddenly from his puzzlement, began a withery smile of greeting. The Shadow's firm hand was clasping Delmont's longish claw, when they heard a shriek behind them.

Preston Marr had collapsed to the floor, in the very center of a small group of friends. Though a dozen hands were close by, none reached out in time to seize him.

The Shadow was one of those who carried Marr to a couch. He was standing close by when Marr's physician, a guest at the party, lifted his head from the stricken man's chest. Looking about and noting that Mrs. Marr had been taken elsewhere, due to the hysteria that had seized her, the doctor made the grim announcement:

"He is dead."

A hush gripped the group. Then came awed buzzes. Some were remembering a recent illness of Marr's; others, that the man had a weak heart. Men were moving away in little clusters. Only one, Lamont Cranston, remained beside the physician.

The Shadow's eyes had a steady, distant gaze. Usually, coincidences did not impress him. But this one, striking immediately after The Shadow's battles with men engaged in singular crimes, was a coincidence that carried portent.

It could be murder. If so, it might link with earlier events. His eyes still fixed in their distant stare, The

Shadow was seeking an answer to death's riddle.

CHAPTER VII. THE WHEELS MOVE

FOR the first time in his career as a crime hunter, The Shadow felt that he had come under the sway of his own imagination. The situation rather oppressed him; he was still thinking it over at noon the next day, when, as Cranston, he sat in the grillroom of the Cobalt Club.

All of his vaguely formed suspicions regarding murder behind Marr's death, were things that had faded within an hour after the man had died.

One the very scene which he considered one of crime, The Shadow had come to the amazing conclusion that his surmise was entirely wrong. Not a single shred of evidence had appeared to back his supposition.

Marr's death had been classed as heart failure by competent physicians. Nothing had been found amiss in the dead man's study. His friends had been genuinely expressive of their grief. One, in particular, had impressed The Shadow.

The man in question was Wilfred Angew. There were real tears in Angew's eyes, when he talked of Marr. When Angew left, he went with another man, who had said nothing but whose drab face had seemed to reflect everything that Angew said. Angew's melancholy companion was Hugo Brydan.

Austin Delmont, too, had seemed quite distressed; enough so for The Shadow to discount Patricia's departure just before Marr's death. If women knew of impending crime and approved it, they never flaunted about before it happened. Their tendency was to be catlike in a silent way. If they kicked up a scene, it always came after crime was done.

Though Patricia Delmont was a very unusual girl, The Shadow was positive that she was no exception to the rule. She was young, and definitely inexperienced in matters of intrigue. Her childish behavior at the time she left Marr's was unquestionably due to some minor tiff that had done nothing more than hurt her pride.

If anyone had mentioned Philip Kreft as a possible enemy of Preston Marr, The Shadow would have gained a prop for his theory of murder. But no one mentioned Kreft at all. Even Angew, Marr's closest friend, considered Kreft's absence sufficient proof that the man of fashion could have done no harm to Marr.

Moreover, for business reasons, Angew didn't care to talk about Kreft; and Brydan was governed by the same policy. As for Delmont, though he was a member of the original five, his present thoughts of Kreft related entirely to Pat, and therefore had nothing to do with Marr.

Five men, all equal claimants to a property that promised millions of dollars, had been reduced to four! Yet The Shadow, having no key to the secret that the surviving four still shared, was unable even to find a motive that could mark Marr's death as murder!

He had made a thorough survey of Marr's servants. All had been honestly grieved by their master's death. In fact, the further The Shadow had gone with his investigation, the weaker his theory had become.

In his present mood, The Shadow actually needed sympathy. It wasn't long before he received some.

Two men entered the grillroom. One was Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, a broad-faced man with short-clipped military mustache. Weston was barking at his companion, Inspector Joe Cardona, a stocky man with a swarthy face that looked unusually glum. Seeing Cranston, Weston sat down and spoke his tale of

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woe.

"IT'S this flower shop robbery," bemoaned the commissioner. "I call it a robbery, because I don't know what else to term it. Inspector Cardona can offer no help. His best theory" Weston shot a contemptuous look at Cardona "is that a lot of crooks were out on a practice trip, just trying to see how tough they could prove themselves."

Slapping a stack of papers on the table, Weston spread them wide. They proved to be order slips from the Interstate Florists shop.

"Inspector Cardona calls these evidence," snapped the commissioner, "simply because he found them scattered around the floor. Humph!" With his grunt, Weston turned to Cardona. "Why didn't you cut off that telephone cord you tripped over while you were blundering around the flower shop? It might have proven important, too."

A faint smile appeared upon the maskish lips of Cranston. The Shadow could testify that the telephone cord had been very important. Despite his recent disappointment at jumping too quickly to conclusions, he decided that the order slips might prove important, also.

"First, the crooks hijacked a flower truck," grumbled Weston. "Fancy that, Cranston! Then, finding no orchids, or whatever they were after, they headed for the flower shop, where they held another gun fray.

"A clerk named Herkshire disappeared along with them. A man of small consequence, who could not possibly have been connected with crime. In fact, Herkshire was just back from a hospital, after an operation.

"The crooks couldn't have killed Herkshire, or they would have left his body on the premises. They didn't take time to carry away the members of their own mob or any rival mob, that was engaged in the conflict."

There were angles to those episodes that The Shadow could have explained for Weston's benefit. Crooks hadn't battled among themselves. Nor had Herkshire fled with them. But it was useless to enlighten the commissioner. Facts were still obscure, even to The Shadow.

From what he had seen of the thugs while fighting them, it had appeared that they were after something; but there was still doubt on that point. Doubt, too, regarding Herkshire. The thugs hadn't been afraid that Herkshire would talk; nevertheless, the clerk's collapse had worried them.

Whether friend or foe to criminals, whether dead or alive, Herkshire had been taken along by Morry Cathlan and Koko Yandel. There was also another crook at large: Goo-goo Jaffer, whose name The Shadow had heard and whose cleverness had been well demonstrated.

The Shadow was doing three things at once. He was listening to Weston; he was pondering over the facts he already knew; he was looking through the slips that had come from the flower shop.

It was the final process that brought a real discovery; one that Weston and Cardona had passed over, but which was important to The Shadow.

In fact, if The Shadow had come across a gold nugget stamped with the name "North Star Mine," the clue would have been no better than the one he actually found.

Among the order slips was one for a dozen Arden Bloom roses, listed for special delivery to Miss Patricia Delmont, the young lady who had so huffily left Marr's reception the night before.

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It was the missing link that The Shadow wanted; a connection, though a meager one, between the Manhattan gun frays and the party at Marr's home.

It produced another factor that The Shadow wanted: the name of someone who might have known about things at Marr's, yet who had not been there.

The name was that of Philip Kreft. The order slip listed him as the purchaser of the flowers that had gone to Patricia Delmont.

TO date, the engagement of Phil Kreft and Pat Delmont had not been announced. It wasn't known among socialites like Lamont Cranston and his friends. Even the snoopers who ran scandal columns in the tabloid newspapers had missed it. Kreft had so many girl friends, that no one ever bothered to count them.

Perhaps Marr and a few others knew that Kreft had his eyes on Patricia. Certainly, old Austin Delmont must be in the know, whether he approved or not. But The Shadow was not thinking in terms of Marr, or even of Delmont. He was considering Philip Kreft, picturing the fancy-dressed man about town.

Conspicuous in The Shadow's visualization of Kreft was a little golden-hued flower that always decorated the fellow's coat lapel. In all his meetings with Kreft, and there had been many of them, The Shadow could not recall a time when the fastidious chap had lacked one of those tiny carnations.

Where Kreft got them, how he always happened to have a fresh flower, were such minor mysteries that The Shadow had never considered them in the past. Recent events, however, made those matters loom large.

While he lunched with Weston, The Shadow retained the leisurely pose of Cranston, but behind his calmness he felt a continual impatience to be elsewhere.

It was past midafternoon when Lamont Cranston finally disentangled himself from his friend the police commissioner and dropped in at the Club Cabana. There, The Shadow found Philip Kreft in a tiny private bar reserved for the most-prized patrons of the Club Cabana.

Kreft was slouched across the bar, muttering thickly to a stolid-faced barkeeper named Jerry. Though dressed as usual in the height of fashion, Kreft looked very slouchy. His wilted appearance did not, however, apply to the small golden carnation that adorned his lapel.

The Shadow observed that the boutonniere was a fresh one, quite in keeping with the standard.

Blinking in bleary-eyed fashion, Kreft recognized Cranston. Thrusting out his hand, he nearly fell off his stool. His foot slipped from the brass rail beneath it, starting him in a forward tumble.

The Shadow caught him from one side, while Jerry thrust a big paw across the bar, to grip Kreft by the other arm.

"Take it easy, Beau Brummel," advised the barkeeper. "Better sit tight and try to sober up. I'll mix you something that's good for you."

Kreft did look very drunk, which was something quite unusual. He seemed to realize it and began to apologize for his condition.

"I'm in the dog house, Cranston," said Kreft, very solemnly. "My girl's given me the air" he wavered, took hold on the bar with one hand and made a flinging motion with the other "just like that!"

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"Which girl?" inquired The Shadow, casually.

"The only girl," affirmed Kreft. "Most lovely girl I ever knew! Pat Delmont." As he uttered the name, Kreft seemed to sober. Tilting his head, he looked sharply at The Shadow. "Ever meet her, Cranston?"

"I saw her last night," was the calm-toned reply, "when she was leaving the Marr reception."

A PECULIAR tightness came over Kreft's face. It developed into a pained expression. His tone was sorrowful, as he said:

"That's where Pat called me from. Last time she talked to me. Been calling her all day" he gestured toward a telephone near the bar "but they say she's out. Left word for her to call me here. No luck."

Kreft gulped the sedative that Jerry handed him. He thwacked the barkeeper's shoulder.

"Good old Jerry," said Kreft. "You take care of any calls that come for me. You'll do that, Jerry?" He leaned toward the barkeeper, who nodded. "I'm going back to the apartment," added Kreft.

Sliding from the stool, he found his feet unsteadily. "You help me get there, Cranston" he was leaning heavily on The Shadow "like a pal. Yessir, you're a real pal, Cranston."

"And remember, Jerry" from the doorway, Kreft wagged his cane "you talk to the women for me. Any of 'em that call up here. Only, don't say where I've gone except to Pat Delmont."

When Kreft had left with his new pal, Cranston, Jerry kept glancing toward the telephone. When the bell rang the stolid barkeeper shot a wary glance toward the door, then answered the call. He recognized the falsetto tone that sounded much like a woman's.

"Hello, Goo-goo," undertoned Jerry. "Kreft has gone. He took a guy named Cranston with him... Yeah, a wise guy, this Cranston; knows too much... He was out at Marr's last night, Cranston was..."

"Kreft handled him just right... Yeah, said just enough to alibi himself, then switched the talk. Told me to answer calls that came here" Jerry was chuckling "so that's what I'm doing... Better tip off Morry and Koko to watch for Cranston."

Wheels of crime were again on the move. Jerry, the barkeeper, another of the ring that served a master murderer, had done his bit to see that Marr's death preserved the requirements of a perfect crime. Trouble lay in the offing for Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. FADED EVIDENCE

WHEN The Shadow left Kreft's apartment, an hour or so later, he had established a few facts that were satisfactory, but small.

First, Kreft was not as drunk as he pretended to be. He had overdone it, Kreft had, by making his talk more vague and maudlin, instead of sobering after he left the bar.

It was plain that Kreft had known Marr and was admitting the fact, to protect himself in case Cranston learned it elsewhere. But Kreft, canny beneath the intoxicated state that he exaggerated, had dodged all details relating to his acquaintanceship with the dead automobile manufacturer.

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Kreft was establishing an alibi; that much was very apparent. Quite ready to declare to anyone, police included, that Patricia had phoned him from Marr's home, Kreft was turning that incident to his own advantage. It stood as proof that he had been miles away at the approximate time when death struck down Preston Marr.

Starting for Long Island, The Shadow drove a sporty roadster that he often used when he traveled as Cranston. All during the drive, he kept thinking of little golden carnations.

He had seen a cluster of those tiny flowers at Kreft's apartment. They were in a glass vase partly filled with water, to which Kreft had added a pinch of salt, saying that it kept his pet flowers fresh.

As he neared Marr's home, however, The Shadow turned his thoughts to roses. He hadn't asked Kreft about the Arden Blooms that had been sent to Patricia; for that wasn't necessary. The Shadow was quite sure that the girl had not only received a cluster of flowers, but had worn them to Marr's reception.

Picturing Pat's rage as she left the Marr mansion, The Shadow remembered that she had plucked at a torn sash belonging to her evening gown. Knowing that her anger was directed toward Kreft, it was quite plain that she had flung away the flowers that her debonair suitor had sent her.

It was close to dusk when a sad-faced butler admitted Cranston to the somber residence that had been so gay the night before. Apparently, others had previously come there to extend their sympathies; but Mrs. Marr was not at home. Her physician had sent her to stay with relatives; and the butler, as spokesman for the household, was accepting all condolences.

It wasn't long before the man was pouring his full tale of grief to the sympathetic Mr. Cranston. Under persuasive encouragement, the butler talked of Marr, of the family, their servants and their friends. He remembered Patricia Delmont when her name was mentioned by Cranston, but the butler did not recall the flowers that she wore.

He shook his head when Cranston remarked that roses made Miss Delmont look unusually attractive.

"I scarcely saw the guests last night, sir," said the butler. "That is, not until after Mr. Marr had his heart attack, and at that time, Miss Delmont had gone. There was so much to do about the house, Mr. Cranston, on account of the painters."

The Shadow's eyes showed query.

"The painters left at six o'clock," explained the butler, "but so much was in confusion. Particularly Mr Marr's study. I had to rearrange it personally, before he arrived home from the office."

"It was painted yesterday?"

"No. But the painters were starting on it, by mistake. I was forced to halt them. They had moved the furniture, but they pried into nothing. Of that, I am sure."

FEELING that he ought to convince Cranston further, the butler led the way up to the study.

Though The Shadow had seen the room before, he had not entered it. Last night, he had simply watched from the doorway while the butler and a few members of the family had made a cursory inspection to make sure that everything was in order.

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Today, stepping deep into the room, The Shadow observed a fireplace in the front wall and noted that the mantel, with the woodwork below it, had a fresh coat of paint.

"They had done that much when I stopped them," said the butler. "I was afraid that the odor of the paint would annoy Mr. Marr; but it didn't. He smoked cigars constantly when he was in this room, and he never minded how stuffy it became."

The Shadow approached the fireplace, drew his finger along the mantel. The paint was quite dry and glossy, like a varnish. Traces of its odor remained, and the smell was of a sort that some persons would have considered sickening.

As they walked from the study, the butler turned toward a rear hallway.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Cranston," he said, "but the painters are here again today. I thought it best to let them finish the work that they had started. I must see how they have progressed before they leave."

With a bow, the butler gestured toward the front stairway, indicating that he would meet Cranston later, downstairs. But The Shadow lingered in the rear hall when the butler had gone.

The hallway had been painted, too, but its smell was exactly that of fresh paint. Returning to the study, The Shadow made another inspection of the mantelpiece.

The glossy paint had the smoothness of collodion, and its smell, too, had something of the banana odor characteristic of that quick-drying substance. The faint odor was evidence, of a sort. Faded evidence, yet enough to indicate that the painters had not visited the room by mistake.

It would be well, The Shadow decided, to look over those painters before they left. Since they were going soon, he had only a few minutes to complete another matter of investigation, the task which he had actually come here to perform.

Going downstairs, The Shadow stopped at the telephone in an alcove of the lower hall. He knew that it must be the telephone that Patricia Delmont had used when she called Philip Kreft.

From this spot, the girl had gone directly to the front door. The Shadow was hopeful that he would find some clue near the telephone, perhaps in the shape of a rose petal.

Instead, he observed a great vase, close to five feet tall. A whispered laugh came from the lips of Lamont Cranston, as The Shadow tilted the huge vase toward the floor.

Something slid inside with a slight scraping sound. Thrusting his arm full length into the vase, The Shadow brought out a cluster of flowers.

The last rays of the setting sun glinted through a hallway window, to burnish the drooped petals of Patricia's golden flowers!

Again, faded evidence. But these flowers, still possessed of a fragrance that resembled the scent of carnations, had lost none of their value as a clue.

They were large-sized editions of the golden flowers that Kreft reserved for buttonhole display. No order slip from a flower shop was needed to identify them with the wealthy man of fashion.

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But the fact that Patricia Delmont had received the golden carnations, instead of roses, was something that released a floodgate of possibilities.

The Shadow scarcely noted the heaviness of the flower scent, much stronger than that of ordinary carnations. He was wondering how these flowers had come to reach Patricia, when the order slip read otherwise. He was pondering, too, upon what fate had originally been planned for the golden flowers.

It was not difficult to find the answer. In the excitement prevailing after Marr's sudden death, no one would have thought of flowers, except in terms of a coming funeral. Leaving with other guests, Patricia would have worn the flowers home. Perhaps the girl would have kept them for a few days, then they would have gone into oblivion.

By consigning the golden carnations to the vase, Pat had simply left the temporary evidence at Marr's, instead of at her own home. The Shadow had been intending to call on the Delmonts later; but he now decided that it would not be necessary, for a while, at least.

HEARING the butler coming down the front stairs, The Shadow stowed the golden flowers beneath his coat. He met the butler and walked with him to the front door, where they watched four painters file down the driveway.

The men were wearing uniforms that had once been white, but which now carried paint marks, like their faces. Noting those faces as they turned in his direction, The Shadow did not like them.

Maybe the increasing dusk did not do proper justice to the painters, but The Shadow's judgment was seldom wrong when he classed men as thugs.

None of the faces were familiar, however, which meant that the painters, if crooks, belonged among the small fry.

There was a truck, however, that awaited the plodding painters, to take them home. For some reason, it was stopped outside the driveway. Two men were in the front seat; The Shadow could not see their faces at that distance, but he made a comparison of their sizes.

If they were the pair that The Shadow suspected them to be, it would prove profitable to trail that truck wherever it went. But there was no need to hurry. The road past Marr's was a long one. Whichever way the truck went, The Shadow could give it a half mile start and still overtake it in his speedy roadster.

Chatting with the butler until the painters had reached the truck, The Shadow watched the lumbering vehicle depart. As soon as it had rolled from sight beyond a hedge, he shook hands with Marr's faithful servant. Walking down the driveway to his roadster, The Shadow entered the car, looked back to see the house door close.

Again, a soft laugh came from the lips of Lamont Cranston. Sheltered beneath the raised top of the roadster, The Shadow drew the faded golden flowers from beneath his coat, stowed them behind the front seat in a special compartment.

While there, his hands plucked black cloth. His cloak was ready when he needed it. The time might be very soon; for the present, The Shadow preferred to preserve the identity of Cranston. With darkness, his roadster would be difficult to identify, when he stayed close behind the truck. That would be the time to assume the habit of The Shadow.

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Guns might be needed later. They were ready, if required. The Shadow pressed the compartment shut. A touch of its hidden spring would pop it open. Starting the roadster, The Shadow began a slow roll down the driveway, departing in a style that suited the never-hurried Cranston.

The turn from the driveway was sharp, leading just past the hedge. The Shadow applied the brakes as he neared it; the swerve of his car was quite slow. The space beside the hedge was very dark; the moment that the car swung past it, two men made a powerful leap for the sporty roadster.

They had waited until the car's dim lights could not reveal them; nevertheless, The Shadow saw their surge. He snapped into action, thrusting his hand for the push button behind the seat. A mere press; a scooping move for a gun and those lunging men would be blasted by an adversary much swifter than the supposed Mr. Cranston.

It was a formula that had worked often in the past. This was the time the system didn't work.

The Shadow's fingers couldn't find the button. They were numb as they probed. Even his other arm seemed slow, as he lifted it from the wheel to ward off the first attacker, who shoved in from the running board.

His feet were like lead weights when he lifted them. The Shadow could find neither the brake nor the accelerator; in fact, he didn't know which one he wanted.

A husky man was over the roadster's door, clutching The Shadow's throat. The maskish face of Cranston tilted upward, eyes staring blankly at the roadster's top.

As The Shadow's big adversary clamped him down behind the wheel, a smaller man yanked the door open, shoved a quick hand through and tugged the hand brake, stopping the slowly rolling car.

Two minutes later The Shadow, limp and helpless, was riding wedged between two captors who were taking him to parts unknown, along with his sporty car. The pair exchanged contemptuous guffaws regarding the prisoner who had proven such perfect prey.

There was only one redeeming feature in the situation. The trapping of Lamont Cranston had been so easy, that neither of the gloating crooks could possibly suppose that their prisoner was The Shadow!

CHAPTER IX. DEATH LIES BELOW

EXCEPT for the glow of a tiny flashlight, thick darkness surrounded the three riders in the speedy roadster that whirled smoothly along a narrow highway. The headlamps cut a brilliant path that altered rapidly and unexpectedly as the car negotiated numerous curves.

Morry Cathlan, the driver at the wheel, liked the way the car handled, and said so to Koko Yandel. The latter grunted as a sharp curve threw his weight against the door on the right. Recovering his grip, Koko prodded a gun against a limp figure that lay between them, then grumbled:

"Say, Morry, maybe this guy's croaked! I must have busted his neck with these mitts of mine."

"Don't forget the sock I gave him," reminded Morry, coolly. "When I tap them with a blackjack, they go out and stay out!"

"What're we going to do with him?"

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"We're taking him to Gordy, like Goo-goo took Herkshire. He'll look out for this guy, whether he's croaked or not."

These comments were heard by an interested listener. They were the first words, though, that The Shadow had heard clearly. Previous conversation had been blurred.

There were a few impressions, however, that The Shadow had gained at intervals when he opened his eyes, only to close them before the crooks could notice that he was no longer unconscious. He was sure that they had crossed the Triboro Bridge and taken a course toward Westchester County.

Judging from the car's present actions, they were traveling through a hilly region, but The Shadow could not see the road ahead. He had slumped downward until his head was below the level of the windshield.

"This guy Gordy," remarked Morry, "is all fixed to handle whatever comes along. He patched up those two guys who got clipped by The Shadow the time we highjacked the flower truck."

"Yeah, I remember you sent 'em out there," returned Koko. "But they weren't hurt very bad. The way you talked, I thought Gordy was a medico."

"He used to be," said Morry. "How good he is, I don't know. I never met him."

"Then how's he going to know you?" demanded Koko. "Ain't we taking a chance, pulling in there tonight?"

Morry chuckled. He fished in a vest pocket, produced something, and shoved it under The Shadow's chin. The Shadow felt the graze of fingers as they opened, moving toward the dashlight.

"When Gordy sees this," announced Morry, "he'll do what we want without asking questions. I gave one of these to the two gorillas the other night, and one to Goo-goo, too, when he took Herkshire out to Gordy's."

The Shadow's eyelids lifted very slightly, but too late. Morry's hand was closed again, moving back to his vest pocket. Whatever the token that he had shown to Koko, The Shadow did not see it.

"Yes, Gordy used to be a sawbones," remarked Morry, "until the Feds found out he specialized in face lifting, with public enemies as his customers."

"Where was he working that dodge?" asked Koko.

"Somewhere in the Middlewest," replied Morry. "In Nebraska, I think."

"That's near Omaha," said Koko, with a knowing nod. "Where did this Gordy go after he lammed from there?"

"To Mexico, where he specialized in horticulture."

"In which?"

"He grafted plants," replied Morry. Then, hearing a puzzled grunt from Koko, said: "I'll go into that later. Our business, when we meet up with Gordy, is to have him take this stuffed shirt off our hands."

By "stuffed shirt," Morry meant Cranston, as he indicated by jostling the prisoner with his elbow. The gesture wasn't necessary, because Koko understood the term. Nevertheless, Koko gave a grumble.

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"Maybe Gordy took care of Herkshire," said Koko, "but when a guy like Herkshire goes out of circulation, nobody worries much. The coppers figure that Herkshire was with us, and lammed, so Goo-goo says. But they won't dope it that way with this bird Cranston. They'll figure he was snatched."

"Not unless a ransom note shows up," argued Morry, "and there won't be any. What's more, nobody's going to figure what happened to him, so forget it. In about ten minutes we'll be rid of the guy. We're pretty close to where we're going."

FROM the statements in that conversation, as well as the tone, The Shadow knew that his kidnapers hadn't found the secret compartment in back of the seat. Unfortunately, wedged as he was, The Shadow had no way of reaching it.

His previous experience also made him wonder about his present ability. He could understand why he had succumbed so easily when the crooks had attacked. By this time, his strength should have returned; but it wasn't wise to discount the treatment that he had received when the crooks overpowered him.

Koko's choking tactics, Morry's added touch with the blackjack, might have left after-effects. To test his condition, The Shadow let himself roll as the car struck a curve, until his right hand was beneath his body. He tightened his hidden hand. His grip seemed strong enough.

Morry had calculated ten minutes more. That meant only a few miles to Gordy's, where The Shadow would have more than two foemen to handle. Resting limply, The Shadow waited for the next curve to the left. It came. Morry took it at high speed.

The instant that Koko's gun slid away from the prisoner's ribs, The Shadow made a hard lunge to the right. He twisted as he threw his weight on Koko, who was already bearing hard against the door. The Shadow's hands performed their work like vises on the ends of springs. His left clamped Koko's gun, his right clutched the big crook's throat.

Koko hadn't a chance to shoot. A finger had shoved beneath the trigger guard, to prevent pressure. The big man's gargles told that he was learning what real choking could be.

Flaying with his free hand, Koko tried to ward off the attack, but failed. He was off balance, due to the car's swerve; that, plus the power of The Shadow's attack, trapped Koko hopelessly.

There was still Morry to consider. The Shadow was risking his whole game on the chance that Morry wouldn't yank a gun until after they rounded the curve. In fact, Morry couldn't; he needed both hands on the wheel at the high speed he was making.

If he slackened the car's pace, it would be the give-away. In that case, The Shadow would have to switch tactics, with the odds in Morry's favor. It wasn't likely, though, that Morry would realize his possible advantage in the short time allowed.

Morry didn't. He acted as The Shadow wanted. He kept both hands on the wheel. He wanted to get on the straightaway. But he was smart enough to guess that the sooner he reached a straight stretch, the better.

On that account, Morry pressed the accelerator to the floorboard. The car lurched into a furious spurt.

Koko was sinking. He wouldn't be out of combat, but he would be slow to resume the fight when The Shadow's hand left his throat. Slow enough for The Shadow to make a quick slash at Morry with the revolver that was already squeezing from Koko's hand into The Shadow's own.

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If Morry was depending upon the straightaway, so was The Shadow.

The straightaway never came.

As the car whipped from that curve, it struck another, in the opposite direction. It took all of Morry's strength to yank the car from left to right. The roadster reeled in the bowl-like center of the road, then rose high on the opposite bank.

THREE figures were hurled forcibly to the left side of the car. The Shadow went in that direction, carrying Koko with him. The two struck Morry, pinning him against the door on the left.

More than ever, Morry wanted speed. Wedged as he was, he hadn't a chance to pull a gun.

Where Morry lost an advantage, Koko gained one. His hand came free of The Shadow's, and Koko still had the gun, retained with a frantic grip that didn't quite enable him to find the trigger. He took a blind slash toward The Shadow's head, overgauging it because of the roadster's swing.

The blow reached Morry just above the forehead. It had jarring force, which proved particularly disastrous at that moment. Morry needed all his strength and skill combined, to guide the rocketing car. He was driving so fast that he couldn't even read the road signs. One of those signs read:

NO GUARD RAIL

Morry didn't even notice the road after Koko's misjudged stroke pounded home. His hands slipped from the wheel and he lurched outward, half across the door. The Shadow tried to right the slewing car, but he in turn was pinned by Koko's weight.

Right then the roadster straightened, but not on a stretch of road. Its steering wheel released, the big front tires climbed the bank. The front of the car seemed to haul the chassis along with it. Arrowing at sixty miles an hour, the heavy-built car shot over the brink.

The head lamps spotted the sky, like big searchlights turned aloft. Then, arching downward, they showed the jagged tops of trees. The car had scaled from the brink of a ravine. It was plunging down to reach a rocky, slanting slope.

Three figures floundered down into the seat. Morry's hands were gripping for the wheel, not with hope of turning it, but merely trying to get a hold that would serve him in the plunge.

Koko had twisted about; his left hand had the door-edge on his side of the car, while his right was busy with the gun. He had found the trigger at last, and was pulling it, not realizing that in his crisscrossed position he was shooting out into space.

Hands flung upward, The Shadow caught the bow that ran across the center of the top. His fingers dug between that strut and the canvas itself. There was a ripping sound as the car plummeted through tree branches; a crash as it struck the boulders that lined the ravine's wooded slope.

More crashes as the shattered roadster took great bounds, slashing its way to the gully's depth. The explosions that sounded like backfires of the motor were actually the futile pops from Koko's misdirected gun.

Lights smashed as the car's nose struck a boulder. Blackness blanketed the final crash, which was the loudest of all.

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After the terrific clatter of that fearful plunge, a deep, hollow silence gripped the depths. From the darkness came a gradual rise of sound the tumult of a little creek that sent its water tumbling toward the Hudson River.

Compared to the battering crashes that had echoed through the deep ravine, the roar of the creek seemed puny. Like a melancholy babble, it seemed to repeat a simple yet awesome tale, one of rapid, sudden doom.

Wavering tree boughs rustled their leaves above the blackened depths like ghostly arms, warning all comers that death lay below.

CHAPTER X. DEALS AND DOUBLE DEALS

WHILE The Shadow was ending the disastrous ride on which the two crooks had taken him, another pair of men were busily discussing the affairs of the late Preston Marr. Those two were Wilfred Angew and Hugo Brydan; they were at their former place of conference, Angew's office.

No talk of murder entered their discussion. They referred to Marr's death as a chance occurrence, which they greatly regretted. At the same time, they recognized that the loss of their third partner called for a prompt rearrangement of their business plans.

Angew was taking over the task that he and Marr had previously shared. He was trying to keep Brydan on his side of the fence by promises that Philip Kreft probably would not match. Marr's death, it so happened, provided Angew with new arguments.

"Only four of us remain," said Angew soberly, as he stroked his long jaw. "That means we shall each have to put up fifteen thousand dollars, instead of twelve thousand, to close the claim on the North Star Mine."

The comment brought but little change to Brydan's dreary face. The drab man made a slow mental calculation, evidenced by a motion of his pasty lips.

"I can afford three thousand dollars more," drawled Brydan. "The proposition is certainly worth the extra cost."

"More than worth it," said Angew, smiling at the simple look on Brydan's face. "North Star should bring about three million dollars. Yesterday, that meant six hundred thousand dollars for each of five investors.

"Today, there are but four of us. Therefore, we stand to make seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars each, since Marr's claim, like all the rest, is not transferable."

Lifting eyelids registered Brydan's amazement. Apparently that prospect had not occurred to him.

"Added profits, however," resumed Angew, "cannot make up for the loss of Marr. While we had Marr with us" he gave his head a sad shake "we held control. Marr's death" Angew's tone was bitter "helps Kreft, not us. If Kreft had actually designed it, the thing could not have fitted better with his schemes."

Almost without realizing it, Angew had expressed a motive for murder. But the long-jawed importer was too concerned with his own plans to waste time with a wild theory that Kreft had arranged Marr's death.

Angew reached into a desk drawer, brought out three typewritten sheets of paper that were held together with paper fasteners.

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"I am going to call on Austin Delmont," declared Angew, "and offer him fifty thousand dollars cash if he will agree to sell out his share of North Star to us after he has made his claim. Read that paragraph at the top of the second page, Brydan."

Brydan obliged. The paragraph stated:

In return for the said sum of fifty thousand dollars, I, the aforementioned Austin Delmont, agree to deliver said mining stock, after its issue, to Wilfred Angew and/or Hugo Brydan, in accordance with all terms and provisions of this contract.

After reading the paragraph twice, Brydan went over the rest of the contract, while Angew watched in keen-eyed fashion. Angew was expecting an objection. It came.

"You aren't offering Delmont his full shares" exclaimed Brydan. "I thought we agreed that he and Kreft would have their proper rights."

"So they shall," assured Angew, with a benign expression, "but it would be unwise to talk in terms of millions to old Delmont. I am quite sure" Angew cocked his head, wisely "that Kreft is keeping the old gentleman in the dark. This is the time for prompt action. We can prove our generosity later."

After a few moments, Brydan nodded. Then, slowly, he said:

"Speaking of Kreft, he has invited me to meet him at the Club Cabana this evening. His tone was very friendly when he called me."

Alarm showed on Angew's face; quickly, it flickered away. Remembering yesterday's chat with Marr, Angew was quite sure that Brydan would stay in line. Therefore, he approved the meeting.

"Be careful what you say to Kreft," advised Angew. "Be friendly, but wise. After I leave Delmont's; I shall drop in at the Club Cabana and join you."

WHEN Brydan had gone, Angew glanced at his watch. The evening was advanced; it was time to leave the office and go to Delmont's home. However, Angew took a few minutes for a very important action.

Loosening the paper fasteners, he removed the second page of the contract and replaced it with another sheet that he took from a lower desk drawer.

The new sheet had a differing top paragraph. Instead of the term, "to Wilfred Angew and/or Hugo Brydan," it merely specified, "to Wilfred Angew."

Some forty minutes later Wilfred Angew entered the old brownstone house where Austin Delmont lived. While he was announcing his name to a stoop-shouldered manservant who looked about ninety years of age, Angew saw Patricia Delmont come down the stairs.

Bowing, he stopped to chat with the girl, and Pat received him very cordially. Attired in lounging pajamas, smoking a cigarette in a long holder, the girl had a streamlined appearance that Angew regarded as both modern and attractive.

She frowned, though, as she chatted, and Angew guessed what was on her mind. The girl must have had a tiff with Kreft. Perhaps her grandfather had told her not to see the fellow in the future. Angew hoped so, for it would mean that Kreft and old Delmont were at odds.

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When Delmont came from his smoking room to greet Angew, the elderly man gave a reproving look at Pat, who merely strolled away, puffing her cigarette.

Apparently, Delmont did not care for his granddaughter's present costume. There was coolness between them; that much was apparent. Angew was more pleased than ever.

The visitor went into the smoking room with Delmont. They came to business rapidly. When Delmont had read the contract, he chuckled. Laying aside a pipe that reeked with the odor of heavy tobacco, he said:

"You are a greater fool than Kreft, Angew. He wanted to give me twenty-five thousand dollars for that worthless North Star property. He said he'd like to speculate with it, but I wouldn't let him."

"I'm still willing to double the offer," put in Angew. "I like to speculate, too."

"So do I," laughed Delmont, "when it's merely a matter of a claim, not cash. I never intended to close this claim; however, I am inclined to take your offer. It's against my policy, you understand, to profit at another man's expense. But your case is different from Kreft's."

"You are a solid business man, Angew, the sort who might make something out of a difficult proposition. You go into matters with your eyes open. I cannot question your right to use your own judgment. But Kreft" the old man shook his head "is merely a wealthy spendthrift who relies on sheer luck."

Angew produced a check book, wrote out a check for fifty thousand dollars. Reluctantly, Delmont accepted it. He brought in the creaky-boned servant and a dapper chauffeur to sign as witnesses.

There was a duplicate of the contract; like the original, it named Angew only, without mention of Brydan. All hands signed the duplicate, also.

Leaving one copy with Delmont, along with the check for fifty thousand dollars, Angew left the mansion, bowing good night to Pat, who was standing at the doorway of the library looking very mournful.

From Delmont's, Angew went directly to the Club Cabana.

ANGEW found Brydan with Kreft. The two had been getting along very well and, from Brydan's smile, Angew guessed that the North Star Mine had scarcely been mentioned.

It was plain that Kreft was merely trying to build up a friendship with Brydan, to put a proposition later. More than ever, Angew was sure of Brydan.

"Hello, fellow mine owner!" Kreft greeted him. "Don't forget the North Star" he tapped a tiny golden flower in his buttonhole "and keep your shirt on, so you won't lose it."

"What's the trouble, Kreft?" questioned Angew, with a smile. "Losing your interest in mines?"

"That for all of them!" Kreft snapped his fingers. "If you chaps want to hang onto your options, you are welcome. I'll keep mine, too, and see how its turns out. Meanwhile, I'll look about far some other proposition to take care of my surplus cash."

Kreft invited Angew to have a drink, and Angew did. They watched the floor show, after which Angew looked at Brydan and remarked that it was time to leave.

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Brydan agreed. After they shook hands with Kreft, they saw him go to the door that led to the private bar.

Near the exit from the Club Cabana, Angew brought the signed contract from his inside pocket and showed it to Brydan. He wanted the dour man to see the signatures.

Spreading the pages, Angew doubled them slightly at the top, just enough to hide the paragraph at the top of the second page. Brydan did not notice that the contract had been altered, leaving him in the cold.

"I paid Delmont the fifty thousand," confided Angew. "Since you are in with me, Brydan, you ought to put up half. I'm willing to take your note, but it can wait. I'll simply keep the contract, for present security."

Angew was smiling as he left the Club Cabana. So was Brydan, who went in the opposite direction. In his turn, Kreft was smiling, too, as he peered from the almost-closed door of the private bar.

Kreft had seen Angew show Brydan the contract at the exit door, and had an idea what it was all about.

"Dirty work at the crossroads, Jerry," said Kreft to the stolid barkeeper. "Make mine a double whiskey and soda" he perched himself on a stool and stretched his hand across the bar "and give me one of those telegraph blanks you keep in the cash drawer."

Jerry provided the drink and the telegraph blank. Kreft wrote out a telegram that suited him, then reached for the telephone.

"I'll get the charges," said Kreft, "and pay you, Jerry. This wire won't cost much. It's only going to a place in Westchester. It means a lot, though, because it's going to square me with my girl. Yes, Jerry, I've figured a way to solve the biggest problem in my life."

From Kreft's tone, Jerry decided that the man who wore the golden flower had larger problems on his mind than the one he mentioned. Any telegram to that town in Westchester was important, for the place had much to do with schemes of crime.

Crooks knew that death traveled the road between Manhattan and that town in Westchester.

So did The Shadow!

CHAPTER XI. JOURNEY'S END

GRAY wreckage streaked the tree boughs halfway down the precipitous side of the gully. Below, a crumpled roadster held its quota of dead humanity. The surging creek still gushed its oft-repeated tale of "death death death!"

Gradually, that babble reached The Shadow's ears. He stirred amid the underbrush that clustered all about him, found his footing, then lost it. Sliding, he caught a tree trunk, clung there, and looked up toward the sky.

A crescent moon was above the ravine. Its fragmentary glow showed strips of hanging canvas. Those tattered remnants were the roadster's ruined top. Big boughs had torn it from the plunging car.

The Shadow's grip on the cross strut had been a fortunate idea. Braces and all had given when the top hooked the branches. Morry and Koko had continued their downward trail in the somersaulting car, but the prisoner who battled them had stopped off halfway.

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It had been death for the crooks, but not for the captive who had been taken in the guise of Lamont Cranston. With the tree boughs yanking the cross brace from his hands, The Shadow had dropped hard and heavily, but the fall had been comparatively short.

In fact, his greatest danger lay ahead. The Shadow's head was swimming from a jolt supplied by stony soil beneath the underbrush. As he tried to find his feet again, he lost his balance entirely and began a bounding slide to the gully's depths.

Fast grabs with his hands along the way were lucky enough to save him. The trip ended between two jagged rocks, where The Shadow caught himself and stared over a ten-foot brink.

He was looking squarely at a stone in the creek bed, one that would have given him an unpleasant reception had he slid a few feet farther.

Blackness drifted amid the moonlight that illumined the little creek. Everything that The Shadow saw was partial, and he couldn't understand why. It was always that way after a hard jolt that brought a brain concussion. The Shadow had been through the very same experience before, but he could not remember it.

He managed, though, to grip fleeting thoughts that he repeated half aloud, until he talked himself into remembering them. Marr's house, the golden flowers, the wild ride in the car all those were facts, not fancies.

The Shadow made out a smashed thing beside the creek. It was the roadster. Crawling along the bank, he reached the car.

Half upright, the roadster was empty. The Shadow couldn't understand why, for he was whispering the names of Morry and Koko. Stumbling around the car, he fell across one, then the other. The moonlight showed what was left of them, but even its gentle glow did not make them look pleasant.

The crushed figures distorted themselves before The Shadow's gaze. They seemed to writhe and fling their battered, bloody faces upward. The illusion puzzled him, until he found that he was swaying. Getting a grip on the bent door of the roadster, The Shadow rolled into the car.

His fingers were slower, more helpless, than they had been at Marr's when The Shadow made a new effort to find the button of the secret compartment.

At last, it seemed to pop open of its own accord. The Shadow drew out his cloak, his hat, his guns. With them came the rustling remains of the withered carnations.

CLUTCHING all those prizes, The Shadow rolled from the car, fell across Morry's body. The jolt brought him a new train of thought. His lips repeated a name: "Gordy."

Mechanically, The Shadow probed through Morry's pockets, found odds and ends that he shoved into the pockets of his own trousers. He rejected a revolver that he did not need but, as he groped, he kept saying that there was something else to find.

The Shadow chanced on it at last, in the dead crook's vest pocket. Fingers opening in the moonlight, The Shadow saw the token that Morry had shown to Koko. It was a gold carnation, of the smaller variety, the sort that Kreft wore in his buttonhole.

Clutching the little golden flower, The Shadow stumbled away from the wrecked car. He took the only course

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the ravine offered, the bed of the shallow creek. Floundering over rocks, The Shadow sprawled in the water; not once, but often.

Each spill revived him somewhat; but when he clutched his guns, his cloak and hat, he lost the evidence that he had brought from Marr's.

A few at a time, large golden carnations left The Shadow's hands and floated down the stream ahead of him. One flower, though, was constantly in his clutch.

It was the tiny coin-sized flower that The Shadow had found in Morry's pocket.

The Shadow was following the creek downstream because the course was easier. His coat, ripped half from his shoulders, was bothering him. He realized that he didn't want it, for the pockets carried papers that identified him as Cranston. The Shadow shook the coat off, let it fall into the stream.

He was repeating a name, time and again.

The name was Morry Cathlan. That was who The Shadow was. He could prove he was Morry Cathlan. His hip pockets carried the evidence.

And in his hand The Shadow held the tiny flower. The token that Morry had brought to show to Gordy!

The floundering journey must have covered half a mile before The Shadow came to low banks, where the creek deepened in between. There were large carnations floating slowly through that pool, drifting beneath a bridge, but The Shadow did not see them.

He found the bridge, managed to crawl up beside it. The Shadow was back on the road that followed the ravine. This was a place where it dipped, between widened cliffs, to cross the creek.

Steadier of gait, The Shadow moved along the road. There were times when it seemed to reel beneath his feet; always, it showed blackish gaps that faded as The Shadow approached them. He was looking for something, sure that he would recognize it.

At last, it came a dirt road that led away from the paving, through thick woods. The Shadow followed the ruts.

Blackness was thick beneath the trees. The Shadow's stumbles were many, until the road widened. Glints of moonlight showed obscure buildings.

Making toward them, The Shadow staggered against a door. Dropping all burdens except the tiny flower, The Shadow let his free hand slide along the door. He felt the smoothness of glass.

The wall past the door was glass, too. The Shadow had come across a greenhouse, though he didn't recognize what it was.

He was thinking in other terms as he stopped to pick up his cloak and guns. He had to hide these things; the hat, too. He remembered that, as he found it.

Probing numbly along the glass-paneled wall, The Shadow came to a brick surface a house that adjoined the greenery. He stumbled heavily across some wooden steps; crouching beside them, he found a loosened board. Instinctively, he rolled the cloak and hat about his guns, pushed the entire bundle beneath the steps.

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Then, crawling upward, The Shadow clutched the side of the steps with one hand, while he rapped at the door with his other fist. He was sagged, motionless, when the door opened inward.

SEEMINGLY floating upward under the lift of hands that he could scarcely feel, The Shadow gradually opened his eyes, to find himself on an old-fashioned couch in a small parlor. A kindly-faced man was studying him through thick eyeglasses.

The man's stare was owlish, his drooping mustache gave him a walrus appearance. His gaze, however, was both friendly and sympathetic. Thrusting his closed hand upward, The Shadow tried to open it, muttering: "Gordy."

"No, no," returned the mustached man, with a headshake. "I am not Dr. Gordon. Rest quietly, my friend. He will be here very soon."

"My name is Debbleman," informed the man with the glasses. "This is my home, yes, but Dr. Gordon is here, too. He is my guest." The man drew himself up proudly. "Dr. Gordon is kind enough to call me his associate."

A: crisp voice interrupted from the doorway. The man who stepped into the light was thin-faced, but his complexion was tawny. His thinness gave him a frail appearance, but he was built of bone and muscle, as he proved when he lifted The Shadow and propped him on the couch.

"A stranger, Dr. Gordon," began old Debbleman. "He asked for you. I was just telling him that you had gone to town, when "

"Gordy!"— The Shadow gulped the name; then, his eyes opening toward the muscular man: "You're Gordy?"

"Yeah, I'm Gordy," interposed the crisp voice. "But who are you? What are you doing here?"

The Shadow answered the second question first by pushing his hand forward and opening it. Morry's flower fell into Gordy's palm.

"Another man from Mr. Kreft!" exclaimed Debbleman. "He must have had an accident, too."

"Go get a basin of water," snapped Gordy. "Hurry it, Debbleman!"

As soon as Debbleman was gone, Gordy shoved his face close to The Shadow's and rasped:

"Who are you?"

"Morry," returned The Shadow, weakly. "Morry Cathlan. Koko... Koko Yandel was with me only he lammed "

Sagging sideward on the couch, The Shadow lay motionless until Debbleman returned. Meanwhile, Gordy had found the papers in his pockets. With a glance at them, the thin-faced man nodded, slipped them into his own coat pocket.

"We'll get him upstairs to a room," Gordy told the entering Debbleman. "You're right, he's a friend of Mr. Kreft. We'll look after him."

Together, they carried the unconscious figure up the stairs. Crime's trail had brought The Shadow to a

journey's end. Though helpless, he had found security in this place where crime prevailed.

By taking the identity of the dead crook, Morry Cathlan, along with the flower that served him as a passport, The Shadow had found security, even in the enemy's domain!

CHAPTER XII. CRIME MOVES AHEAD

MANY hours had passed since The Shadow's arrival at the Westchester greenhouse. His impressions of those hours formed a series of dawns and twilights, with stretches of occasional darkness when he dozed.

Awakening from a nap that was comparatively peaceful, The Shadow at last understood why the periods of daylight had been dull. He was in a room where shades were drawn over every window, the proper treatment for a patient suffering from brain concussion.

His vision had cleared again, but The Shadow did not care to test his eyes against the sunlight. His head back against the pillows, he was content to watch the edge of a window shade and note the green of trees beyond it.

That green was deepening. The time was late afternoon. The thought of approaching dusk was a comfortable one. It meant that The Shadow might soon drop the role of Morry Cathlan and become himself again, with no need to play the part of Lamont Cranston in between.

The door opened, noticeably enough to attract The Shadow's gaze. The man who called himself Dr. Gordon stepped into the room. Seeing that the patient was awake, Gordy approached the bed, stood looking at The Shadow. He purred the question:

"Feeling better?"

The Shadow nodded.

"Maybe you're well enough," suggested Gordy, "to tell me what happened last night."

"Koko and I grabbed a guy named Cranston," stated The Shadow. "We were bringing him here, when he put up a battle. He heaved me out of the car just before Koko socked him."

"Koko was driving?"

"Yeah. We'd taken over Cranston's car. Anyway, Koko headed north and took Cranston along with him. I found my way here. I didn't have far to go."

"Why didn't you have Koko drive you here and bring the prisoner, too, as you originally intended?"

The Shadow was ready for that sharp-put question. He had a satisfactory answer, that he prefaced with a very knowing smile.

"There was another car went by," he said, "while we were stopped on the road putting the slug on Cranston. Koko said the guys in the other buggy slowed up, like they were looking back. Even with this bum konk of mine" The Shadow was rubbing his head "I figured it a dumb idea to leave a trail, if the State coppers showed up.

"I knew you could hide me, all right, Gordy, or explain I was a friend of yours. But two other guys and a car

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would have been a big order."

Gordy agreed. He asked where Koko had taken Cranston. The Shadow shrugged.

"Somewhere over in Jersey," he said. "To any one of six places where we used to hide beer when we were highjacking the brewery trucks. I'll make the rounds after I leave here."

Suspicion flashed in Gordy's eyes, though he tried to smother it. He offered The Shadow a cigarette, took one for himself. While he was supplying a match, Gordy put another question, crisply:

"Didn't Kreft tell you to bring Cranston here?"

THERE was trickery behind that query. Gordy hadn't managed to cover it. Where the catch lay was a question in itself, one that The Shadow couldn't analyze at a moment's notice. There was a way to manage it, though by putting an answer just as cryptic.

As Morry Cathlan, The Shadow could play a tight-lipped part. He was as important a cog in the crime machine as Gordy. He had a right to meet suspicion with suspicion. With a smile to indicate that he had caught the gist of Gordy's query, The Shadow treated it accordingly.

"Grabbing Cranston was our own idea," he asserted. "When Koko and I get hold of anything that's hot, whether it's a guy or a load of merchandise, we freeze it. We knew about this place, so we started here. Only we changed our minds, like we told you. That covers it, Gordy."

No mention of Kreft; no admission of receiving orders. That was The Shadow's formula, and it worked. Gordy looked quite pleased. He clapped The Shadow on the shoulder.

"All right, Morry," he said. "I'm running over to town. Walk around awhile, and if you're sure you're steady, start for Jersey in my old car. It's a junker, but it ought to get you there."

"I'll have Koko bring it back," returned The Shadow. "He's probably been watching Cranston all night, and he'll need some sleep. Better give me one of those fancy dandelions, so you'll know Koko when he brings it."

"Debbleman will give you one of the flowers. So long, Morry."

Shortly after the purr of a motor had announced Gordy's departure for a nearby town, The Shadow strolled downstairs, fully dressed except for his missing coat.

He met old Debbleman, who was about to conduct him out to the garage, when The Shadow noticed a connecting passage that led to the greenhouse.

"Nice place you've got there," he said. "Mind if I take a look around it, old-timer?"

"I should be very pleased, Mr. Cathlan," returned Debbleman, beaming as he spoke. "I am quite proud of my greenhouse. This place has been mine for years; but no matter how long we live" he shook his head "we can always learn."

"You mean you learned things from Gordy?"

Debbleman nodded. They were in the greenhouse now. The old gardener pointed out clusters of small golden carnations.

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"These are the kind I developed for Mr. Kreft," he said. "Once every week I have sent him a shipment, for the past three no, it is four years. I was very poor when Mr. Kreft first heard of my carnations. Since then, he has paid me much money for these golden flowers.

"Too much money" Debbleman shook his head "but he has said that it was worth it to have a flower all his own. I have kept always to our agreement. Never have I supplied the carnations to anyone else. People who have happened to come here" the old man blinked through his thick spectacles "have always asked for golden flowers. I have said no."

As they walked past other rows of flowers, The Shadow noticed that the framework of the greenhouse was of metal, recently constructed. The panes appeared to be a type of bulletproof glass. They reached a bed of larger carnations, twice the size of Debbleman's pets.

The old man spread his hands in an apologetic gesture. He clucked to himself, as he sniffed the strong odor of the large flowers.

"Always I hoped to grow some such as these," he stated. "Never was I able. Until, some months ago" he was counting on his fingers "Dr. Gordon came here. He said that Mr. Kreft had sent him, not to buy flowers but to help me grow the large carnations, with which I had failed."

POINTING toward a corner, Debbleman indicated a cluster of huge, yellow flowers. They were exotic in appearance, coarse-petaled, and with peculiarly drooping leaves. Their smell was strong, decidedly unpleasant.

"It is a tropic plant," explained Debbleman, "that Dr. Gordon brought from Mexico. He said that he had crossed it with other species; that he might do the same with my carnations.

"I feared that it might lessen the golden color, or destroy the fragrance of my flowers. But, no! The result was success, so rapid that it amazed me. The tropic plant grows swiftly, with the proper care."

They turned back to the large carnations. Debbleman stooped, about to pick some; then he paused.

"We sent some to Mr. Kreft, only two days ago," said Debbleman, and he was pleased. "Dr. Gordon has heard from him, saying that he wants more. It is Dr. Gordon who drives over to the town to get the telegrams and mail. My eyes are no longer good enough."

"Swell-looking flowers," observed The Shadow, retaining the deadpan expression that had helped him pass himself as Morry. "I don't blame Kreft for wanting a lot of them."

"One dozen are to be sent this evening," said Debbleman. "Like the last ones, they are to go to Mr. Jaffer, the gentleman who came here the other night. I believe he is an associate of Dr. Gordon. They spent a long while together in here."

In classing Goo-goo as an associate of Gordy's, Debbleman wasn't far wrong. But their mutual interest in flowers had an insidious savor, as The Shadow could have testified.

"One dozen go tomorrow," added Debbleman, "to Mr. Kreft himself."

They were leaving the greenhouse. In the hallway of the main house, Debbleman opened a door, pointed out some large tanks, with metal pipes attached. He explained that Dr. Gordon had installed them, along with the new glass in the greenhouse. They contained a special vapor, sometimes needed in the culture of tropical

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plants.

Showing The Shadow to the garage, Debbleman pointed out Gordy's old car. The Shadow drove it to the front, paused there in the dusk to shake hands with Debbleman.

He had trouble starting the car, after Debbleman went into the house. The trouble was a pretense. It enabled The Shadow to regain his black garb and his guns from under the house steps.

The old car rattled off into the gloom. As he drove away, The Shadow thought of Debbleman. The old man was a dupe, probably slated for death when the crooks no longer needed him. But The Shadow had others ideas regarding Debbleman's future.

He hadn't forgotten to ask the old gardener for one of the little carnations, to serve as a future token of identity.

In fact, The Shadow had plans for crooks, as well. One crook, specifically: Goo-goo Jaffer. He was one who could be easily located, and The Shadow intended to visit him immediately upon arriving in New York.

Unfortunately, Debbleman, with all his honesty, had been mistaken on one point. Soon after The Shadow left, Gordy returned to the isolated house. After telling him that the guest had gone, Debbleman reminded Gordy of the flowers that were to be sent that evening.

"They're already on their way," chuckled Gordy. "I picked them and took them along with me, Debbleman. I saw I had time to get them off on the early train."

Those words, though lightly uttered, were ominous. They meant though even Gordy did not know it that crime was moving ahead of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIII. DEATH AFTER DARK

THE messenger who stopped at the squalid rooming house where Goo-goo Jaffer lived, arrived there a few minutes too soon. He was gone, when a taxicab pulled up opposite and two men peered from its darkened window.

Those men were Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland, running mates in the present campaign against crime. With Moe Shrevnitz at the wheel, a trio of The Shadow's agents were on the job.

They were acting in response to orders from Burbank, the contact man, who communicated with their chief. Burbank had heard from The Shadow, by telephone, from somewhere in Westchester County.

Harry and Cliff were about to leave the cab and prowl a bit in search of Goo-goo, when the man himself came from the rooming house. Goo-goo looked very dapper, and he was carrying a suitcase. From his manner, he was bound on a trip out of town.

Not noticing Moe's cab, which was darkened, Goo-goo walked to the corner and took another. Moe trailed it; the route led southward, near the ferries.

But instead of going to a ferry station, Goo-goo entered a small cafe that had another doorway on the side street.

From where they watched, The Shadow's agents kept lookout on both doorways. They were allowing

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Goo-goo time for a meal, which he had evidently stopped to get. Various people were going in and out of the place, and after about five minutes, Cliff suggested that Harry drop in for a cup of coffee.

Goo-goo knew Cliff by sight, for Cliff's well-chiseled face was familiar in the underworld. But Harry frequented more fashionable places. He was a clean-cut chap with a Park Avenue appearance, and it wasn't likely that Goo-goo would pick him out as a trailer.

While Harry was going in the front door, an old woman shambled out of the side entrance. She was carrying something in a shawl, and Cliff decided that she was probably taking home a pitcher of coffee. He changed that opinion soon after the old lady had shambled out of sight along the block.

Harry came bolting suddenly from the side door, reached the cab, and announced breathlessly:

"Goo-goo isn't in there!"

"Where did he go?" demanded Cliff. "I've been watching both doors."

"I don't know," admitted Harry. "I looked in a back room, but it was empty. I saw a suitcase under a table; it might have been the one Goo-goo had. So I came out by the side door, which was right there in the back room "

Harry's sentence ended, as the taxicab shot forward. Moe had heard the statements and knew the answer. So did Cliff. After the jolt from the sudden start, he came upright and exclaimed:

"The old woman! She was Goo-goo! We should have guessed that he'd pass himself as a dame. But I was figuring he'd rig up as a young one, like he did at the flower shop."

By the end of the block, the hunt proved hopeless. Goo-goo had slipped somewhere out of sight. He was probably still in the vicinity, so The Shadow's agents decided to cruise about, keeping lookout.

They were in a neighborhood of towering office buildings, and Harry had a chance to enter a cigar store and report, by telephone, the latest development to Burbank.

After that, the agents resumed their circling trip through the surrounding blocks.

THIRTY stories above one street that the cab patrolled, Wilfred Angew was working late in his office. Angew had a habit of working late. He was a bachelor, who spent most of his time at his club, and seldom cared to dine before eight o'clock.

Late work at the office produced problems, however. Tonight, some cleaning men were about. They had gone through the outer offices scouring desks and other woodwork with an ill-smelling cleansing liquid, and they had finally invaded Angew's private domain, curtly inviting him to clear out.

Angew obliged. He had work to do in an outer office, so he attended to its details, scarcely noting the pungent smell that surrounded him. Finally, the cleaners came out. One of them shoved his thumb over his shoulder, indicating that Angew's private office was open to its owner.

The cleaning men were clad in white, like the painters who had been at Marr's. That meant nothing to Angew, because he hadn't seen the painters at Marr's house. What did mean something to Angew, was the way his private office smelled.

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It reeked worse than the outer room. Annoyed by that fact, Angew packed a brief case, to take important papers to the club.

One paper, though, remained in the office. It was in the old-fashioned safe that stood in the corner. Angew grinned, as he looked in that direction.

The document in question was the contract that Delmont had signed, promising to transfer all shares of a future mining stock to Angew alone.

The telephone bell rang while Angew was packing. The call was for him; he learned that a special brand of imported cigarettes was waiting at a cigar store, two blocks away. The news pleased him. He had been trying to get those cigarettes for quite a while.

Still bothered by the odor of the cleaning fluid, Angew left the office, forgetting his brief case. He didn't think of it until after he reached the cigar store.

Looking back at the building, Angew contemplated a thirty-story trip by elevator, and gave a shrug. He decided that he had done enough work for the day.

When he asked for the cigarettes, Angew found that the store did not have them after all. That annoyed him immensely. He berated the clerk for having called him; the man denied that he had made the call. He blamed it on the manager, who had left a while before.

Angew didn't bother to calculate the time element. He stalked, bristling, from the store and beckoned to the first taxicab he saw.

At that moment, Angew wasn't in a pleasant mood. He gave a sharp shove of his arm, when someone gripped it lightly just as he was stepping into the cab. He heard a slight shriek, turned to see an old lady staggering away. Realizing that he had jostled her, he started to apologize.

A plaintive, trustful face thrust up toward his. The old lady spread a shawl; with quivering hands, she thrust a bunch of flowers toward Angew.

"Please buy them," she pleaded. "Surely, you can buy an old lady's flowers "

"How much?" interrupted Angew.

"Only seventy-five cents, sir," came the falsetto reply. "So cheap, sir, for these lovely carnations."

Angew thrust a dollar bill into the trembling hands and told the old lady to keep the change. He slammed the cab door, told the driver to get started. The taxi swung the corner, with the shawled woman staring after it from the curb.

Another cab pulled into sight, swerving toward the space that Angew's had left. By that time, the old woman had started toward a building entrance. Taking a chance look over her shoulder, she saw the stopping cab and darted out of sight.

The passengers spotted the beginning of that flight. Cliff Marsland snapped quick words to Harry Vincent.

"It's Goo-goo! I'll go after him, Harry. You hop in that store and see what you can find out."

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Finding the clerk muttering to himself, Harry asked the trouble. The clerk told him. A fussy guy named Angew had just been raising hob.

Purchasing some cigarettes, Harry followed with a phone call to Burbank, reporting all details except the matter of the flowers, which he hadn't observed.

Burbank told Harry to stand by, and report when Cliff returned. Going out to the cab, Harry found Moe shaking his head. The taxicab driver was quite sure that Cliff had been too late to overtake Goo-goo.

MEANWHILE, Angew's cab had gone its own way without being spotted by The Shadow's agents. It was weaving through heavy traffic, and Angew was sitting in the back seat, a cluster of carnations in his lap.

The cab windows were closed, for the evening was chilly. Angew could smell the flowers; their odor was quite pleasing. Sniffing their strong but fragrant scent, he forgot the smell of his office.

As the cab paused beneath a traffic light, Angew noted the color of the flowers. Golden flowers, of a sort that he had seen before. His mind went back to Marr's reception. He remembered a slight, shapely girl Patricia Delmont with a bunch of flowers like these.

He recalled Pat as he had seen her the night before, even more alluring in the lounging pajamas that had clung so closely to her perfect figure. He remembered the girl's morose look, and the reason for her gloom. His mind went instantly to Philip Kreft.

Golden carnations!

Flowers that resembled those which Kreft wore singly in his buttonhole. Flowers like the one that Angew had seen last night at the Club Cabana, shining from the fastidious man's lapel.

With one hand, Angew tried to lower a window, intending to hurl the hated flowers out into the street. He couldn't seem to get the window down. He reached for the door handle. His strength failed him, but sheer weight was sufficient to press the handle downward.

Angew's long face looked very fishlike, as he gasped the fresh air. But he couldn't find breath enough to cry out to the cab driver. The cab started forward on the green light; the door jolted outward. Collapsing, Angew lay precariously at the floor edge.

Flowers dripped from his limp hand, tumbled in the passing gutter. During the next two blocks, Angew was strewing a golden trail behind him. The dropping flowers lay forgotten in the darkness, to be crushed by wheels of passing vehicles.

The cab swung another corner. The door flipped inward, struck Angew's shoulders, but he didn't feel it. The last flower dropped from his hand, slid between the floor edge and the door. Falling on the cab's running board, it remained there.

By then, the cab was spurting along an avenue. Other drivers saw its flapping door and began to pass the cab, blaring away with their horns.

Aware at last of what was happening in back, the cabby yanked his vehicle to the curb. The door smacked shut, struck Angew forcibly and rebounded, as if the man had been a rubber buffer. The cab took a sideward jolt against the curb; Angew lurched out through the reopened door.

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Striking the running board, he slid across it, to strike the sidewalk, lifeless. His twisting body brushed the last golden flower to the curb.

A traffic officer dashed from across the street, ordered men to help him lift Angew's crazily sprawled form.

Commandeering a car, the officer dispatched Angew to the nearest hospital; but he told the cabby to wait. The fellow was pale and shaky, with good reason. Like the traffic cop, the cabby was pretty sure that his passenger was dead.

The men who were rushing Angew to the hospital had no doubt about it. They were wildly anxious to get rid of their grim burden that rolled heavily from side to side as it rested in the rear seat. Chance passers, they didn't want to be involved in a thing that savored much of murder.

Again, a claim holder in the North Star Mine had met with sudden death. First Preston Marr; now, Wilfred Angew; but this time, a visible clue to crime remained upon the scene.

That clue was a flower, resting on the curb edge by the halted taxicab in which the victim had been riding when stricken.

A flower which, by its very color, symbolized the subject of contention responsible for Angew's death.

Gold!

CHAPTER XIV. CROSSED BATTLE

IN a narrow passage behind the building where Goo-goo Jaffer had last been seen, Harry Vincent found Cliff Marsland crouched with a drawn gun. Warded back by Cliff's elbow, Harry stayed low and waited.

Gradually, Harry's gaze became accustomed to the dim glow of the little alleyway. He saw something squatted at the opposite end of the space. Harry pictured Goo-goo huddled there, until he finally made out the rounded shape of Cliff's target.

"It's only an ash can, Cliff "

"Yeah," undertoned Cliff, interrupting Harry's whisper, "but Goo-goo's on the other side of it. Somebody was doing some clanking with the lid, and only Goo-goo had been hereabouts."

"He's good with the gun?"

"Too good! That baby-doll stuff that Goo-goo stages is just a dodge. He comes as tough as they make them."

Minutes passed, with no sound from beyond the ash can. Cliff, eyeing a darkened stretch against the wall, resolved upon a stealthy advance. He told Harry to be ready with a covering barrage, if needed.

His own gun drawn, Harry concentrated on the ash can, all set to cut loose the moment that Goo-goo gave any signs of action. But it wasn't Goo-goo who finally motioned from the gloom. It was Cliff. Harry joined him.

The space past the ash can was vacant. Cliff yanked away the can lid, thrusting a flashlight into the container, with Harry poking his gun along. In the ash can they saw an old dress, a ragged wig, and a frayed shawl.

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Goo-goo had left behind the old woman's disguise, and had gotten away.

Harry's grip on Cliff's arm caused his running mate to extinguish the flashlight. Back near the entrance to the alley, Harry had caught a fleeting glimpse of an entering figure, too momentary to identify the newcomer.

Another flashlight blinked from the alley's mouth. Its glow was a tiny speck of red; a warning.

As they waited, the agents saw the tiny light again. This time, its spot was green. A signal for their approach. Moving outward, they met The Shadow coming toward them. Both gave a prompt report.

Stepping past the ash can, The Shadow changed his tiny flashlight to a whitish yellow, spread its focus and ran the glow along the wall above the ash can.

He saw a small window, easily reached by anyone who used the ash can as a ladder. It marked Goo-goo's route; knowing the proximity of Angew's office building, The Shadow gauged the crook's ultimate goal.

Ordering his agents to circle to the street and keep a lookout below, The Shadow took his own course through the narrow window.

From then, it became a long and arduous climb, by a stairway that Goo-goo must have taken. Despite the high location of Angew's office, criminals wouldn't be giving themselves away by riding elevators at this hour.

There was a chance, though, that some could have been earlier on the scene, waiting for Angew's departure. What had happened to Angew was another matter; one that The Shadow recognized would be too late to correct. He was banking on the prospect of picking up a trail from the office, itself.

The door to the importing offices was unlocked. Windows had been lifted; The Shadow could feel the breeze that wafted through them. He noted the odor of the cleaning fluid, but its traces were slight. More important was the glow of a flashlight that shone from the inner office.

MOVING closer to that scene, The Shadow saw a man stopped in front of Angew's safe. Either the intruder had learned the combination, or had merely utilized much patience, plus a little skill, to crack the antiquated strong box; for the safe was open.

The man wasn't Goo-goo Jaffer. He was taller, larger, than the undersized crook whose trail had brought The Shadow here. But the light was too fragmentary to allow an identification of the safe-cracker.

The man was masked, and was wearing gloves. He was going over papers in the safe. The fringe of the light showed an open brief case lying on the desk, indicating that the intruder had searched it first, but hadn't found what he wanted.

Concentrated upon a folded document that he brought from the safe, the masked man did not notice The Shadow's close approach. Actually looking across the fellow's shoulder, The Shadow could see the typewritten pages of a contract, unfolded in the light.

The motions of the masked man's hands indicated that he had finished his quest; but he was coolly taking time to go over the paper in detail.

Suddenly, his manner changed. Folding the paper, he dropped it among others, scooped up the entire batch and thrust all into the safe.

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Shifting, he almost thrust his masked features into the light; but not quite. All that the glow actually revealed was a small golden flower in the intruder's coat lapel. Then, sight of that token was gone. Rising, the man clanged the safe door shut.

Perhaps it was the swerve of his body that swung the light suddenly about. Whatever the cause, the result was unexpected. The glow flashed straight into The Shadow's eyes before he could fade toward the room corner.

With a fierce snarl, the safecracker lunged, swinging the flashlight for The Shadow's head.

The Shadow's own hands worked like trip hammers. One caught a swinging wrist, stopped it short, sending the flashlight on a scaling journey that extinguished the torch when it struck the wall. The Shadow's other fist produced an automatic, pressed the muzzle against the masked man's temple.

Sharply, The Shadow hissed the words:

"It's no use, Kreft!"

Whether the crook thought that The Shadow was relying on guesswork, or realized that his black cloaked captor had seen the telltale golden flower, the words inspired him to fight rather than surrender.

He made a dive that carried his head away from The Shadow's gun. With a surprising show of strength, he tried to wrest himself clear and make for the outer door.

The Shadow went with him, bringing the .45 against his prisoner's ribs. That would have ended the contest, if they hadn't reeled against a chair. The crook sprawled one way, The Shadow the other.

At that, the odds weren't changed. With his drawn gun, The Shadow could have blasted the darkness and the masked man with it. Crime was through, unless intervention came in its behalf.

The intervention arrived.

SOMEONE pressed the light switch in the outer office. Goo-goo Jaffer, a revolver in his fist, saw the masked man scramble from the inner office, a gloved hand across his coat lapel. Having remembered the flower, the crook was trying to hide it, or retain it; perhaps both.

After him lunged The Shadow; but the cloaked fighter's drive took a sudden veer. The Shadow became a living arrow, a long, black shaft that shot past the man he pursued. He was making a terrific dive for Goo-goo, whose drawn revolver was the immediate menace.

Goo-goo made a frantic side leap, firing as he went. The effort was useless; his gun hand was already warded aside by a cross slash of The Shadow's own weapon-weighted fist. But Goo-goo, sprawling, made an acrobatic roll for the shelter behind a desk.

Excited, Goo-goo forgot his usual voice; he screeched in the falsetto that he so frequently employed:

"The Shadow! Get him!"

White-clad men surged in from the hallway. They were the fake cleaners, the erstwhile house painters. They had discarded their mops, as they had previously rid themselves of paint brushes. Instead, they had guns and were ready to use them.

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So was The Shadow. He had flung Goo-goo out of combat; he was ready to deal with these reserves. Snapping the light switch, he wheeled off through the darkness. Amid the blast of guns, his were the ones that found targets.

Men were lunging, sprawling. One saw The Shadow by the open window. But the blackened silhouette was gone when the mobbie drove in that direction, shooting as he came.

Before he dropped his gun muzzle to a lower angle, that crook received an upward stab in the shape of swift-tongued flame, that carried a red-hot bullet.

The slug didn't stop the man in white. He kept right ahead, struck the window sill and pitched across it. His dying scream faded from the depths of a thirty-story dive.

Amid that wail, which symbolized the defeat of crime's reserves, Goo-goo ducked out into the hallway. An elevator had arrived at the thirtieth floor. The operator was taking punches from the gloved fists of the masked safe-cracker whom The Shadow had denounced as Philip Kreft.

The elevator man had glimpsed the golden flower that identified Kreft, but the punches were making him forget it. As the fellow slumped to the floor, Goo-goo followed his chief into the elevator. Together, they began the trip to the ground floor.

A master crook was escaping, along with his lone lieutenant, for The Shadow unbeknown to the master criminal had already finished Morry and Koko, the only two who rated equally with Goo-goo when it came to leading battle mobs.

From the thirtieth floor, The Shadow was following, but his route the only one available was much slower. He was coming down the stairway. He was only at the twenty-fifth floor when the crooks reached the street.

Goo-goo bolted out through the lobby, to cover his chief's departure. That was good policy. Two men were waiting outside: Harry and Cliff.

Both made a drive for Goo-goo as he headed for Moe's cab, which was parked in front of the building. Goo-goo lived up to the fighting tactics with which Cliff had credited him.

The wiry crook aimed for Harry. As the agent grabbed for Goo-goo's gun, the crook deftly tripped him. Then, ducking behind Moe's cab to escape Cliff's fire, Goo-goo boarded a passing taxi, shoved his gun muzzle against the driver's neck and snarled:

"Step on it, jockey!"

AS the cab wheeled away, Moe took up the pursuit, carrying Cliff as a passenger. But Goo-goo's frantic driver had enough of a head start to lose the trail.

Cliff had left Harry on the scene, thinking that he could handle it. But Harry's tumble had been a bad one, his head glancing a fire hydrant.

As he came up, groggily rubbing his head, Harry found himself in the supporting grip of two policemen, who were demanding to know what had happened.

Realizing that a couple of minutes must have passed, enough for someone beside Goo-goo to get away from the building, Harry told a rueful story. He simply said that he had been getting out of a cab, when a man had

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slugged him and made a departure. Probably the flight had been in the same cab, according to Harry's account.

The cops were accepting the story dubiously, when a fashionably-dressed man strolled up beside them. The arrival was Philip Kreft, fastidious as ever. He was wearing his golden flower and swinging a cane. He recognized Harry, having seen him at some of the night clubs.

"I can vouch for this chap," said Kreft, in an important tone. "I would suggest, officers, that you go around the corner. A man just fell from one of the higher stories" he pointed with his cane "just how many floors, I wouldn't know. The fellow looked like a workman."

With the officers gone, Kreft helped Harry into a cab. As they started away, Kreft remarked:

"I was stopping by to see a chap named Angew. But with all that annoying commotion, it would be better to call on him tomorrow. Come on up to the Club Cabana, Vincent. I'll have Jerry mix you something that will put you on your feet again."

A black-cloaked witness saw that cab's departure. From the deserted lobby of the building, The Shadow delivered a whispered laugh; then took his own route, off into the dark.

CHAPTER XV. THE SHADOW'S MOVES

MORNING found The Shadow quite restricted, so far as his part of Cranston was concerned. It was possible for him to go wherever he wanted, in any of the various guises that he sometimes used. But he did not care to be seen at large as Cranston.

By this time, all members of the crime ring probably supposed that Lamont Cranston, whether dead or alive, was in the ungentle hands of Morry Cathlan and Koko Yandel, somewhere in New Jersey.

It was a good idea to let that illusion continue. Particularly as Cranston's absence indirectly indicated that Morry and Koko were well and happy, instead of being lifeless things that lay beside a wrecked roadster in a forgotten ravine.

It would help things, though, if the police did not begin a hunt for Cranston. So The Shadow used a very effective measure to spike any rumors that Cranston was missing.

He dropped into the Cobalt Club, shortly before noon. Guised as Cranston, he told the door attendant to keep his visit confidential. Going directly to the grillroom, he took a secluded corner table and began a patient wait.

During that interval, The Shadow reviewed some recent activities of his agents.

Last night, Harry Vincent had spent some jolly hours with Philip Kreft. Harry hadn't turned in until four o'clock, but he had remembered to phone a report to Burbank. Harry had learned the reason for Kreft's happy mood.

Things were all square again between Kreft and his best girl friend, Patricia Delmont. Kreft had sent Pat a very special message, telling her to expect some lovely flowers of a sort that he had long been promising to send.

The flowers were due to reach Pat this evening, with Kreft bringing them in person. Kreft had bet Jerry, the

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barkeeper, ten dollars to one that there would be a welcome awaiting when Kreft showed up at the Delmont home.

As proof of his success, Kreft intended to spend the evening with Pat at the Club Cabana.

The other agent who figured heavily in The Shadow's review was Cliff Marsland. He had sent orders to Cliff this morning; and with those orders had gone a small golden carnation, that meant real work ahead for Cliff.

Having passed himself off as Morry Cathlan, The Shadow was quite sure that Cliff could play the part of Koko Yandel. Since Gordy was expecting Koko at the greenhouse, somebody had to show up. It wouldn't be difficult for Cliff to act like the blundering tough guy, Koko.

Moreover, Cliff would have a good excuse for staying at the greenery. As Koko, he was to claim that Morry wanted him to wait there; that their prisoner, Cranston, was in a bad way.

Cranston, so Cliff would state, was in the hands of a doctor over in Jersey; a right guy, who would keep his trap shut. As soon as possible, however, Morry would bring the victim to Gordy, either for cure or burial.

While The Shadow was picturing Cliff driving Gordy's old car back to Westchester County, Commissioner Weston entered the grillroom. He came to The Shadow's table, because it was the one he himself preferred. Weston was quite pleased to find his friend Cranston waiting for him.

DURING lunch, Weston began to talk about Wilfred Angew, which was exactly what The Shadow wanted to hear.

"A strange case," declared the commissioner. "Odd, because Angew dropped dead suddenly, like his friend Marr."

The Shadow nodded.

"I remember that they were friends," he said. "Perhaps they were business associates also."

Weston didn't agree. He brought a bundle of papers from his pocket.

"I have gone over these with Inspector Cardona," he declared. "None of them show any connection between Marr and Angew. These papers were found in Angew's safe, which the burglar did not manage to open."

"The burglar?"

"Yes. There was quite a battle in Angew's office after he left there. A masked man slugged the elevator operator and escaped, after shooting it out with some of the building employees.

"Cardona has learned, though, that some of the men working in the building had prison records. It looks as though they were on hand to help the burglary."

Going through the papers, Weston passed them to Cranston, one by one. The commissioner seemed to regard them as little more important than the order slips that had once come from the Interstate Florist shop.

Less important, in a way, because crime at Angew's office had seemed a matter of ordinary burglary. The coincidence of Angew's death did not particularly impress Weston as having anything to do with the office crime.

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The real oddity as the commissioner had previously mentioned was the similarity between Angew's heart attack and the one that had stricken Marr.

"After he left his office," declared Weston, "Angew stopped at a cigar store. He argued with the clerk over a matter of some cigarettes. He seemed healthy enough, the clerk tells us, though Angew was probably unaware that burglars were then preparing to enter his office.

"Perhaps his heated argument excited him. That, and the rapid ride in the taxicab, could have been enough to settle a weak heart. There is a great deal in suggestion, too, Cranston.

"Angew may have been unsettled, nervous, ever since he saw his friend Marr drop dead. There is a great deal of truth in these sympathetic ailments, as the doctors term them."

Ordinarily, Cranston might have been inclined to agree with Weston. But on this occasion, he could picture a different type of sympathy between Marr and Angew. One that might involve a common interest, making both of them targets for murder.

The Shadow began to study the papers, particularly one that looked much like the document which had interested the masked burglar the night before. Reading the terms of that contract, The Shadow thought of Philip Kreft, which was logical enough. The contract was signed by Austin Delmont, grandfather of the girl to whom Kreft was engaged.

Meanwhile, Inspector Cardona entered. After a few words with Weston, Cardona interrupted The Shadow's reading.

"You won't find anything in that thing," he said. "I've been talking to people down at Angew's office. They're all agreed on one point, Mr. Cranston: that Angew never said anything about gold mines. They figure it was just another of his speculations.

"Look over the rest of that stuff. You'll see where he had options on orange groves, that never delivered; interests in shale oil properties, that went to sleep. He was even going to buy a lake, to cut ice from it in the winter. Electric refrigeration came along and queered that one for him."

The Shadow explained that the contract interested him chiefly because it had been signed recently. Though it referred to "all and sundry mining properties upon which the said Austin Delmont has claim," mentioning none by actual name, it was something that Delmont could explain, if questioned.

In fact, the lack of the terms "North Star Mine" and "gold," impressed The Shadow by their absence. For all he knew, from reading the contract, the property might be a coal mine in Timbuktu, if they had such things there.

GENEROUSLY, The Shadow was offering Joe Cardona an equal chance of investigating a clue that might solve the riddle of two almost-perfect crimes; but he did not expect the police inspector to warm to it. Joe merely shook his head.

"I can look into stuff like that later," he said. "I grant that this contract is more promising than the others, Mr. Cranston. But it can wait awhile, before I bother with it."

Joe's reaction was exactly what The Shadow expected; and precisely what crooks expected, too. There wouldn't be any chance that the law would seek facts from Delmont before the next day, at least. Then, it would be too late, though for a reason that didn't occur to Joe Cardona.

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The Shadow knew the reason.

Philip Kreft was scheduled to visit Austin Delmont this evening. The fact that he was taking flowers to Patricia would not prevent Kreft from talking business with odd Delmont.

Had Cardona known of Kreft's plans and thought of them in terms of flowers, as The Shadow did, Joe's reaction would have been quite different. For flowers golden ones were on Cardona's mind at this particular moment.

From his pocket, Joe produced a fattish, wrinkled envelope; he opened it and displayed what it contained a crushed golden carnation of the larger size.

"Angew bought a bunch of these," asserted Joe, "from an old flower dame. The hackie that drove his cab remembered it. This was the only flower left out of the batch, and I'm going to find the old gal that peddled those posies.

"She could have been the lookout, get it? Waiting there to flash the high sign to the crooks up in Angew's office. They've ducked somewhere, probably; but maybe she hasn't. That old witch can do some talking and she will, when I get hold of her."

Commissioner Weston nodded approval to Cardona's plan of hunting up the old flower woman. Folding Angew's papers, Weston replaced them in his pocket. Lunch was ended as Cranston, The Shadow, made a polite departure, his masklike lips repressing a smile.

The Shadow had offered his own opinions to the law, only to have them sidetracked. In return, Joe Cardona had at least expressed his own ideas, and The Shadow had found them valuable. Not because they involved a woman peddler that The Shadow knew must be Goo-goo Jaffer, but because of the wares that the disguised crook had sold.

Golden flowers again. The Shadow had coupled them with Marr's death; the law had linked them to Angew. But only The Shadow recognized the murderous importance of those specially-grown carnations. Where such golden flowers went, death followed.

Fresh flowers tonight; to be delivered by a man whose name the law had not yet considered in terms of crime: Philip Kreft. Tonight, The Shadow would be close upon the golden trail.

CHAPTER XVI. NIGHT BRINGS SHADOWS

IT was late afternoon, and Austin Delmont sat in his smoking room talking with a visitor. Both were speaking in hushed tones; their faces actually showed fear. The visitor was Hugo Brydan. With Marr and Angew dead, both Brydan and Delmont were men who spoke in terms of doom.

"Marr wanted millions!" voiced Brydan. His drab face was gray, his drawly voice quivered. "He wanted millions, and he received death!"

"Millions?" echoed Delmont, his aged face suddenly alert. "Do you mean that the North Star Mine may be worth millions?"

"I do! Marr was honest enough to be fair about it. But when Marr died" Brydan shook his head "Angew wanted more than his rightful share. Now Angew is dead."

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Old Delmont had partly filled his pipe from a metal tobacco jar. He paused, went across the room and opened a small wall safe. Brydan could see Delmont grimace, for the fading sunlight showed the old man's face quite plainly.

"About that contract, Mr. Delmont," insisted Brydan, "it was none of my doing. It was Angew who insisted that it be made out to both of us."

"To both of you?" returned Delmont. He was unfolding the paper, as he spoke. "You're wrong, Brydan. Look at it."

The amazed expression that came over Brydan's face, at reading of the all-important paragraph, brought a chuckle from Delmont. The dry humor of the situation enabled Delmont to shake off thoughts of doom.

"Apparently," said Delmont, "Angew double-crossed you also. Did he show you a copy of the contract?"

"Before it was signed," replied Brydan. "Afterward, too, but I did not have a chance to read it closely."

Delmont shrugged.

"I regret Marr's death," he said, at last, "but I can't feel sorry for Angew. At present, our question is: What do you and I, fully understanding matters, intend to do about The North Star property?"

Before Brydan could answer, the door opened. Patricia Delmont stepped across the threshold, gorgeously attired in a golden evening gown, which she was displaying for her grandfather's admiration.

As she stepped to the window, the last rays of sunlight gave the gold a glamorous shimmer. Though portions of the gown were like gossamer, the whole effect was golden, for Pat was wearing a slip that matched it.

In fact, all of her attire was of golden hue, even to the high-heeled slippers that glittered like burnished metal. Austin Delmont gave an indulgent smile, as he inquired:

"Is all this just to please me?"

"No, grandfather," replied Patricia, with a smile. "I've kept this ensemble for a very important occasion. Phil is coming here this evening, bringing those golden flowers that he promised me. I want to surprise him."

"He sent you golden flowers once before."

"I know." Pat gave a frown. "But I didn't wear the gown that night, because he and I weren't going out together."

"You're going out with Kreft this evening?"

There was sharpness in Delmont's tone. Brydan recognized the reason. The old man was mistrustful of Kreft. Pat took the question as one of disapproval. She set her chin in determined fashion, and gave a nod.

"I am not quite sure," decided Delmont, icily, "that I shall give you my permission. I am your guardian, Patricia, and you will recall that you are not yet of age."

"What does that make me?" snapped Pat. "A child?"

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"You were childish a few nights ago," reminded Delmont, "when you abruptly departed from Marr's. You had better go to your room, Patricia, and consider the matter for yourself, before I render a decision."

PIVOTING on golden heels, the girl strode from the room, slamming the door in her grandfather's face. In the gloomy hallway, where the sunlight did not sift, everything seemed streaked with blackness, as if creeping, lurky figures were about her.

Angrily, Pat groped for the stairway; gloom faded as she reached it, for there was still sunlight from the windows above. Hurrying up the stairs, the clatter of her high heels was audible in the room that she had left.

"Do you suppose," Delmont said to Brydan, "that it would be dangerous to let Patricia see Kreft? These deaths of Marr and Angew are ominous."

"To us," returned Brydan, solemnly, "but scarcely to your granddaughter. I think we shall be quite safe, however, if we adhere to one policy. We must act as though we did not know the value of the North Star Mine."

"A good idea, Brydan. But suppose he wants us to sell?"

"We can appear willing, but hold off awhile. It will give us time to plan our next step."

"Good!" Delmont smiled wanly, as he stepped toward the door. "I shall tell Patricia that she can keep her dinner date with Kreft, this evening."

The door was ajar when Delmont opened it. Starting out through the hallway, the old man paused; then returned. Lighting the pipe that he had filled, he smiled at Brydan and remarked:

"Modern youth is too impetuous, expecting everything in a hurry. It will be better for me to inform Patricia of my decision after Kreft arrives."

Upstairs, Pat had come to a decision of her own. She had arrived in time to find the maid who had helped her dress. The maid was going out for the evening, very shortly.

"Help me get these clothes off, Suzanne," ordered Pat. "I'm going to bed."

"Mademoiselle is ill?"

"No. I'm tired, that's all. Tired of having people meddle in my plans. Stop asking questions, Suzanne, and help me with these things before I tear them."

Recognizing that Pat was smothering a real rage, Suzanne hastened to obey. But even the maid's deft aid seemed slow to the enraged girl.

Pat had visions of her grandfather coming upstairs and ordering her to bed. She wanted to be there before the idea occurred to him. Her temper broke, the moment she was undressed.

Turning upon Suzanne, who was gathering dropped garments, Pat snatched up the golden dress and flung it into the maid's arms, along with the rest of the clothes.

"Keep those things!" stormed Pat. "Take the dress, too! These go with it!" she grabbed up the slippers and hurled them as good measure. "And get out!"

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Literally bombarded to the door, Suzanne stood there, stupefied. Sight of Pat going native was too much for her. Transformed from a queenly creature in shimmering gold, the girl had become a slender bundle of human dynamite.

Quivering in every muscle, Pat shook her fists at Suzanne. When the maid refused to budge, Pat grabbed objects from the dressing table and began to fling them. Her aim was bad, but Suzanne fled, quite sure that Pat, devoid of clothes, would not pursue her.

Suzanne was wrong. Pat followed, just through the doorway. Looking back over her shoulder, Suzanne received the finish of the barrage a hairbrush that caught her just above the eye. Hearing Suzanne's screech, Pat darted back into the room, slamming the door.

Snatching a nightgown from a chair, Pat slid it over her shoulders. She was sobbing, as she swept back the golden hair that strewed across her forehead. Her tear-filled eyes saw only blurs, for the room was glooming with dusk.

Pat groped her way into bed, buried her face in the pillows.

DOWNSTAIRS, the old servant lighted a single lamp that proved feeble in the darkened hall. He knocked at the smoking-room door.

Delmont came out, carrying his emptied pipe. Brydan was with him; the two walked to the front door.

"This is the night the servants always take off," said Delmont. "I shall be here alone when Kreft calls for Patricia."

There was a sidelong look from Suzanne, who was coming down the stairs at that moment; but the maid said nothing. She was quite sure that Pat wouldn't be ready when Kreft called. The girl's clothes were in Suzanne's room, but the maid hadn't stopped to tell Pat so.

Delmont's ancient limousine was waiting out front, to take Brydan to the hotel where he lived. Suzanne went along in the car, riding in the front seat with the chauffeur. Edward, the old manservant, wasn't along; he was going by subway in the opposite direction.

They had dropped Brydan at his hotel, when Suzanne showed the chauffeur her black eye and described the events that had led up to it. Her description of Pat's tantrum was graphic; it brought a regretful grunt from the chauffeur.

"You ought to have yelled for Mr. Delmont," he said. "If the old man had taken that sock, he'd have picked up the hairbrush and whaled his darling granddaughter, for once. Trouble with him is, he's always been too easy."

Back in the old mansion, Austin Delmont was not sharing the chauffeur's opinion. Pondering, as he walked through the gloomy hallway, Delmont actually feared that he had been too harsh with Patricia. He had closed the smoking room when he left it; engrossed in thought, he did not notice that the door was open.

So were the windows. The cool breeze from them attracted his attention. He closed the windows, wondering why Edward had opened them, and how. Delmont didn't remember the old servant going into the smoking room.

Fumbling with his tobacco humidior, Delmont was again surprised when he found that the lid was off it. He

decided that he must be losing his careful habits, for he always closed that jar when he finished filling his pipe.

At present, his pipe was empty. The metal of the humidor felt very cold, as Delmont scraped tobacco from the bottom and loaded the pipe.

As he puffed, however, the old man noticed that the tobacco smoke was cool and pleasant. He leaned back in his easy-chair, planning the course that he would take when Kreft arrived.

Beyond the door of the smoking room lay the gloom of the dimly lighted hall. Dark-paneled walls were shrouded; corners looked deep enough to hold living blackness. Night had settled; seemingly, it had encroached into the ancient mansion.

Long streaks of blackness lay along the hallway floor. One patch seemed to form a silhouette; but it could have been a shadowy illusion formed by the newel post at the bottom of the stairway banister.

Calmly smoking his pipe, Austin Delmont gave no thought to those inky symbols in the hall. His house was always filled with shadows after night arrived.

CHAPTER XVII. DEATH STALKS ANEW

WITHIN a half hour, a ring of the doorbell announced Philip Kreft. Answering the door in person, Austin Delmont shook hands with the well-dressed arrival and gave a glance toward the stairway. He hoped that Patricia had heard the doorbell, but evidently she hadn't.

Kreft was carrying a long, light bundle. Looking for a place to rest it, he stopped by a table near the library door. Delmont turned on the library lights, rather than invite Kreft into the smoking room, which was an out-of-the-way place to take a temporary visitor.

"Where's Pat?" asked Kreft, looking about. "She said she would be ready."

"She is upstairs," replied Delmont. "I shall tell her that you are here, Philip."

Going upstairs, Delmont knocked at Pat's door. A low, half-choked voice responded.

"Kreft is here," announced Delmont, in a kindly tone. "You may go out with him, Patricia, if you wish."

There was a pause; then a stifled answer:

"I... I've gone to bed. Tell Phil I'm " Pat broke off with a sob. "Tell him anything!"

"I understand, Patricia."

The tone showed that Delmont did understand and was sympathetic. He had hardly reached the stairs before Pat's door opened.

Stealing after him, the night-gowned girl reached the top of the stairs. Her slight figure scarcely discernible in the darkness, she watched to see what happened.

Delmont was telling Kreft that Pat was ill, and doing it so genuinely that the story carried weight. During the past hour, Pat had been feeling more and more regretful because she had lost her temper; but her pride hadn't

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been shattered until this moment.

Realizing that her grandfather was taking her part and trying to smooth matters for her, she wanted to sob again; not because she felt that she was hurt, but on Delmont's account. She recognized that she had not repaid the kindness that her grandfather had always shown her.

Kreft was unwrapping the package, to show a spread of large golden carnations. Intrigued by the flowers, as well as the scene, Pat managed to choke back the sobs and listen.

"Give these to Pat," said Kreft, handing the flowers to Delmont. "Beautiful carnations, aren't they?"

Delmont nodded.

"Sorry Pat is indisposed tonight," added Kreft. "I'll tell you how to cheer her up, Mr. Delmont. Tell her I'm driving out to the place where they grow these flowers. If they have any more of them, I'll order fresh ones tomorrow."

Fingering the little flower in his lapel, Kreft left by the front door. Pat wanted to call after him, to tell him to wait until she could dress and go along. Then she realized that it would be useless. By forcing her golden costume upon Suzanne, Pat had definitely put herself on the shelf for this evening.

Pat was a victim of her own sweet spite, for she had promised to wear the golden gown as part of their celebration, like the golden flowers that Kreft had brought.

Standing helplessly at the top of the stairs, she heard Kreft's car drive away. Biting her lips, she decided to go back to bed, a suitable self-punishment for her folly.

DELMONT was placing the golden carnations in a vase. He paused to smell their fragrance, then started back through the hallway to his smoking room.

The flowers reminded Pat of the ones that had come from Kreft the night of Marr's party; she felt very remorseful, when she remembered how she had thrown them away. Like her grandfather, Kreft was tactful. He hadn't mentioned those other golden flowers.

Feeling very humble, when she realized how much trouble she caused people, Pat stole downstairs and took the flowers from the vase, intending to carry them to her room. She wanted to preserve them, to thank Kreft for them when he called up tomorrow.

About to return upstairs, she decided that she owed her grandfather an apology. The golden flowers in her arms, she turned toward the smoking room.

A sudden terror gripped her as she stared at the gloomy rear hall. She couldn't understand her fear; she was used to this tomblike house and had never felt afraid before. Tonight, however, she could not fight off the shudders.

It couldn't be dread of meeting her grandfather. He was kindly; he would understand whatever she had to say.

Had sight of Kreft brought that chill? It seemed impossible. Squabbles had kept them apart before, and Phil could not have changed completely during the past few days.

Pat felt that the hall, itself, had something to do with her fear.

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Blackened corners looked very deep. The girl had a curious sensation that eyes were watching her. Forcing a slight laugh, she decided that her flimsy attire was the cause. Parading through a house in nothing but a nightie would naturally cause a person to feel conspicuous, even to the point of imagining that intruders were on watch.

It took real bravery for Pat to go through that hall, treading carefully because of her unslipped feet. She clutched the flowers tightly to her breast and kept on toward the door of the smoking room, which Delmont had closed behind him.

Pat tried to think only of her grandfather how kind he had been, not to tell Kreft that he had rebuked her. She tried to picture Delmont beyond the door which she approached, but, oddly, the effort terrified her more. Maybe the danger that she so definitely sensed was beyond that door; not in this hallway!

Frantically, the girl sprang for the door and tugged it open. She stopped on the threshold; her mouth opened for a scream that did not come. What Pat saw was the embodiment of all her horror.

STRETCHED in the chair beside his table, Austin Delmont lay limp and motionless.

His pipe had fallen to the table, its smoldering ashes streaked the mahogany. His head was lying on the top of the chair back; his face, tilted sideways, looked lifeless. His features were pallid, his half-opened eyes had a glazed stare.

Pat's own hands went limp. Golden flowers slipped unnoticed to the floor, falling one by one as she advanced. Pat stepped on the carnations, without feeling them crush beneath her feet.

Reaching the chair, she let the last of the cluster drop into Delmont's lap, as she threw her arms about his neck.

"It's my fault, grandfather," the girl sobbed. "I... I've killed you! I shouldn't have acted as I did. If you could only hear me, to know how sorry I am!"

To Pat, the last hour had been one of torment. She had magnified her own affairs, until they seemed tremendous. In fancy, she had pictured her grandfather undergoing the same anguish.

With thoughts of Marr and Angew, men much younger than Delmont, dying from sudden heart attacks, it was only logical that Pat should suppose that her grandfather had succumbed to the same malady.

Strain caused heart failure, so she had heard. If anyone had worked Delmont to a strenuous mental pitch, it must have been Pat herself. That was why she reasoned that she was to blame. Her moan was louder:

"I've killed you, grandfather!"

Something slashed hard against Pat's wrist. It had the cold feel of metal. Staring, she saw a bracelet; not a golden one, of a sort that she had intended to add to her evening costume, but a bracelet made of steel.

It was one half of a pair of handcuffs. A strong hand tugged from the other end. Pat was yanked to her feet, whirled full about, gasping in new fright, to face a stocky man with swarthy complexion. He promptly clamped the handcuff on Pat's other wrist.

Pat was in the custody of Inspector Joe Cardona.

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"So you're the flower girl," spoke the ace inspector, coldly. "I'm beginning to size you up, Miss Delmont. You were out at Marr's the night he died, and you left there in a hurry. Maybe you were wearing golden flowers that night."

The girl's eyes went wide. Without realizing it, she nodded.

"I thought so," snapped Cardona. "Then, last night, you put on a funny shawl and peddled some more of these overgrown daisies to Angew."

This time, Pat blinked, shook her head. Her denial didn't count with Cardona; not after her silent admission that she had been wearing golden carnations at Marr's.

"Tonight, you tried an inside job," added Cardona. "But it kind of shook you, didn't it, after you realized you'd done away with your own grandfather?"

"But I didn't kill him "

"You just said you did," interposed Cardona. "Loud enough for me to hear. What's more, your grandfather must have known it was coming. That's why a call came to headquarters, telling me to come here and talk to him. You didn't figure I'd be getting here tonight, did you?"

"Well, I wouldn't have come, if it hadn't been for that call. Say" – Cardona glanced suspiciously toward the hall "where's the fellow who made that call, anyway? He talked like he was the butler, or some other servant."

PAT began to sob. Looking at her, Cardona showed annoyance. He wasn't a sentimentalist, but weeping women always proved a nuisance, when being taken to headquarters. Pat, moreover, presented an added problem.

She'd have to put more clothes on, before she started her trip. Maybe she'd want a maid to help her; society dames usually did. The few that Cardona had arrested in the past had never been properly attired for a ride to headquarters. They always had maids around, though, which smoothed matters somewhat.

"Where's the servants?" demanded Joe, shaking Pat until the handcuffs rattled. "And that butler, or whatever he is. What's his name, to begin with?"

Pat didn't answer. She was looking toward the hall, almost determined to make a wild dash for freedom. Cardona was faced in the same direction. The reply to his question startled both the girl and the police inspector, for it came from in back of them.

"The servant is named Edward," spoke a slow, mechanical voice. "He has gone out for the evening."

Turning, Cardona wheeled Pat with him, heard the girl give a happy shriek. The person who had spoken was Austin Delmont! His head lifted, the old man had his hand across his eyes, as if trying to recover from a daze.

To two persons who saw Delmont, his revival was nothing less than a return from death. Those witnesses were Pat and Cardona. A third observer, though, did not share their amazement.

From the gloom-streaked hallway came a whispered laugh that spoke full understanding. The weird, whispered laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME'S METHOD

AN awed trio stared at the black-cloaked figure that stepped in from the hallway. To Delmont, whose eyes had slowly opened, The Shadow seemed to represent the spirit of the old mansion; a portion of its gloom, come to life after many long years.

As for Pat, she forgot her present plight through sheer amazement. The fear that she had felt in the hallway; that sensation of watching eyes both were explained.

Her present sight of The Shadow brought no terror; quite the contrary. Somehow, Pat was sure that the mysterious being was responsible for her grandfather's return from death.

Last of the awed three was Joe Cardona. Things had been happening rapidly for the ace inspector, faster than his hunches. The appearance of The Shadow marked the finale of a startling sequence.

It meant that crime's riddle was beyond Cardona's ken. Joe knew that, from past experience. Usually, The Shadow stayed in the offing when the law took over. His specialty was that of setting a scene so that crime would explain itself.

When The Shadow found it necessary to come from shrouding darkness, the only thing to do was listen.

The Shadow's eyes met Pat's. His burning gaze was reflected by wide, expressive orbs that carried a plea.

Pat hoped that this strange personage could shatter the accusations that Cardona had hurled upon her. The girl lifted her arms, to show her wrist-weighted handcuffs.

The Shadow spoke quietly to Cardona:

"Remove them."

Cardona unlocked the handcuffs. His hunch, that golden flowers had something to do with death, was going back on him. In fact, Joe had been thinking more in terms of Pat, than of the flowers; and Delmont's revival freed the girl of what Cardona had considered a solid murder charge.

Pat's words couldn't have been a confession, for Delmont wasn't dead.

Moreover, the golden carnations seemed innocuous in themselves, for The Shadow calmly gathered them up like things of no harm. Pat had carried those flowers into the smoking room; she had suffered no ill effects from them.

But when The Shadow stepped toward Delmont, the old man shied away. Instinctively, he used his hands to ward off the golden blossoms. His recent experience warned him that death lurked in those carnations, at least for Austin Delmont.

Cardona saw Delmont's action. So did Pat, as she stood in the background, rubbing her slender wrists, glad that the handcuffs had gone from them. Both wondered why the flowers were poison to Delmont, but to no one else.

Stepping to the table, The Shadow pointed to the open tobacco humidior. Cardona approached it, noted the traces of a peculiar odor.

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"Ether!" exclaimed Joe, between sniffs. "But how "

He paused, as The Shadow lifted a golden flower toward him. Cardona breathed the strong carnation scent. The Shadow allowed him only a few whiffs of that fragrance; then spoke the one word:

"Wait!"

With passing moments, Cardona felt a dizziness seize him. He gripped the table edge, though he did not need it. His mental whirl was of brief duration. Rallying from it, Cardona expressed his understanding between long breaths.

"Somebody loaded the tobacco jar!" panted Joe. "After an ether treatment, the victim was ready! When those flowers were handed to Delmont, they were poison to him! But who "

JOE interrupted to glare at Pat. Biting her lips, the girl shook her head. Pat was beginning to see a connection that horrified her. She didn't want to talk.

"Philip Kreft gave me those flowers," said Delmont, slowly. "When I returned here, the windows were raised. Kreft must have entered by the window, to fix the tobacco humidor. Previous, of course, to his arrival with the flowers."

"You took the lid off the humidor?" queried Cardona. "After Kreft had saturated the tobacco with ether?"

"No." Delmont shook his head. "The lid was off the humidor. The windows were still raised. I am quite sure" he was turning to The Shadow "that I owe my life to you. After the trap was set, you entered here, to remove the cover from the humidor and open the windows."

The Shadow's response was a whispered laugh that corroborated Delmont's statement. There was a significance to the tone that carried something more. Delmont was the only person who understood it; he opened his lips to speak.

Then, his eyes catching The Shadow's burning gaze, Delmont maintained his silence. Whatever Delmont's thoughts, The Shadow preferred that they remain unspoken, for the present. They were a sort that might confuse the issue, turning The Shadow's own plans awry.

From that moment, Delmont was determined to say nothing except at The Shadow's bidding.

"Philip Kreft!" exclaimed Cardona. "Say he's the fancy dresser who always sports a little yellow flower! These are the same kind, only bigger. We're getting somewhere! What I want to know is, why would Kreft have wanted to kill you, Delmont?"

Looking at The Shadow, Delmont received a nod. In a slow, precise tone, Delmont told an impartial story regarding the North Star Mine. He explained how Kreft had wanted to acquire full control of the open claims on what he termed a purely speculative basis.

Then, Delmont came to Marr and Angew. He related that they had learned the mine's real value; had lined Brydan up on their side. He told how Angew had tried some double dealing of his own, and produced the contract to prove it.

With the contract, Delmont showed Cardona the check that Angew had made out for fifty thousand dollars, as he told how Brydan had revealed the truth tonight.

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Tearing up both the contract and the check, Delmont declared:

"These are void. There are now three claim holders in the North Star Mine: myself, Brydan, and Kreft."

"And one of them," returned Cardona, nodding at the mention of Kreft, "is a murderer. I ought to have guessed that Kreft killed Angew. Some of those cleaning men were phonies; maybe all of them.

"They loaded Angew's office with the smell of ether in their special cleaning fluid. Only, he got a real whiff of the stuff, so when the dame handed him the flowers, he was a goner. But who was that flower dame, anyway?"

Cardona wheeled about, to turn a suspicious glance in Pat's direction; but the girl was no longer there. She had gone upstairs to get dressed; only The Shadow had noted her departure from the room.

Joe started for the door, intending to dash upstairs and invade Pat's boudoir before she could put on enough clothes to make a flight. The Shadow's outstretched arm blocked the ambitious police inspector.

"The flower woman," The Shadow told Cardona, "was Goo-goo Jaffer. He gave the carnations to Angew."

THE news roused Cardona's interest. He hadn't figured Goo-goo in the game. Knowing the crook's ability at disguise, Cardona was impressed enough to forget Pat for the moment, particularly as the riddle of Angew's death was solved.

Then Cardona thought of Marr. Facing The Shadow, who seemed to have the answer to all questions, Joe demanded:

"How did Marr get his dose of ether?"

"From paint in his study," replied The Shadow. "It was mixed with collodion, applied just before Marr came home."

Cardona began to see the link between house painters at Marr's home and cleaning men in Angew's office. But Joe had another question.

"Miss Delmont wore gold flowers out to Marr's," he said, thumbing upward in the general direction of Pat's room. "That means she had a part in it."

"An innocent part!" exclaimed Delmont, before The Shadow could intervene in Pat's behalf. "The flowers came to her that evening. I remember it well, because we had to wait for the flower shop to deliver them."

Thrusting his hand in his pocket, Cardona yanked out a batch of papers that he had been looking over at headquarters. They were the order slips from the Interstate Florists shop. Cardona found the slip he wanted.

"Kreft sent those flowers!" exclaimed Joe. "But" he was considerably puzzled "but this slip says roses, not carnations."

The Shadow's sibilant laugh, peculiarly sinister, brought a flood of recollections to Cardona's mind. Under the influence of that persuasive tone, Joe began to find his own answers.

"That truck the mob highjacked!" expressed Cardona. "They weren't after anything. They were putting those golden flowers in it!" Then, as The Shadow's whisper gave corroboration, Joe added: "But this slip" – he was

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fingering it "still says roses.

"Wait! I've got it! Somebody must have switched slips on that clerk Herkshire. Goo-goo, I'll bet, faking himself as a dame buying flowers!"

Cardona's hunches were getting him places, thanks to The Shadow's encouragement. But Joe finally struck a blank wall. He swung to The Shadow.

"What about Herkshire?"

"Herkshire is dead," replied The Shadow, "but the crooks planned merely to dupe him, not to kill him."

"Then why "

"Herkshire had just left the hospital," reminded The Shadow, "after an operation."

The clerk's death was explained. Circumstances had made him a potential victim for the poison fragrance of the golden flowers. Ether, inhaled in quantity by Herkshire when he had his operation, had left its effect upon his lungs. No longer immune from the death flowers, he had become their first victim.

Herkshire's unexpected collapse had forced the crooks to remove his body. They hadn't wanted to leave an accidental victim lying about. Herkshire's supposed disappearance was a better proposition.

EVERYTHING seemed very clear to Joe Cardona. He did not know that there was one important matter that The Shadow had not mentioned at all. It was The Shadow's own experience at Marr's, when he went there to investigate.

Traces of ether in Marr's study; the remaining fragrance of the flowers that Pat had tossed in the big vase, had combined to produce a half daze on The Shadow, himself. The sensation had struck just after he reached his car. It accounted for the ease with which Morry and Koko had overpowered Cranston.

Because of that experience, which had left no ill effect, The Shadow had let Delmont undergo the same, this evening. Faint traces of ether from the open tobacco jar had been enough to put Delmont into a faint, after he smelled the flowers that Kreft delivered. By opening the windows, The Shadow had ventilated the room sufficiently to insure Delmont's safety.

The Shadow had demonstrated the same thing later, to a very mild degree, with Cardona as the subject.

Those facts didn't matter much to Joe Cardona while he was on the trail of actual murder. At Delmont's telephone, the ace inspector was calling headquarters, to begin a man hunt for Philip Kreft.

With Cardona occupied, Austin Delmont had a chance to clutch The Shadow's cloaked arm and put some eager, anxious questions.

There were things that Delmont suspected, and was sure The Shadow could explain in full. Most important, Delmont wanted to know how The Shadow intended to handle those matters when the man hunt started; and how Delmont could himself co-operate.

In whispered tone, The Shadow was answering those questions while Delmont put them. In a very few words, he told the rescued man all that was needed. Their undertoned parley was ended by the time Cardona had finished his headquarters call.

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When Cardona turned about from the telephone, the room was empty, save for himself and Delmont. From the streaked gloom of the hallway Joe heard the weird, parting laugh of The Shadow. The rest, Cardona decided, was being left to the law.

That hunch was wrong. The next few moves would be up to Joe Cardona. After that, The Shadow would be needed more than ever before, in this campaign against the golden death!

CHAPTER XIX. MURDERER'S LAIR

VERY soon after making that call to headquarters, Joe Cardona came to a conclusion that The Shadow had foreseen. The police inspector decided that he had been somewhat hasty in ordering a general man hunt for Philip Kreft.

"Maybe you know where Kreft has gone," said Joe, to Delmont. "I never thought to ask you, Mr. Delmont."

"He said he intended to drive out into the country," replied Delmont. "He planned to visit the greenhouse where they grow the golden flowers."

"Did Kreft tell you where the place was?"

"No. But I am sure that he has gone there."

Arriving from the hallway, Pat heard those statements. Trimly dressed in dark-brown, she looked quite businesslike. Quite different from the gold-gowned vision of a few hours before, as Delmont noted; but he was used to his granddaughter's many moods.

It was Cardona who was really puzzled by the contrast. He thought Pat was someone else. He couldn't picture this womanly arrival as the slender, tearful girl who had shrunk, frightened, from his touch when he clamped the bracelets on her. During the past few minutes, Joe had been thinking that Pat had probably gone back to bed to have a good cry.

When the girl began to talk, Cardona realized who she was. Pat's voice was firm, as she objected to Delmont's statements.

"Phil wouldn't have gone out to the country," insisted Pat. "He's probably at one of the night clubs. Maybe" her tone was bitter "he's found another girl for this evening."

Cardona gave a wise nod.

"Maybe you're right, Miss Delmont," he said. "Which night spot do you think we'd find him at?"

"The Club Cabana "

Pat caught herself. She was trying to shield Kreft. She half believed that he had gone where he said; that was why she had tried to change the trail. But in naming the Club Cabana, Pat had given away the one spot in New York where Phil would be, had he chosen to remain in town.

Cardona called headquarters, ordered some detectives to cover the Club Cabana, saying that he would join them there. Finishing the call, he turned to Delmont:

"Let's go."

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"I'm going with you," asserted Pat. "It looks like I started this, so I'm going to see it through."

Delmont shook his head in disapproval. In a dry tone, he stated that Pat's childish behavior did not warrant her staying up late. He decided that she should return to bed at once, and remain there.

But as he spoke, Delmont saw the flash of disobedience in Pat's eyes; knew that his orders would be disregarded, as soon as he and Cardona had left the house.

"On second thought," declared Delmont, "I believe that you should come with us, Patricia." Then, as they started for the door, Delmont glanced at his watch and said calmly to Cardona: "Do you suppose there is a possibility of further murder this evening, inspector?"

"Further murder?" echoed Cardona. "If Kreft thinks he killed you, Mr. Delmont, why should he try anything else?"

"We must still consider Hugo Brydan," reminded Delmont. "If only he and Philip Kreft remained alive, each would hold a half claim on the North Star Mine."

CARDONA pounced back to the telephone, called Brydan's hotel. Getting Brydan on the wire, Joe told him details of the thwarted crime at Delmont's; how a man hunt had begun for Kreft.

He advised Brydan to call in the hotel detectives right away, have them stay with him until men came from headquarters. After that, he could join Cardona at the Club Cabana.

"Brydan's safe," decided Cardona in a relieved tone, as they hailed a cab outside the house. "That's one thing sure."

Austin Delmont smiled. He had purposely delayed mention of Brydan, to allow The Shadow time to get to the man's hotel.

Delmont was quite sure that Brydan's room was being watched by the black-cloaked investigator before Cardona made the phone call. He was convinced that The Shadow would follow to the Club Cabana, when Brydan came there.

Reaching the Club Cabana with Delmont and Pat, Cardona found two detectives in the private bar. They had taken Jerry, the bartender, into custody, and one of them explained why.

"This barkeep was using the phone," said the dick. "He must have spotted us outside. What's more, he set fire to some old telegrams. Those ashes" he pointed to the floor behind the bar "are all that's left of them."

Cardona began to quiz Jerry. Joe was still at it, when Brydan arrived. Up to then, Jerry had been insistently denying that he knew anything about Kreft's affairs; but in the diversion of attention caused by Brydan's arrival, the barkeeper suddenly belied his denials.

Grabbing a revolver beneath the bar, Jerry broke for a rear door. Detectives fired after him, wildly; from the doorway, the crook aimed pointblank for Cardona, who was lunging after him.

A gun spoke from the alleyway. With its cough, Jerry's arm dropped. He had lost his chance to beat Cardona to the shot, for Joe's Police Positive began to talk while Jerry was trying to regain his grip on his own revolver.

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Slumping from Cardona's fire, Jerry was flayed by bullets that the detectives delivered. The crooked barkeeper was dead when Cardona sprang across his body.

In the alleyway, Joe saw the cloaked fighter who had saved his life. The Shadow spoke brief words, then blended with the darkness.

Rejoining the others, Cardona gave them news. He had learned he did not specify from whom the place where Kreft could be found. The greenhouse was in Westchester County; and Cardona intended to take everyone there, to confront the murderer when captured.

They waited while Cardona made the necessary arrangements. He ordered cars to be on hand as soon as possible; he phoned the Westchester authorities and arranged for county officials to meet him.

All that while, Delmont kept staring at the blackened doorway, from which Jerry's body had been removed.

The keen-eyed old man was positive that The Shadow was still close at hand, as a guardian power.

During the rapid ride to the remote corner of Westchester County, Delmont kept glancing back, watching for a trailing car. Several times he thought he saw one, but there was none when they reached the winding road beside the ravine.

At last the cars pulled up at their secluded destination.

OLD Debbleman's house was very dim; but they could see a glow in the small greenery beside it. The Shadow had told Cardona that the greenhouse could be reached through the main building, so Joe led the way by that route.

Past clustered plants, the invaders came upon Kreft, talking with old Debbleman. Evidently Kreft hadn't heard the cars roll in beside the place, for he was taken by complete surprise when Cardona pounced upon him.

Two Westchester detectives added their weight to the struggle. Kreft was relieved of the automatic that he carried, and Cardona planted handcuffs on his wrists. Old Debbleman stood stupefied, with upraised hands, when Kreft was flung forcibly on a bench in the corner of the greenhouse.

Confronted by Delmont and Brydan, Kreft acted puzzled. He saw Pat beyond them and smiled at the girl. Then Cardona was to the fore, calling Kreft a murderer.

"Because I carry a gun?" queried Kreft. "I've got a permit for that gun, because I need it sometimes, when I take long trips out of town."

"I'm talking about Marr and Angew," informed Cardona. "You murdered them, Kreft, and you know it!"

Kreft acted as though he didn't know it. Cardona began to state the details. Item for item, he covered murder's trail; from the highjacking of the flower truck, through the events at Marr's home and Angew's office, up to the foiled attempt on Delmont's life.

From his expression, Kreft seemed to regard the whole story as fantastic.

"Bring me some ether," he suggested. "I'll sniff it, inspector, and then smell those flowers" he pointed to the bed of strong-scented carnation blooms, almost at his elbow "to see if they can knock me woozy."

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"Suicide, eh?" retorted Joe. "You're figuring a quick way out, aren't you? Not a chance! It's the hot seat for you, now that you've lost your three-million-dollar bet on the North Star Mine!"

"So that's what in back of it!" exclaimed Kreft. "Marr and Angew didn't believe me, when I said I wanted to speculate. They looked into it and found they really had something. Why didn't the fools tell me!"

Cardona was tired of Kreft's bluff. A hothouse banked with flowers was no place to start a grilling. Joe wanted to get Kreft back to Manhattan, and start questioning him at headquarters. He'd have Kreft wilted soon enough, along with the yellow daisy in the fellow's buttonhole.

At the doorway to the house, Pat blocked them. From a bag she carried, the girl whipped out a small revolver. She covered Cardona and the detectives just behind him. Taken totally unawares, the three let their arms come up. Tiny though the gun was, its bullets could damage. Parley was the best plan.

"Mr. Kreft is leaving with me," announced Pat, coolly, as she ignored Cardona's plea for her to be reasonable. "I regard him as a victim of some unexplainable circumstance."

Old Austin Delmont was moving forward boldly, confident that his granddaughter would not use the gun against him. Behind him came Hugo Brydan, gingerly keeping Delmont between himself and the gun.

"Let me have that revolver, Patricia," said Delmont, calmly. "I assure you that Kreft shall have fair treatment. It is imperative, Patricia, that you obey me."

"Stay where you are," warned the girl. "If you can prove that Phil is innocent, I shall listen; but no other terms will do."

"I can prove it!" insisted Delmont, suddenly. "I swear it! Give me the gun instantly" he was sweeping his dampened forehead "or it will be too late!"

As Pat hesitated, Delmont darted a look at Brydan. With a bound, the drab-faced man sprang past Pat and through the connecting door.

Alarmed, the girl turned to fire after him; but she pulled the trigger too late. Slamming the door, Brydan had closed a barrier against the shots that came.

Through the bulletproof panes they saw him, his face no longer dreary. Brydan's features were aglow with the ugly glare of evil. The change of his expression, from fixed solemnity to a livid leer, brought the truth home with a shudder.

Hugo Brydan, not Philip Kreft, was the master murderer who ruled golden death!

CHAPTER XX. CRIME COMES HOME

A VOICE spoke, loud and raucous, through the cramped confines of the compact greenhouse. It startled all listeners, except old Debbleman. The gardener knew what it was: an amplifier that Gordy had installed because Debbleman was hard of hearing.

Hugo Brydan was talking into the microphone, just outside the door that he had barred.

"So you guessed it, Delmont!" sneered Brydan. "You finally wondered how Kreft could have gotten into your smoking room and out again, to put that ether in the humidor. You remembered, at last, that I had been there

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alone just before I left; that the opportunity was mine, not Kreft's."

Austin Delmont did not answer. He kept looking steadily at the door, while Patricia, realizing that her new folly had made them prisoners, lost all her bravery, to sob on Kreft's shoulders. Handcuffed, Kreft could only soothe the girl with words, being unable to embrace her.

"Perhaps, Delmont," continued Brydan, "you can tell your fellow fools the rest of the story."

Delmont couldn't; so Brydan did. His part was known in the Delmont case, for the victim was alive and had guessed the truth, though he had kept it to himself awhile.

Thus Brydan, marked as a murderer, had nothing to lose by telling all. Holding full control, he rather relished the idea of gloating over his crimes.

He began by stating that he, too, had looked into the matter of the North Star Mine, months before. Therewith, he had commenced his campaign to dispose of other claimants.

Happening to know of this greenhouse, Brydan had seen the possibility of dealing death by golden flowers, thus thrusting the blame on Kreft.

Beckoning as he spoke, Brydan brought Gordy to the glass-paneled door.

"This is Dr. Gordon," introduced the master crook, through the loudspeaker. "He and I were associated some years ago in criminal practices, which we covered later. Gordy specializes in poisons. He came from Mexico to develop the large carnations. He grafted them with a venomous tropical plant."

Among the listeners, old Debbleman stood alone, muttering half aloud. He was repeating what he had told The Shadow that Gordy had pretended to be a friend of Kreft.

Continuing his tale, Brydan revealed his cunning. Though pinning the trail to Kreft, he had kept it covered until all murders were accomplished. Kreft hadn't sent the first golden carnations to Pat; but Brydan knew that Kreft wouldn't be at Marr's party. He intended to have the game finished by the time Kreft and Pat compared notes.

Brydan had intended Angew's death to be the last. Opening the safe to get the contract signed by Delmont, he had learned of Angew's double cross. Thinking his own name was also on the contract, Brydan had intended to use it to buy up Delmont's share of North Star. He had been willing to spend fifty thousand dollars.

"Since the contract was made to Angew alone," declared Brydan, "I left it there, your death warrant, Delmont. You were back in the game, and I saw a way to kill you. Kreft had ordered flowers for your granddaughter. Your death would pin another crime on him."

With Delmont dead, and Kreft behind bars, Brydan would have stood supreme. He had left Delmont's house with the servants as an alibi, while Delmont was still alive. Brydan was the person who had called Cardona, telling him to come there.

Brydan had wanted clues to bob up later, for they all led back to Kreft: the flowers that Pat had worn at Marr's; the carnations carried in Angew's cab; the final bunch that Kreft brought to Delmont's house. As for Jerry, the barkeeper, he was Brydan's tool, placed where he could keep close tabs on Kreft. Jerry had phoned Brydan at the hotel just before Cardona called there. When Joe blamed crime on Kreft, Brydan had decided to bluff things out.

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BRYDAN did not know the part The Shadow played. That occurred to Delmont, as he watched the man beyond the glass. Meeting Pat's gaze, as the girl lifted her tear-streaked face, Delmont saw that she, too, cherished the hope that The Shadow still might aid.

Then hope faded, when a gruff exclamation came from Joe Cardona.

Brydan was up to something beyond the door. He was tugging a lever beside the wall. Old Debbleman understood. He croaked alarmed words about "gas pipes."

From the amplifier, Brydan spoke.

"You are now inhaling an etherized vapor," he announced, with an ugly chuckle. "When the air is sufficiently saturated, which will be within three minutes, the odor of the golden flowers will do the rest. You cannot escape it!"

The odor of the ether was not perceptible in the thick fragrance of the many plants, but the victims knew that the vapor would operate, regardless.

Old Debbleman was at the flower bed, uprooting the much-prized golden carnations; his action was met by a combined laugh from Brydan and Gordy. No effort could destroy the poison odor of those flowers, because the greenhouse was airtight. There were dozens of the growing carnations; their death-giving fragrance was everywhere.

Cardona and the detectives were battering at the glass panes with their revolvers; Kreft was using his handcuffs for the same task. The glass was unbreakable; so were the metal frames that held it.

With two minutes gone, Brydan and Gordy gloated. The ether vapor was softening those victims. Soon, they would be succumbing to scientific murder.

Voices came over the loud-speaker during that last minute. Brydan and Gordy were holding a conversation of their own.

"Even The Shadow fell for it," laughed Brydan. "When he showed up at Angew's, he called me Kreft, because he saw the flower in my buttonhole. I was wearing it, just in case anybody spotted me. Another clue to the wrong man."

"You played it perfectly," agreed Gordy. "That was a good stunt of yours, having me ask people who came here if they knew Kreft. The Shadow, for instance, would have said yes, and given himself away. When Morry came here, he dodged the question, like he'd been told to do."

"You mean you thought Morry was The Shadow?"

"He might have been. He looked like a pretty smart guy. Maybe, though" Gordy chuckled "The Shadow isn't so smart, after all."

Brydan was staring at the glass panels, then at his watch. Frantic efforts were still going on within the greenhouse. Delmont and Pat were trying to help break the windows. The three minutes were past, but no one had begun to die!

Staring at the door to the storeroom, Brydan saw that it was ajar. He whipped it open, saw pipes detached from the vapor tanks. Not only were they unscrewed; they were plugged.

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"Who's been in here?" stormed Brydan.

"Only Koko," answered Gordy. "I showed him around the place, after Morry sent him here today."

"Get hold of him, and hurry!"

Gordy shouted for Koko. Cliff Marsland appeared from the house. Hearing Gordy address Cliff as Koko, Brydan saw that something was amiss. The master crook started his hand toward his hip; too late. Cliff had him covered.

Hearing Brydan's snarl, Gordy pulled a gun. Cliff had stepped forward; a sinister laugh from the depth of the hall held Gordy as he was. Into the space that Cliff had left stepped The Shadow!

THROBBING mockery reminded the two crooks of their recent words. Brydan realized that The Shadow had known he wasn't Kreft, that the flower in Brydan's buttonhole was a bluff, during that burglary at Angew's.

Gordy, in his turn, guessed that The Shadow's hat brim hid features that Gordy had supposed were Morry's.

Though murders had been accomplished, The Shadow had finally moved ahead of the game and held it under complete control; even to the point of having Delmont hold back valuable testimony, so that Brydan might be trapped on crime's own preserves.

The master crook hadn't needed to talk himself into a full confession of his guilt. The Shadow had known enough about Brydan to prove the rest.

What went for Brydan went for Gordy also. Thwarted of their massed victims who were still imprisoned in the greenery, yet safe there, two men of murder were boxed.

The Shadow's laugh had been heard through the loud-speaker. Its sinister tone made crooks cringe; but it produced the opposite effect upon the prisoners.

They crowded to the barred door; The Shadow saw their hopeful faces pressed against the glass. He was moving forward, when a shout came from behind him.

Instantly, The Shadow wheeled, blasting shots along the hall. Goo-goo Jaffer and a crew of mobbies surged through, as Cliff was trying to handle Brydan and Gordy together. He flattened Gordy, but Brydan reached The Shadow. The cloaked fighter was forced to turn, to ward off the frenzied murderer's attack.

Shots from outside told that The Shadow had friends at hand. Harry Vincent and other agents had followed him here, under orders; but sniping crooks were holding them off. Meanwhile, The Shadow and Cliff were in the midst of a swirling mob that outnumbered them four to one.

Hands were slashing with their guns. Muzzles were blasting, but the clash of warding weapons turned them aside. Bashed crooks were settling to the floor about the spot where The Shadow, his long arms flaying, gave proof that he could reduce big odds.

Brydan was away; from the door of the storeroom, he was watching, in vulturish fashion, for a chance to take The Shadow as his prey. He saw Goo-goo deliver a sideways gun slash that staggered Cliff. He heard the report of The Shadow's automatic, putting a bullet into Goo-goo's heart.

But Cliff had flattened, groggy, beneath the weight of Goo-goo's sprawl. Three thugs, taking advantage of

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The Shadow's turnabout, bowled upon the lone fighter en masse.

Brydan saw one gun jounce from The Shadow's hand, as the black-cloaked battler hit the floor beside the door to the greenhouse.

Crooks were grappling for the other gun. Cudgeling with it, The Shadow beat them off. Brydan lunged forward, looking for an opening through which he could aim. He didn't watch The Shadow's free hand. It had crept up beside the door.

Fighters pulled the bolt. As Brydan's finger tightened on the trigger, the door was hurled outward like a mammoth battering ram. The Shadow and a pair of clawing thugs were catapulted past Brydan as he fired. Only the big door, slapping in his direction, received the bullet intended for The Shadow.

Cardona and the two Westchester detectives had put all their combined weight behind that drive. They came through in a surge, shooting down the thugs who came up to hands and knees. The Shadow was lying flat upon the floor, as tramping men sprang over him.

AFTER that surge came Kreft; though unarmed, he slashed at Brydan with his handcuffs as the master crook turned to open flank fire at Cardona and the clicks. Those three were wheeling at Kreft's shout; but neither they nor Kreft could have stopped Brydan's lust for murder at that moment.

The thing that did stop him was a shot fired from floor level. The Shadow's gun still had a bullet, reserved for Hugo Brydan. The murderer took it in the shoulder; slumping sideward, he let his gun hand waver. Kreft's hands, raised high, slashed down to the killer's skull.

Cardona and the detectives were tonguing lead into Brydan's body, as Kreft's weighted wrists sideswiped the murderer's head. Brydan's free hand made a clawing grab at Kreft; held a momentary grip, then lost it.

His fist closed, as Brydan coiled to the floor. Men sprang forward to make sure that he was dead. There wasn't any doubt on that point. Brydan had taken enough bullets to kill a tribe. His muscles went flabby as he jarred the floor; the clenched hand opened.

A strange laugh whispered from The Shadow's lips. In Brydan's palm lay an appropriate token: a tiny golden carnation. In his clutch at Kreft, the real murderer had plucked that flower from the innocent man's lapel!

In life, Hugo Brydan had sought gold. In death, he had found it. Crime had come home, to be pinned upon its maker. The golden trail was ended, by The Shadow.

Outside battle was over. Harry and others, entering, helped Cliff through the hallway after The Shadow brought the groggy agent from among a heap of crooks. Following, The Shadow turned for a final check-up of the scene.

Like Hugo Brydan, certain crooks lay dead; among them were Gordy and Goo-goo. The rest were moaning, wounded. Cardona and the local detectives had relieved them of their guns. The Shadow watched Cardona turn over his supply of hardware to the county police. Then, stepping to Kreft, Joe unlocked the handcuffs.

Pat was in Phil's arms at last. Over his shoulder, she saw her grandfather smiling benign approval. Beside Austin Delmont was old Debbleman. From his nods, the gardener showed that he admired Kreft's choice of ladies quite as much as his taste in selecting flowers.

None noticed the throb of motors outside. But all heard the sound that followed. A strange, weird voice of the

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night, it rose in strident laughter. Mirthless in its shivery crescendo, the peal faded, trailing from the distance, to blend with the thrum of the departing cars.

That laugh was a tone of victory, that marked The Shadow's triumph over Golden Death!

THE END