

SPOILS OF THE SHADOW

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. THE MESSAGE

THE Southern States Limited was clicking northward across Virginia. Forty minutes out of Quantico, the fast train was nearing the end of its run. Passengers on the observation platform were moving into the car, in anticipation of the arrival at Washington.

One person alone remained upon the platform. Tall, quiet in bearing, this passenger was gazing reflectively back along the tracks that seemed to sweep from beneath the speeding limited. In the fading light of late afternoon, his countenance showed with the clearness of chiseled marble.

A strange gem glowed firelike upon the passenger's left hand as fingers plucked a cigarette from immobile lips. Keen eyes burned from either side of a hawklike nose as the strange personage let his gaze follow the swiftly moving scenery. Then the faint semblance of a smile showed upon the lips which had been inflexible.

From among the signboards that lined this section of the railroad, the lingering passenger had spied one that stood out even in the dwindling light. It was an advertisement that proclaimed the merits of a popular low-priced automobile: the Paragon Eight.

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Fingers flicked the cigarette from the platform. Turning, the tall passenger entered the lounge car. Although a dozen minutes still remained before the limited would reach the Washington terminal, other passengers had gone to their own cars to prepare for the arrival. This tall traveler did not follow their example. He chose a comfortable chair in the deserted car and picked up a magazine that lay upon a table.

RUNNING through the pages, the passenger stopped upon an advertisement that corresponded with the sign that he had viewed. It was one that boomed the Paragon Eight. Above a picture of an automobile, the tall passenger placed a long white forefinger upon this statement:

PARAGON

TO-MORROW'S AUTOMOBILE!

THE NEW PERFECTED SILENT

SHIFT HAS GAINED COMPLETE

ADMIRATION FROM SATISFIED

OWNERS THROUGHOUT THE LAND

The flicker of a smile again appeared upon the thin lips. This advertisement was part of a national campaign. Thousands of persons had read its legend. This one reader had alone discovered a peculiar significance to its wording.

Long fingers produced a pencil. The smile persisted while the passenger's hand drew heavy marks through the printed lines. The keen-eyed personage left only the first two letters on the top line; the first three on the next; the first two on each remaining line. The lettering that remained gave forth this terse announcement:

TO

THE

SH

AD

OW

To The Shadow! A remarkable discovery, this announcement. It told a story of its own. Some ingenious man had been desirous of communicating with the master of the unknown, that strange, unaccountable being called The Shadow. Through this advertisement, spread throughout the United States, he had issued his request, confident that it would reach the eyes of the one he wanted to see it.

The object had been gained. The tall, hawkish traveler ten minutes from his journey's end was none other than The Shadow. Alone in the spacious lounge car of the Southern States Limited he was studying this announcement that had been printed for his perusal.

Beneath the picture of the automobile appeared another statement. The Shadow's keen eyes scanned the lower wording, which read:

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Call any dealer. Ask to see the new

Paragon Eight. At your home, your

hotel, or your office. Learn the

room it allows for comfort. The price,

850 dollars, f. o. b., will amaze you.

Again the pencil was busy. This time it crossed out all but the first word in each line. The result was a vertical arrangement of words that delivered a terse message:

Call

Paragon

Hotel

room

850

"To The Shadow. Call Paragon Hotel, room 850" such was the total of the concealed message. The Shadow had discovered it; the smile upon the thin lips beneath the aquiline nose showed that he had already intended to answer the request.

The train was crossing the Potomac. Thrusting the magazine in his pocket, The Shadow arose from his chair and moved toward the front of the car. In the light, his face showed as a masklike countenance. A calm, well-molded visage, it obscured the real features that lay beneath. The Shadow, when he traveled, chose a countenance other than his own.

Six minutes after The Shadow's departure from the lounge car, the Southern States Limited completed its curving journey through the tunnels under Washington and stopped at a lower platform. The calm-faced stranger stepped from a Pullman. A red-cap seized his bags and led the way up the steps to the huge concourse of the mammoth Union Depot. Arriving at the taxi entrance, The Shadow stepped into a cab and ordered the driver to take him to the Colonnade Hotel.

Ten minutes later, the tall arrival was in the lobby of the hotel. Speaking quietly to the clerk on duty, he was announcing himself as Lamont Cranston and asking for the room reserved in his name.

"Six forty-two, Mr. Cranston," informed the clerk. "Front, boy! Here is some mail, Mr. Cranston. It arrived for you yesterday and to-day. We have been holding it, sir."

ALONE in his room, Lamont Cranston seated himself at a writing desk beside the window. The only light was that of a small table lamp. Within this circle of illumination, Cranston opened a long envelope. This letter, addressed to him, bore the return address of Rutledge Mann, an investment broker in the Badger Building, New York City.

Rutledge Mann was a secret agent of The Shadow. Those hands beneath the light were the hands of The Shadow. Long, white fingers removed papers from the envelope. Written sheets, phrased in simple code,

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came beneath The Shadow's view. These were reports from agents in New York, forwarded through Rutledge Mann.

Bluish writing faded as The Shadow completed his perusal. These messages had been inscribed in disappearing ink. No trace of writing remained as The Shadow let the sheets slide into a wastebasket beside the table. A soft laugh came from lips in the darkness as The Shadow arose from his chair. Hands raised a telephone from the table. In the quiet tones of Lamont Cranston, The Shadow called long distance and gave a New York number that of the Paragon Hotel, in Manhattan.

Off in the distance beyond the window, the mighty shaft of the Washington Monument gleamed white amid the searchlights that bathed the huge obelisk. But The Shadow's eyes, though they gazed in that direction, were picturing a different scene. They were visualizing a hotel room in New York Room 850 at the Paragon. That was the number which The Shadow gave over the wire, as he heard the voice of the switchboard operator, speaking from the New York hotel.

A brief pause. The receiver clicked. Some one was on the line. A suave voice greeted The Shadow's ears. Still feigning an even-toned manner of expression, The Shadow spoke in response.

"I received your message," he announced. "I presume that you wish to meet me... Yes... To-night... I can be there... Yes, I am calling by long distance. From Washington... Yes... Yes... I understand... Your terms are acceptable... Yes, a friendly meeting... I shall arrive some time before midnight..."

The receiver clicked. The telephone was replaced upon the table. A hand pulled the cord of the little lamp. A form moved softly through the room and pressed the light switch by the door. In the full illumination which came to the room, the tall form of Lamont Cranston was revealed.

Opening a large grip, the occupant of the room removed a flat briefcase. He followed by bringing out a folded garment of black a cloak which showed a crimson lining. Then came the flattened shape of a slouch hat. After that, a pair of businesslike automatics. Last of all, a black pouch that glistened like oilskin.

These objects went into the briefcase. Closing the grip, Cranston strolled to the telephone. In his quiet tones, he called the desk.

"I am checking out," he informed. "Charge me for a single night... Yes, this is Mr. Cranston speaking. Send a porter for my luggage... The room will be open..."

The call completed, The Shadow held the hook depressed. Then he called a number; when a response occurred, he spoke again, still in the quiet tones of Cranston.

"Airport?" he questioned. "This is Lamont Cranston speaking... Yes, I am back in Washington... Yes, I am ready to use the plane I left here... All ready? Good. I shall be there within a half hour..."

The porter had not arrived when The Shadow's call was finished. Picking up his briefcase, the tall stranger walked from the room in the leisurely fashion that was characteristic of Lamont Cranston. Reaching the lobby, he approached the desk and passed a railroad ticket to the clerk.

"Send my luggage to the Union Depot," he ordered. "Check it through to the Pennsylvania Station in New York. Mail the stubs to my New Jersey address."

"Very well, Mr. Cranston."

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After laying his bill at the cashier's cage, the departing guest strolled from the lobby. Briefcase in hand, he entered a taxi outside the hotel. He gave a quiet order to the driver. The taximan nodded and started the cab.

Headed toward a bridge across the Potomac, the taxi started on a swift journey to the airport the destination given. Street lamps showed a faint smile upon the lips of the passenger who held the briefcase. Then, like an echoed whisper, a soft tone of subdued mockery came from the unmoving mouth.

The laugh of The Shadow! Audible only to the personage who uttered it, the repressed tone carried a presaging note. It was a prediction of strange events that lay ahead; a weird token of coming adventure.

A message to The Shadow! It had been received before to-night. The Shadow had discovered it a few days back; and he had acted in preparation. Absent from New York the logical city for the appointment The Shadow had ordered trusted agents to do preliminary work. The word from Rutledge Mann had told him that their investigations were completed. Acquainted with certain important facts, The Shadow had communicated directly with Room 850 at the Paragon Hotel, New York.

HALF an hour after Lamont Cranston's departure from the Washington hotel, a broad-winged monoplane took off from the airport across the Potomac.

Rising high above the glow of the nation's capital, it zoomed northward along the airway to New York.

The Shadow, mysterious master of the night, was heading toward Manhattan. He was on his way to perform an unprecedented task. From the darkness that enshrouded him, The Shadow would soon emerge to meet the bold man who had summoned him to conference in New York.

Whether he was to meet friend or foe, The Shadow was prepared to answer the challenge of this unaccountable meeting. Before midnight, he would know the reason for the strange request that had been issued to him.

CHAPTER II. THE SHADOW'S FORAY

THE Paragon Hotel was a decrepit structure that rose gloomily from a side street in Manhattan. Decadent for several years, it had become a place of poor repute. Its rooms were sparsely occupied; little account was kept of the guests. Although the neighborhood was fairly respectable, the Paragon was a hotel that no longer catered to the elect.

Two hours after The Shadow had begun his air trip from Washington, a young man appeared in the dismal lobby of the Paragon Hotel. He entered the elevator in inconspicuous fashion and rode up to the eighth floor. Leaving the elevator, he moved to a gloomy corridor, cast a wary look and headed for a room halfway along the hall. The door, which bore the number 847, was unlocked. The young man entered a darkened room and closed the door behind him.

"Harry?" came a whispered question.

"Right," was the young man's response. "What's new, Cliff?"

"Both in the room," answered the first speaker. "The tough looking fellow is Pug Halfin, all right; but I don't know the smooth chap that's with him."

"All right, Cliff. Slide out. I'll keep watch."

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The man who had been in the room made for the door. His square-shouldered form showed as he opened the barrier. Then the door closed and the later arrival remained alone. The watch had been changed.

These two men were agents of The Shadow. Harry Vincent, an experienced operative, had just replaced Cliff Marsland. Harry had been longer in The Shadow's service than had Cliff; the latter, however, had the advantage of being in close contact with the affairs of the underworld.

HARRY VINCENT, posted here to watch Room 850, had been the first to spy the occupants across the hall one, a hard-faced fellow who had taken Room 850 under the name of Bates; the other, a suave individual who was not registered. It was Cliff Marsland, however, who had peered through the transom to identify "Bates" as "Pug" Halfin, a one-time mobleader well known in the badlands of New York.

These facts had been submitted in reports to Rutledge Mann. While awaiting The Shadow's orders, Cliff and Harry had continued their relayed vigil. Both had worked from under cover; neither had been observed by either Pug Halfin or his unknown companion.

Seating himself in the corner of the darkened room, Harry put in a telephone call. This was to Burbank, The Shadow's contact man. Harry was terse and non-committal in his statements. He was merely reporting that he was on duty; and doing it in a fashion that indicated nothing more than a call to a friend. It was Cliff, now outside the hotel, who would give Burbank a more detailed report.

The situation, however, presented nothing new. Harry and Cliff had been on watch for three nights; since Cliff's early identification of Pug Halfin, nothing new had developed.

While Harry Vincent was engaged in his call to Burbank, a peculiar phenomenon took place. Without Harry noticing it, the door of the room opened inward. No light came from the corridor, for a blackened shape filled the opened portion of the doorway. It was not until he arose from his chair that Harry Vincent realized he was not alone. The token of another presence came in a whispered tone.

The Shadow!

Harry was startled by the unexpected arrival of his chief. He could see no one in the darkness. That, however, was not unusual. Enshrouded by gloom, The Shadow had a marked ability for rendering himself invisible.

"Remain on duty," came the whispered order. "Timed report. Zero."

Nodding in the darkness, Harry drew a watch from his pocket. He pressed the stem and held it in readiness, awaiting the next word.

"Set," came The Shadow's whisper.

A slight click from Harry's hand was answered by a similar sound from the spot where The Shadow stood. Two stop-watches, set at the same beginning, were ticking off identical seconds.

Something swished softly in the darkness. Harry saw the door move inward. He noted blocking blackness; then the door was closed. The Shadow had started forth. Harry drew a chair to the door and stood upon it, keeping watch through the transom. There was no sign of The Shadow. Already, the master sleuth had passed along the corridor, beyond the door of Room 850.

THE corridor terminated in an exit to a fire escape. This was the course that The Shadow had taken. Room 850 was the last door on the left. Room 852 was one door inward; and it was catercornered to 847, from

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which Harry Vincent was spying.

The Shadow had passed both doors. A shrouded figure in the darkness of the fire exit, he was looking along the brick wall to the left. His keen eyes spied what he required a cornice jutting from the bricks.

Such projections existed on each floor level. The space provided was no more than a few inches; to The Shadow, that was satisfactory.

A splotch of blackness moved from the dull illumination of the fire exit. A few moments later, a shady figure had pressed itself against the wall of the building.

Beetlelike, The Shadow was moving along the cornice. A journey of a dozen feet brought him to the window of Room 850. A heavy shade was drawn within the window; no light glimmered from its edges. The Shadow paused; then kept onward to the very corner of this wing of the hotel.

Like a clinging bat, the phantom investigator made the turn. He reached a second window of Room 850. Like the first, it showed a drawn shade. This time, a slight glimmer gave a clue. The Shadow proceeded along the cornice until he reached another window.

Here, The Shadow's form huddled downward. Fingers clutched cracks between bricks as firm feet remained upon the cornice. The Shadow had reached an open window to a lighted room. His eyes, coming upward to the sill, observed two men within; they also saw a partly-opened door that obviously led to 850.

This was Room 852; it was the inner room of a suite for it connected with 850. It also had a door to the corridor. The Shadow observed these facts in the gloomy light of a single floor lamp. He also studied the faces of the two men who were in the room; and his keen ears caught their low conversation.

One man, stocky of build, sullen of expression, was standing near the door that led to 850. His face was a hardened one. The Shadow knew him for the mobleader, Pug Halfin. The other was a man of suave and shrewd appearance. He was seated, smoking a cigarette, and his lips wore a wise, satisfied smile.

"Getting nervous, Pug?" this man was questioning, in a smooth, purring tone.

"Yeah," growled Pug. "This is tricky business, Tyrell. I don't like it."

"No?" There was sarcasm in Tyrell's suave tone. "Why should you be worried, Pug? The real game is mine; and I am unconcerned."

"Maybe you don't know much about The Shadow."

"On the contrary, I do. The fact that he communicated with me is sufficient proof."

"Don't it give you the jitters? Knowin' that he's comin' here to talk to you –"

"Why should it?"

"He's death on crooks –"

"Do not include me in that category. My business with The Shadow concerns the future, not the past."

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THERE was a pause. Tyrell continued to smile calmly while he smoked the cigarette. Pug's face still wore its troubled look. At last, Tyrell arose from his chair. Turning toward the window, he flicked his cigarette out into darkness. The glowing object shot above The Shadow's head. The peering intruder had crouched out of sight as Tyrell had turned in his direction.

"At six thirty" Tyrell was talking suavely to Pug "The Shadow called here from Washington. He stated that he would arrive before midnight. He could do so by taking the limited that left at six forty-five. That would bring him here almost at the hour of twelve.

"However, if he chose to come by scheduled plane, he could arrive shortly after ten o'clock. It is nearly half-past nine. That, Pug, will allow me to take a short trip to the lobby."

"Leavin' me here alone?"

"Of course. I shall return before The Shadow gets here. Since you seem to be annoyed by the interval that yet remains, I think it would be best for you to make yourself comfortable before I depart. Come, Pug."

Peering through the window, The Shadow saw the two men move through the door into Room 850. Tyrell left the barrier partly open. A slight click sounded outside the window. Brief minutes passed. Neither Tyrell nor Pug returned. The Shadow began his return trip along the cornice.

It was a slow, precarious journey. More minutes passed before The Shadow reached his goal, the fire exit.

From the darkness of the fire escape he peered into the gloomy corridor. It was empty. In ghostlike fashion, The Shadow moved from the fire exit and glided swiftly to the door of Harry Vincent's room. He entered in noiseless fashion.

Harry had removed the chair from within the door. Standing a short space away, he sensed The Shadow's return. He heard the whispered order:

"Report."

"Pug's companion left," returned Harry, in a low tone. "Went toward the elevator."

"Time."

"Registered."

"Leave. Report from outside."

Harry Vincent strolled from the room. The Shadow moved toward the table. A tiny flashlight glimmered in his gloved hand. It showed Harry's stop watch lying on the table. The Shadow placed his own timepiece beside it.

Both watches had been set at zero. Yet The Shadow's had stopped three minutes before Harry's. The significance was apparent. From the time that he had moved from 852 into 850, Tyrell had lingered for three minutes before beginning his trip to the lobby. Harry had timed the man's exit.

The flashlight glimmered toward a closet. Opening the door, The Shadow threw rays toward a high shelf. He drew forth a large, flat suitcase. He carried it to the bed and opened it. A soft laugh crept from The Shadow's lips as his eyes spied various articles within. This special bag had been brought here by Harry Vincent. It was

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to prove useful to The Shadow.

THE flashlight glimmered upon a polished mirror set in the top of the bag. Setting the little light so that it projected from the open cover of the bag, The Shadow pushed back the brim of his slouch hat and dropped away the folds of his cloak collar to reveal the masklike visage of Lamont Cranston. Gloves came from white hands; long, tapering fingers began to press against the face above.

A buzz from near the table in the corner. It was the telephone. Harry and Cliff had kept the bell well muffled. The Shadow answered. He spoke in a quiet voice. A reply came over the wire.

"I saw my friend." The announcement was in Harry Vincent's voice. "I found him where I expected. He seemed to be in no hurry to leave."

"Never mind then," replied The Shadow, in an easy tone. "I won't have to see you to-night."

The receiver clicked, following the statement that meant Harry was off duty. The Shadow turned back toward the suitcase on the bed. A soft whisper came from his lips. Its repressed tones were a mockery.

While Tyrell remained in the lobby, The Shadow was making ready for the appointment that was to come. His own plane had brought him to New York much sooner than Tyrell had anticipated. The Shadow had viewed and studied the man he was to meet.

Whatever Tyrell's schemes might be, whatever his purpose in requesting an interview with The Shadow, one fact was sure. The suave individual who had issued his cunning summons would be due for a surprise before this evening ended.

CHAPTER III. FACE TO FACE

LESS than ten minutes after Harry Vincent had made his final report to The Shadow, a hand turned the knob of the door to Room 850. The gloom of the corridor gave a fleeting trace of the features of the man called Tyrell. Entering the room, the arrival closed the door behind him.

"Pug!"

Tyrell's voice was a whisper. It brought a growl from a corner of the room. Barely discernible in the slight light that came from the connecting door to 852, Pug Halfin rose from behind a heavy chair.

"Yeah?" questioned the mobleader.

"He'll be here soon," purred Tyrell. "I called up the airport. The Washington plane is in."

"But if he ain't on it –"

"Don't worry. The Shadow wouldn't lose much time getting here."

"Well, I'm all set."

"Good. The only question now is your nerve."

"Say" Pug paused indignantly "it's waitin' that gets my goat that's all. It'll give me the creeps, havin' to let

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The Shadow go by, when I could bag him. But when he comes back this way well, this rod's done its work before."

As he spoke, Pug raised a revolver, which glimmered slightly in the scant light. Tyrell's form moved forward. A low exclamation came from his lips.

"Let's see that gun!"

Pug handed over the revolver. He saw Tyrell hold it to the light. Then came an expression of contempt.

"A .38!" Tyrell's tone had sarcasm. "Where are your brains, Pug? Is this the largest rod you handle?"

"It ain't no bean-shooter," retorted Pug, "Say that gat's done plenty. I'll finish any guy with it –"

"But not The Shadow," came Tyrell's suave interruption. "The less shots, the better. I'll take this gun. You use my .45."

Pocketing Pug's revolver, the speaker produced a larger weapon. He handed a glimmering gun to the mobleader. He uttered a warning as Pug gripped the weapon.

"Easy with that cannon," he warned. "It has no safety catch; and that's a hair-trigger. There won't be any argument when you use that gun."

"All right." Pug kept finger from trigger as he gripped the .45. "Say I guess you're right, Tyrell. This smoke wagon makes my old rod look like a cap-pistol."

"Ease back," ordered Tyrell, motioning Pug down behind the chair. "I'm taking a stroll out in the corridor. When I come back again, I'll be ready for business."

Pug remained silent after the other had gone. Minutes passed; at last, the door of 850 opened. From his hiding place, Pug saw that Tyrell had returned. The suave man closed the door behind him and walked across the room to the door to the adjoining chamber.

"All set, Pug?" he whispered.

"Right," came the mobleader's final growl.

TYRELL entered the other room. Silence persisted in Room 850. There was silence also in the outer corridor, but not for long. The door of 847 opened. A swish occurred as The Shadow emerged from the darkness of the room.

Watching, The Shadow had marked Tyrell's return. He was ready for the appointment. Crossing the corridor, he opened the door of 850 and glided into the darkened room, closing the door behind him.

Keenly, The Shadow spied the light from the connecting door. He moved in that direction. His manner was stealthy. Pug Halfin, waiting in the gloom, did not sense The Shadow's presence until the black-garbed visitant had actually arrived at the connecting door. Then, only, did Pug glimpse what appeared to be a solid silhouette against the wall. A moment later, The Shadow had passed into Room 852.

The man whom Pug had addressed as Tyrell was standing by the window. He was staring out into the darkness, a cigarette pursed between his suave, smiling lips. Tyrell did not hear the slight swish of The

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Shadow's cloak. What he did hear was a sound that The Shadow purposely made. As he stood, a spectral shape in the mild light of the room, The Shadow pressed a hand against the connecting door and gave the barrier a push. The door closed with a slight slam.

Tyrell whirled. His eyes, narrowing, stared intently at the black-garbed figure. His fingers, drawing cigarette from lips, were frozen. Tyrell had evidently steeled himself to meet The Shadow; yet the sudden, almost supernatural arrival of the cloaked visitant had taken him unaware.

ALL that Tyrell could discern was a figure that stood as rigid as an ebony statue. Burning eyes, shining like coals of fire, surveyed the startled man from beneath the brim of the slouch hat. Those eyes were steady and unblinking. Tyrell's own shrewd gaze had difficulty in meeting their sparkle. The man by the window managed to curb his sudden dread with a nervous laugh.

"You are here, eh?" questioned Tyrell, his tone mechanical. "I thought you would arrive early."

"You spoke to me of crime." The Shadow's statement came in a sinister whisper. Tyrell quailed at the utterance from hidden lips. "You said that lawless plans would be altered should I come to see you here."

"Yes." Tyrell steadied to acknowledge the statement. "That is why I had published the advertisement which I hoped would bring you here."

"I told you over the telephone" Tyrell's own voice began to calm the man – "that my word can be relied upon. My name I did not give it to you then is Mark Tyrell. My standing, as a business promoter and a man of social prominence, classes me as one who will keep his word."

Tyrell paused. Though his gaze had steadied, his eyes were troubled as they faced The Shadow's blazing orbs. Silence followed Tyrell's statement. Hearing no word from The Shadow, the man proceeded.

"I mentioned," resumed Tyrell, "that you would not be molested when you came here. I added that I would offer you safe passage from this place. I have abided by my first promise. I shall keep the second. Let us talk as friends."

A pause. Then came a soft, whispered laugh. The sound brought an instinctive shudder to Tyrell's spine. The shrewd faced man had heard of The Shadow's laugh. He was listening to the mockery itself. The tone seemed to carry a hidden, spectral menace.

"You may speak," came The Shadow's sardonic order, in a strange tone that followed whispered echoes. "Your own words will mark you as friend or foe."

"One moment." Tyrell showed sudden boldness. "I have given my word. I must have yours: that you will leave here without harming me, should my statements not prove to your liking."

"Conditions," came The Shadow's response, in a sneering taunt, "are never offered by The Shadow. Since you have imposed them yourself, I shall grant you the return. I shall leave this hotel after I have heard your statements. You will be free to go your way, for the present."

Tyrell managed to smile. His expression, however, was a forced one. It showed confidence, mixed with apprehension. The burning eyes of The Shadow seemed to read the confusion that existed in Tyrell's brain.

"Speak," came The Shadow's final order.

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"I shall speak," agreed Tyrell. "That is why I requested you to come here. That is why I sent a message to The Shadow. But first I must be sure –"

Tyrell paused. He viewed the steady eyes beneath the hat brim. He tried to discern the face to which the eyes belonged. He failed.

"I MUST be sure," he repeated, "that I am actually talking to The Shadow. I have heard of you as a person who appears cloaked in black. But I must have further proof of your identity. I do not ask to know your name" suavely, Tyrell put the statement in an apologetic tone "even though I have told you mine. But I feel that I am entitled to see the face of the person to whom I speak."

"You have admitted my identity," came The Shadow's response. "Proceed with your statements, now that I have agreed to your request for temporary safety."

"I am not positive that you are The Shadow," rejoined Tyrell, shrewdly. "I believe that you are The Shadow; still, it is possible that you are some masquerader who has chanced to learn of my message.

"The Shadow, so I have heard, has agents. You might be one of his men. But should I see your face, I believe that I would be convinced. That is why I put this final request before I speak. If you will lay aside your cloak and hat –"

Tyrell paused. Despite his effort to conceal his feelings, he betrayed a smile upon his crafty features. Tyrell was not lacking in courage; he had managed to force himself to the belief that he was meeting The Shadow upon an equal plane. All that he had needed was the final touch.

Should The Shadow unmask, that would give him the advantage. Hence the reason for the smile; for as Mark Tyrell watched, he saw The Shadow's form stoop forward. The folds of the black cloak dropped away, revealing a figure in street attire. The hands, removing their gloves, reached upward to lay aside the slouch hat.

Tyrell awaited his first triumph as he peered forward, waiting for The Shadow's head to rise. He was anxious to see this visage that had been hidden. He wanted to meet The Shadow face to face, as a man, not as a being of weird appearance. The head came upward.

Mark Tyrell stood astounded. Face to face with The Shadow, his rising triumph faded. If he had really wanted proof of The Shadow's identity, Tyrell could have had none more fitting. For the face that Tyrell saw before him was a tribute to The Shadow's mastery of disguise. It was a countenance that proved The Shadow's craft. It was the one face that Mark Tyrell had never expected to see.

To the last detail; eyebrows, lips, short-clipped mustache, even color of complexion, The Shadow had molded his plastic countenance into an exact duplicate of Mark Tyrell's own. Such had been The Shadow's actions in the room across the hall. Possessed of a photographic memory, this strange visitor had made himself up to appear as the double of the man whom he had seen through the window.

Mark Tyrell might well have been staring at his own reflection in a mirror. As his lips opened in amazement; as his eyes blinked in surprise, the face before him copied the expressions to exactitude. This was The Shadow; but his disguise left Tyrell breathless.

Instead of observing a revealed countenance that he could check for future recollection, Mark Tyrell was balked. The Shadow had granted his requests. There was no course other than to talk. But in the coming interview, Mark Tyrell would be at a hopeless loss. For all the while he spoke to The Shadow, the schemer

would be face to face with himself!

CHAPTER IV. THE INTERVIEW

"WILL you sit down?"

The question came in Mark Tyrell's voice; but it was not uttered by the man himself. The Shadow, finished with his mimicry of expression, was acting the part of host while Tyrell stood stupefied. It was The Shadow who spoke.

His voice an exact copy of Tyrell's own. The Shadow was choosing a chair for himself while he pointed Tyrell to another seat. Mechanically, Tyrell moved toward the spot designated. He dropped into the chair, let his stroked cigarette fall into the ash stand beside him, and stared, still gaping, at his visitor.

The Shadow drew a cigarette case from his pocket. He removed a cigarette, lighted it and puffed in a manner that was an exact copy of Tyrell's way of smoking. It was plain that through the coming interview, Tyrell would be forced to watch a display of his own actions.

"You're clever!" blurted Tyrell suddenly. "Deucedly clever! Any one seeing the two of us could not tell which was which."

"Perhaps not." The Shadow, in replying, chose his words in a precise fashion that Tyrell had used. "In fact, Tyrell, it might be wise to consider ourselves as a single individual in this coming discussion. Crime is in your mind. Your actions show it. Possibly if you visualize me as yourself, I may serve you as a conscience."

The irony of The Shadow's speech brought a snarl from Mark Tyrell. The man had lost his suavity. Strangely, The Shadow was playing Tyrell's usual part better than the man did it himself. The final effect was exactly what The Shadow desired. Tyrell threw cunning to the wind and broke loose with angry words.

"So you figured out that I'm going in for crime?" he challenged. "Well, I am! That's why I wanted to see you first. But if you think you're going to talk me out of it, you're wrong. What I'm going to do is talk you into it!"

"Interesting," responded The Shadow, in mockery of Tyrell's former suavity. "Interesting, but quite unconvincing."

TYRELL scowled. He was about to blurt forth a new tirade when he caught himself. Nervously, he chewed his lips while he drew a cigarette from his pocket. Despite the steadiness of The Shadow's eyes, glowing from the duplicate of Tyrell's own countenance, the schemer managed to regain something of his former smoothness.

"Very clever," he remarked, with a forced laugh. "You threw me out a bit, with that trick make-up of yours. I know you for The Shadow right enough. No one but The Shadow could work a stunt as neat as this one."

"Remember," came The Shadow's feigned tone, "you are talking to yourself."

"I'm talking to The Shadow," declared Tyrell, swallowing his anger at the sarcasm. "To you The Shadow. I'm telling you my game; and I'm giving you a fair proposition."

"Proceed."

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"I'm not a crook," insisted Tyrell. "I'm a promoter. Maybe the two are something alike. In fact they are. Because I'm a promoter that's going in for crime. I've done none yet; but my plans are made.

"If I had already committed crime" Tyrell paused with his shrewdness regained "I would not have dared to communicate with you, The Shadow. I know that you are death on crooks. My plans concern the future; not the past.

"There are certain persons here in New York who own treasures of immense value. I do not refer to large collectors, who have immense galleries of paintings, or vast stores of precious gems. I mean individuals whose collections each boast one particular object of particular worth. Such men do not have the protection that they should. Therefore, their treasures are open to theft."

Tyrell waited. Seeing that his double did not care to make a comment, he proceeded.

"I have planned five robberies," resumed Tyrell. "In each case I intend, with proper aid, to purloin a single object of high value. I know how the stolen treasures can be sold. I expect to aggregate close to a million dollars through these thefts."

"Interesting," observed The Shadow, when Tyrell again paused. "You plan crime. Yet you inform me of its approach. Quite considerate of you, old chap."

"Considerate?" Tyrell smiled. "Yes, it is; particularly because of the offer that I am here to make. My game is set. If you keep hands off, I shall make you a present of one hundred thousand dollars."

"In advance?"

"In advance. Give me your word that you will avoid all interference and the money will be yours before I begin."

"And if I choose to ignore your terms?"

"The crimes will proceed. If you try to thwart them, your actions may prove an obstacle to me; but I assure you that my ways will be too crafty for you to defeat."

Quietly, The Shadow arose from his chair. He let his cigarette fall in exact imitation of Tyrell's previous gesture. The smile that formed upon his lips was as crafty as Tyrell's own.

"We met as friends, Tyrell," remarked The Shadow, still imitating the other's suavity. "We can part as friends. When crime commences, we will be enemies."

"One moment!" Tyrell was on his feet as The Shadow reached for hat and cloak. "I gave you friendly terms. Since you have refused them, I offer a fair warning that you may remember when we have become enemies."

THE SHADOW'S eyes burned toward the suave speaker. Tyrell, his ardor aroused, met the gaze and spoke further.

"I have planned these robberies cleverly," he stated. "They will not involve injury or death, provided that I am unmolested. But let me assure you of this; on the occasion of each crime, I shall have strength sufficient to kill."

"Perhaps you do not fear my threat."

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"On the contrary, I do not fear your power. But I warn you: innocent persons will be involved on every occasion. Should you appear to make a single move against me; should I learn that you have given information to the police, I shall give orders to kill.

"We may meet in combat, you and I. The outcome is a matter that concerns us alone. But the combat, itself, will be the death warrant for people who are present. I have heard it said that you protect the weak. This is your chance to preserve the lives of the innocent. Do not act to thwart my schemes!"

"Your terms then," observed The Shadow, still in the role that he had taken, "apply whether or not I choose to accept the money that you have offered."

"Exactly," agreed Tyrell. "In fact, my offer of one hundred thousand dollars will remain open until operations actually begin. That will not be for nearly a month. If you choose to reverse your present decision, simply place a want-ad in the New York Classic. State that you desire an executive position and use the name of Barnes. I shall communicate with you.

"But if your aversion toward me still exists; if you prefer to continue your policy of thwarting crime, be wise enough to abide by my rules. Make no attempt to injure me or to disclose my schemes to any one. Should you act in such fashion, death to innocent parties will be the result.

"My schemes are clever enough to deceive the law. I shall not be forced to use violence if the police alone are pitted against me. Nevertheless, I shall have capable henchmen; and my plans are so well made that they will continue even if I should die. Any attack on your part will be the signal for slaughter. That condition exists from this moment until the completion of my fifth crime."

The Shadow made no response. While Tyrell talked, his double was undergoing a change. The Shadow, picking up his discarded garments, donned cloak, hat and gloves. Once more he was the spectral shape that Tyrell had first seen.

"We are enemies," reminded Tyrell, as he faced the weird figure before him. "We shall remain so, unless you notify me that my offer is acceptable. However" the man paused to smile suavely "I shall not forget the terms of this meeting. That door" he pointed across the room "leads to the corridor. It is your path to safety. Take it."

Burning eyes were focused upon the smooth promoter. The Shadow's whisper came in sinister response.

"That door," sneered the black-garbed figure, "was not the one by which I entered."

"Of course not," returned Tyrell, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I arranged for your arrival by the door of Room 850. That was because I happened to place advertising copy with the Paragon automobile, which is priced at eight hundred and fifty dollars.

"I might have placed similar copy with the Zenith Company, which sells a car at six seventy-five. Had I done so, our interview would have been set for Room 675 in the old Zenith Hotel. However, 850 at the Paragon proved suitable. It was the logical room for you to enter.

"We are now in Room 852. The simplest exit is from here into the corridor. It is the one I offer you. You gained a safe entry: I offer you a safe departure. There is the way."

Again, Tyrell pointed to the door that led into the corridor. His gesture indicated insistence that The Shadow should leave by this particular exit. Instead, the black-clad visitant turned toward the door that led into 850.

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"I prefer," whispered The Shadow, in a sneering tone, "to leave by the same route which I used in entering."

"Against my advice," warned Tyrell, with an angry scowl.

"Against your advice," repeated The Shadow, in a sardonic tone.

Leaving Tyrell staring in indignation, The Shadow turned and glided toward the connecting door. He opened the barrier. He slid into the darkened room, closing the door partway behind him. His figure merged with darkness.

INSTANTLY, Mark Tyrell's expression changed. His feigned anger was gone. A gloating look appeared upon his face. He was sure that he had tricked The Shadow.

Tyrell had offered safe conduct through the door of 852. He had made no promises should The Shadow depart by 850. Tyrell was priding himself on his subtle cleverness as he listened for a sound from the adjoining room.

What Tyrell expected was the boom of a revolver. Instead, he heard a click. Then another; a third; a rapid succession of clicks and a fuming oath. Finally a weird laugh that trailed as Tyrell sprang to the connecting door. He was just in time to hear the final echoes of the laugh as the outer door of 850 closed on The Shadow's departure.

Tyrell clicked on a light. Before him, rising from in back of the chair in the corner, was Pug Halfin. The mobleader's face looked vicious. His hand clutched the big .45 that he had kept in readiness. Pug looked half stupefied.

"You fool!" snarled Tyrell. "Why didn't you get him? I told you to be ready if he came through here –"

"It wasn't my fault," growled Pug. "This smoke wagon was empty!"

"You told me your gun was loaded!"

"It was. If you'd let me keep my own rod, instead of handin' me this dead gat –"

"Wait a minute! You say I gave you that gun?"

"Sure you did. Say, Tyrell, have you gone goofy? You came in here twice. The first time –"

"Let's see it." Tyrell took the big revolver from Pug's hand. He cracked it open and looked at the empty chambers. "Hm–m–m. A .45 –"

"That's what you said," interposed Pug. "Told me my .38 wouldn't do –"

"And if you had discovered it empty," mused Tyrell, "you couldn't have loaded it, because your own ammunition would be too small. Say he is clever –"

"Who's clever?"

"The Shadow." Tyrell faced the mobleader squarely. "Listen, Pug; I saw The Shadow face to face when I talked with him in the other room. Do you know who he looked like?"

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"Who?"

"Myself. He was made up so perfectly that I might have been studying my own reflection."

"Then you mean –"

"I mean that it was The Shadow who came in here and talked you out of your loaded gun. He was disguised to look like me. He gave you a weapon that you could not use. He knew that you were here to kill him."

"Then he could've got me!"

"Yes. But he preferred not. He learned too much from me. He knows that if he attacks me or any of my pals, innocent people will die. I kidded him into coming back through this room. No wonder he fell for the game."

"Listen, Pug. No word of this to any one. We don't want the crew that's working for us to think that The Shadow can outsmart us. You and I are the only two who will know that The Shadow pulled this trick."

"I get you."

Mark Tyrell was holding the empty .45 up to the light. He wondered if The Shadow had adopted the unnecessary precaution of plugging the barrel. If not, this revolver could be given to some mobster.

Something showed in the barrel. Tyrell pulled a pencil from his pocket. He pushed a twisted sheet of paper out through the mouth of the gun. He opened the message. In neatly traced characters, he read this statement:

TYRELL:

We meet as friends. We separate as enemies. All crime that you contemplate will be nullified.

THE SHADOW.

Tyrell crumpled the paper and thrust it in his pocket. He shook his head as he heard Pug question him about the contents of the message.

"Nothing of importance," declared Tyrell. "Merely The Shadow's compliments. He's smart, The Shadow, but we'll lick him. Remember, Pug; keep mum about this."

"You bet," replied the mobleader.

Mark Tyrell's face showed savage in the light as the suave promoter returned to Room 852. The message from the gun barrel told him that The Shadow had known his name as well as his features prior to the interview. It also proved that The Shadow had divined why Tyrell had requested his presence here. The black-cloaked visitant had foreseen the outcome of the interview.

Mark Tyrell scowled; but his ferocity showed determination. A vicious laugh snorted from his twisting lips. The Shadow had come and gone; in every point, he had been victor. His subtlety had beaten Tyrell's. The Shadow had shown his mastery.

Nevertheless, Tyrell's ultimatum still stood. The schemer was confident that The Shadow could not balk his well-laid plans. In spite of The Shadow's warning, Mark Tyrell was determined to launch his contemplated crimes.

CHAPTER V. THE SCHEMER PREPARES

WEEKS had passed since Mark Tyrell's meeting with The Shadow. During that interval, the schemer had seen no further sign of his mysterious antagonist. No advertisement had appeared in the New York Classic. While Tyrell waited for his schemes to ripen, The Shadow, apparently, was waiting also.

Pug Halfin, alias Bates, had checked out of the Paragon Hotel the morning after the meeting. The tough-faced mobleader had dived to the cover of the underworld. Mark Tyrell, choosing the opposite course, had stepped into high society.

On this particular night, the suave promoter was donning evening clothes in the dressing room of a sumptuous apartment. Tyrell was residing at the Esplanade, newest and most fashionable of Manhattan's exclusive apartment hotels. A smug, shrewd-faced valet was waiting on his master.

"What time is it, Wellington?" questioned Tyrell.

"Precisely eight o'clock, sir," returned the valet.

"Call Miss Munson's apartment," ordered Tyrell. "I shall be ready to speak to her by the time you have obtained the number."

Wellington departed. Tyrell surveyed his reflection in a full-length mirror. He smiled; then went into the living room and took the telephone from Wellington. The valet had already obtained the number.

Seated by a window that commanded a glittering view of Central Park, Tyrell spoke in smooth response to the tone of a girl's voice that came over the wire.

"Hello, Doris," was his greeting. "Will you be ready in an hour?... Good. I shall be there... we can reach Dutton's by half past nine..."

"Yes, it will probably be a rather stodgy evening... Yes, old Dutton will show the tapestry, I suppose... It's his prize possession... However, we may meet some interesting people..."

"Thank you for the compliment, Doris... It's quite flattering to know that you regard me as the most interesting person whom you have ever met... No, no. There are other chaps quite as likeable as I am... Perhaps I'll introduce you to some of them to-night... You'll be pleasant? Good... I like to see people admire you, Doris."

Tyrell hung up the receiver. His suave smile was at its best as he turned to Wellington. The valet returned a smug grin when he observed his master's expression.

"Bring my coat," ordered Tyrell, "and the derby. I've got to be going."

Wellington produced an overcoat; also a scarf. Tyrell donned the coat and bundled the scarf about his neck so that his white tie and upright collar were no longer visible. He put on the derby and looked in a mirror. His fashionable appearance had been completely modified.

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"All right, Wellington," remarked Tyrell. "You're sure that nobody has been snooping around this apartment; but I'm taking no chances to-night. I've been traveling in high places, behaving myself nicely. I don't want to spoil it on the first night that I have to do business."

"I'm going down into the lobby. Put on your hat and coat. Follow me in five minutes. You know the taxi trick; we've worked it before. It goes again to-night."

Wellington nodded his understanding.

MARK TYRELL strolled from the apartment. Five minutes later, he appeared on the sidewalk outside the pretentious lobby of the Esplanade. He hailed a cab and entered. The taxi pulled away. Half a minute later, Wellington, strolling from the lobby, hailed a second cab and followed.

Tyrell's cab took an eastbound street. Wellington's followed a block behind. Seeing that no other vehicles were moving along between his cab and Tyrell's, the valet ordered his driver to stop. Alighting, Wellington paid his fare. He walked along until he reached an avenue. Looking back, he waited until the street was temporarily deserted. He walked one block south and stopped by a cigar store. Tyrell came out to meet him.

"Nobody following, sir," informed Wellington.

"Good," decided Tyrell. "Go back to the Esplanade. I'm going alone."

He hailed another taxi and entered it. Wellington grinned smugly as he saw his master ride away. This trick of a second cab watching the first was one that allowed a sure check-up on any trailers.

FIFTEEN minutes after he had entered the new cab, Mark Tyrell alighted on a side street near The Bowery. He dismissed the taxi and walked to the busy thoroughfare that stretched beneath the structure of the elevated line. Jostling through an indiscriminate crowd, Tyrell entered a doorway beneath a sign that read: Morocco Hotel.

This place was even more disreputable than the Paragon Hotel in which Tyrell had met The Shadow. It was not much better than some of the twenty-five cent flop houses found in this district. Hard-faced rowdies were parked in the wooden chairs of the lobby. No one, however, paid any attention to Tyrell as he headed for a flight of dingy, cracked stairs.

This was due to Tyrell's foresight in covering up his formal attire. Dress suits might be appropriate in the lobby of the Esplanade; they were not common, however, in the Morocco. Overcoat and derby rendered Tyrell sufficiently inconspicuous.

The visitor ascended two flights. He stopped at a door and rapped in quick, rat-tat fashion. The floor swung inward; Tyrell met the challenging gaze of Pug Halfin. The gangleader stepped aside to let him enter.

"All set, Pug?" questioned Tyrell.

"Sure," returned the gangleader. "I've got two men planted as servants at Dutton's. Chopper Hoban and Muff Motter. They've been layin' low an' they ain't no dumb guys, neither. Dutton took on extra help for this swell party he's throwin' an' they grabbed the jobs."

"They'll do," decided Tyrell. "The outside is all arranged. Slug Bracken and his crew will be ready there."

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Pug Halfin grinned in pleased fashion. Tyrell, however, became thoughtful. His shrewd countenance clouded as he opened his coat and drew his cigarette case from a pocket of his white vest.

"All is well to-night, Pug," declared Tyrell. "Two men on the inside as servants will be sufficient. We can use the same ones or others if necessary when we pull the next job. But we've got to have some one who can play a better part. We'll need a phony guest at some of these coming affairs; and none of those mugs of yours can fill the bill. Slug's outfit has the same limitations. Can't you dig up the type of man I need? I put the proposition to you long ago."

"I told you I had the man you wanted," broke in Pug. "You know I've been keepin' him on tap. Cliff Marsland —"

"You told me about him," interposed Tyrell, quietly. "You said he was a mobster who looked like a gentleman. But you added that he has served a term in Sing Sing. That eliminates him."

"Maybe it does," admitted Pug, "but it don't mean that he can't be used —"

"For one of Slug's mob —"

"I don't mean that," Pug spoke triumphantly. "I've been usin' him already."

"How?"

"I'll tell you. I figured it like this. Marsland looks like a silk hatter. As soon as I let the word slip aroun' that I was lookin' for a bird that didn't have an ugly pan, he shows up. Then you said that he was out because he'd been in the big house.

"But when I couldn't locate no other bozo like him, I doped it out that maybe he'd be able to locate some guy himself. He don't stick around the joints all the time, Marsland doesn't. So I told him what I wanted a bird that could handle a rod an' had guts an' he said he'd get the guy."

"Not an ex-prisoner?"

"Of course not. I told him that. He said he'd find some bird who wouldn't even know what the big house was; an' he said the guy would have the goods."

"Did he succeed?"

"You bet. He's bringin' his pal aroun' here to-night. I thought it was them comin' when you showed up. Stick aroun', Tyrell. You've got time to take a squint at 'em."

"I can wait a few minutes," decided Tyrell, glancing at a heavy watch that he drew from his pocket.

"Marsland sounded like the man I wanted, except for his penitentiary record. If this other chap is of the same caliber —"

Tyrell paused. Quick raps were sounding at the door. Pug stepped over and opened the portal. Two men entered. One was Cliff Marsland; the other, Harry Vincent.

Mark Tyrell, ever observant, picked Cliff from Pug's former description of the man. Pug had said that Cliff was a gorilla who looked like a gentleman. The statement fitted Cliff's firm, chiseled face; his set, determined expression gave him an appearance that savored of knowledge in the underworld. At the same time, he had

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the bearing of an educated man. His quiet ease of entry marked him as a person who could pass inspection in any group.

HARRY VINCENT, as Tyrell examined him, was a fellow who lacked the hardness of Cliff Marsland. He seemed to have some of his companion's determination; at the same time, his gentility predominated.

"Hello, Pug," greeted Cliff. "Meet Vincent Harry Vincent friend of mine. Chap I told you about."

"This is Mr. Tyrell," returned Pug, introducing the man in evening clothes. "He's been waitin' to meet you fellows."

Tyrell shook hands with the newcomers. A pleased smile appeared beneath his short clipped mustache. He turned to Pug Halfin and nodded.

"He's wise?" questioned Pug, nudging a thumb toward Harry, while speaking to Cliff.

"Yes," responded Cliff. "You can count on him. My recommendation stands good."

"Talk to Tyrell," declared Pug.

Harry and Cliff turned toward the man in evening clothes. Tyrell had finished his cigarette. He was drawing his case from his pocket for the second time. Suavely, he addressed both men as one.

"I can use you chaps," he asserted. "I need a man to work with me. I had you in mind, Marsland; but frankly, we both might run a risk because of your unfortunate record. However, you have produced Vincent. He is the type of man that I require."

Tyrell turned to Harry and studied him closely. Harry met his gaze squarely. He was ready for any question that Tyrell might ask. One came.

"You're a New Yorker?" questioned Tyrell.

"Only for the past few years," returned Harry. "Michigan is my home state."

"Ever mixed in any rackets?"

Harry shook his head.

"But you wouldn't mind getting in the game?" quizzed Tyrell.

"I'm ready for anything," announced Harry, coldly. "Jobs are scarce and I wouldn't mind some easy money. Cliff Marsland is an old friend of mine. He's helped me out with cash when I've needed it. I want to pay him back; and any work that is good enough for Cliff is good enough for me."

"Can you handle a revolver?"

"I was runner-up in the Michigan small arms championship when I was home last summer. I prefer a .45 when I shoot."

"Good. Well, Vincent, I don't expect you'll have to use a gun, unless" – Tyrell paused thoughtfully "unless a certain emergency arises. Despite your preference, you will have to carry a revolver of smaller caliber under

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the dress-suit that you will be wearing.

"I won't need you to-night. It is too late and it is just as well that you wait for another occasion. Keep in touch with Pug here. He will tell you when you are needed."

"Where do I come in?" questioned Cliff. "You said you had work for both of us."

"Keep in touch with Pug also," ordered Tyrell. "Maybe you will stay with him; perhaps you will join Slug Bracken's outfit. I can't use you to-night, either."

"You make the terms Pug" Tyrell turned to the hard-faced mobleader – "because I shall be late if I remain here longer. Good night, gentlemen."

Tyrell shook hands with his new minions and turned toward the door. Pug inserted a suggestion as Tyrell was stepping into the hallway.

"Keep them glad rags covered," he said. "Like they was when you came in here. Some of those mugs downstairs wouldn't never get through talkin' if they spotted a soup an' fish aroun' this dump."

Smilingly, Mark Tyrell tightened his scarf around his neck. He buttoned his overcoat and closed the door behind him. He walked down the stairs and passed quietly through the lobby. On the street, he waited for a few minutes; then was lucky enough to spot a passing taxi.

TYRELL ordered the driver to take him to Times Square. He planned to change cabs there; then go to keep his appointment with Doris Munson. But it was not the anticipation of the meeting with the society girl that made the shrewd schemer smile.

Tyrell's plans were already outlined for to-night. Doris Munson was merely a minor factor. Tyrell was looking ahead to new episodes in the career of crime that he was beginning. He had needed an aid like Harry Vincent. He had gained the man that he required. Cliff Marsland, too, would fill in handily.

Pug Halfin had done good work, so Tyrell thought. For weeks, the mobleader had stalled about trying to get the type of henchmen that Tyrell needed; at last, Pug had come through. Even though Cliff and Harry might price their services high, they would be worth it.

So Tyrell supposed. In fact, he was positive that both of these men would play an important part in the events of the future. His assumption was a true one; but Tyrell did not suspect the real story that lay beneath the surface.

The schemer did not know that after to-night's crime, all his moves would be reported from the inside. Not for an instant did he suspect that his two new henchmen were agents of his archenemy The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI. THE FIRST CRIME

IT was half past nine. Guests were assembled in the spacious living room of Sebastian Dutton's uptown home. Glasses were clinking as liveried servants passed among the throng. Men in evening clothes were talking with ladies garbed in décolleté gowns. The party, despite Mark Tyrell's contrary belief, was proving a convivial one.

Tyrell had arrived; with him was an attractive blonde gowned in turquoise blue. This was Doris Munson,

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former debutante, a girl of twenty. Most of the other women were older, for Sebastian Dutton had invited persons of his own age to the soiree. The men who glanced in Doris Munson's direction immediately classed her as the most attractive lady present.

Sebastian Dutton, a pleasant-faced man of fifty, was standing in a corner with his wife beside him. Mrs. Dutton was a smiling, bejeweled dowager who beamed and nodded at everything her husband said.

"So you are displaying the Sicilian tapestry?" a gray-haired man was inquiring. "Well, that alone is well worth this visit, Dutton."

"It should be, Bexler," returned Dutton. "I'll warrant that you have nothing like it in your collection."

"Granted," returned Bexler.

"Nor you, Brockthorpe," added Dutton, turning to a tall, heavy-browed individual who stood close by. "Not even your celebrated golden screens can match my tapestry."

"That is a matter of opinion, Dutton," returned Brockthorpe, in a rumbling voice. "My Chinese screens are unique. The two of them form a perfect pair. As for Bexler, the Persian throne that he possesses is a treasure unmatched in all the world. If he does not choose to boast of it, I am ready to do so for him."

"I have never seen the throne, Bexler," remarked Dutton, turning to the gray-haired man. "I hope that some time you may grant us the treat of viewing it."

"Not I," laughed Bexler. "You and Brockthorpe can display your prized possessions. My throne will remain where it belongs in the big vault at my home. I prefer to keep my treasure guarded."

"Like Ferrell Gault," nodded Dutton. "That emerald Buddha of his is glistening away inside of steel walls. Where is Gault, by the way?"

"Out of town," informed Brockthorpe. "As for the Buddha. I understand he is preparing a shrine for it in his apartment. He is copying our plan, Dutton, of placing a rare treasure in a suitable spot where his friends can see it."

DORIS MUNSON was listening intently. She turned to Mark Tyrell with an inquiring lift of her eyebrows. Tyrell replied in an undertone.

"These collectors are a clique," he explained. "Sebastian Dutton boasts of his Sicilian tapestry. Rudolph Brockthorpe becomes boring when he talks about his golden screens. Ferrell Gault owns a Buddha that glitters with emeralds. As for Hubert Bexler, the gray-haired man, he has some sort of a throne that belonged to a boy emperor in Persia."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Doris. "I knew of Mr. Dutton's tapestry, although I have never seen it. Are these the only collectors in the group?"

"There are several others," responded Tyrell, in a bored tone. "One chap, Powers Jordan, has some sort of a diamond tiara. I think he is also out of town —"

Tyrell paused. Another guest had joined the group. A tall, hawk-faced man with keen eyes, this individual captured Tyrell's immediate attention.

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"Good evening, Cranston!" Sebastian Dutton was extending an eager hand. "A rare pleasure to have you with us! We were just matching the merits of our treasures. What have you to offer?"

"No treasures," returned Cranston, quietly. "I have curios and trophies; but no items of singular value. I am looking forward to a glimpse of your famous tapestry, Dutton."

"Lamont Cranston!" murmured Tyrell, as he stared toward the newcomer.

"Lamont Cranston?" whispered Doris. "Is he the famous globetrotter?"

"Yes," replied Tyrell.

"I should like to meet him," said the girl. "He looks like an interesting person. Why are you staring so oddly, Mark?"

"He reminds me of some one," mumbled Tyrell. "Was I staring? Quite impolite. So you would like to meet Lamont Cranston" the schemer smiled as he faced Doris "very well, you shall. Mrs. Dutton will introduce you."

"Don't be jealous, Mark –"

"I'm not jealous. Remember what I told you over the telephone? I should like you to meet men other than myself. Cranston, for instance. He is a man who has traveled everywhere. Why not make his acquaintance?"

"I shall, since you insist," pouted Doris. "I shall have Mrs. Dutton introduce me to him. I should like to hear his comments on the famous tapestry."

"An excellent idea," decided Tyrell, in a sarcastic tone. "Go right ahead, little girl. But remember, you're a debutante no longer. Pretty flowers wilt when summer passes."

Placing a cigarette to his lips, Tyrell strolled away. He smiled as soon as his back was turned. He knew Doris Munson's childish nature. He had learned long ago that the girl was in love with him. To Doris, a man's jealousy meant love reciprocated. Tyrell knew that she would do exactly as she had said; that for the remainder of this evening she would seek to annoy him by showing interest in Lamont Cranston.

That was to Mark Tyrell's liking. For in his study of Cranston's steady features, Tyrell had made a prompt discovery. To him, that aquiline visage was a mask. It might well have been the blackness created by the overhanging brim of a slouch hat. For Tyrell had recognized the eyes that burned from Cranston's countenance. They were the eyes of The Shadow!

Tyrell had expected to find The Shadow on his trail. He was sure that the master of disguise would choose some identity that would enable him to appear wherever Tyrell might be. He did not believe that this guest was actually Lamont Cranston. Having viewed The Shadow as himself, Tyrell decided that the mysterious being had simply made himself up to look like the famous globe-trotter.

What could The Shadow do to frustrate crime to-night? Tyrell smiled coldly. He had prepared for The Shadow's appearance here. He was determined to go through with his threat should The Shadow try to prevent the planned theft of the Sicilian tapestry. But at the same time, the schemer was anxious to avoid the encounter. Through Doris Munson, he felt that he might do so.

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A servant approached with a tray. Tyrell took a glass and raised it to his lips. He spoke in a low tone that none but the servant heard.

"All set, Chopper?"

"Yeah."

"Gat ready?"

"Right."

"Muff all set?"

"Yeah."

Tyrell nodded. He finished his drink and placed the empty glass upon the tray. The servant walked away and Tyrell smiled. This was "Chopper" Hoban: the man looked well in livery. The mention of a gat had been a precaution on Tyrell's part. Guns were not to be in the proceedings unless he called for them. With The Shadow here, he might find it necessary to do so.

TYRELL strolled about, chatting with other guests. Fifteen minutes passed; when Tyrell again approached the group of boastful collectors; he noted that Lamont Cranston was gone. Looking about, he spied the globe-trotter talking with Doris Munson. The two were engaged in earnest conversation. Tyrell smiled.

"As for the tapestry –"

Tyrell heard Rudolph Brockthorpe speaking. He also caught the interruption that came from Sebastian Dutton.

"I shall tell all my guests about it," the host returned. "Every one is here; there is no need of further delay. Come, every one!"

The last sentence was uttered loudly, above the buzz of conversation. All eyes swung toward Dutton. The wealthy collector turned toward a door at the end of the room and waved for his guests to follow.

Dutton led the way into a broad but gloomy hall. As the twenty-odd guests gathered about in a semi-circle, the host beckoned to his beaming wife. She joined him by a double doorway. Dutton, speaking in the manner of a lecturer, pointed to the barriers.

"These are sliding doors," he informed. "You will notice that they have a large combination lock. I, alone, know the letters that open it. There are two other locks, also; for them, I use keys."

So speaking, Dutton turned toward the doors and worked with the locks. No one could observe his operation. The fastenings yielded; at Dutton's order, two servants slid back the doors. Dutton pressed a switch at the wall. A buzz of admiration came from the observers.

The pressing of the switch had focused a spotlight on the further wall of the inside room. There, hanging in the daylike glare, was a gorgeous hanging. Its weaving, glistening with golden thread, portrayed paneled scenes of ships and armored knights.

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"This room is windowless," remarked Dutton, as he stepped through the doorway. "Its doors are impregnable. Of course, they might be chopped to pieces, but people in the house would hear such operations. So much for the protection of my treasure. Let me speak of the tapestry itself.

"It is woven of silk; it dates from the fourteenth century. It is comparatively light in weight and texture; one might consider it an embroidery, rather than an actual tapestry, although it belongs to the latter class. The scenes which it portrays are taken from the story of Tristram and Isolde.

"Here, for instance, is the Morold come to Cornwall with forty galleys; here, the ambassadors visiting King Mark. Singularly, though the story comes from English legend, the inscriptions are in Sicilian dialect."

"What is the value of the tapestry?" inquired some one.

"Conservatively," returned Dutton, "two hundred thousand dollars. That is here in America. It might bring more from a European collector. In fact, I have received definite offers from Italy. The tapestry, however, is not for sale.

"If you will step inside three or four at a time I shall permit you to examine the texture of the tapestry and to view it at closer range."

Groups of guests came forward. As they completed their inspection, Dutton ushered them back to the hall. Among the last half dozen were Lamont Cranston and Doris Munson. Cranston was nodding as they turned away. He apparently did not observe the approach of Mark Tyrell, who was with the final group.

The guests, as they examined the tapestry, stood aside, to avoid the spotlight. The edges and corners of the embroidered decoration were just outside the range of light. Tyrell performed a simple action which others had done before him. He lifted a corner of the tapestry. As he released it, the cloth dropped to its former position.

Sebastian Dutton saw the action. He thought nothing of it, for it appeared to be a natural procedure. In fact, when Tyrell strolled across in front of the spotlight and happened to lift the other corner of the tapestry, Dutton took the action as a mere repetition.

THE final guests were leaving; all but Rudolph Brockthorpe and Hubert Bexler. These two collectors were talking with Sebastian Dutton. Tyrell lingered, listening.

"The tapestry is well preserved," said Bexler. "But is it wise to have it hanging on the wall? The upper border might be damaged."

"The weight is not too great," explained Dutton. "I have a special type of fastening that will not injure the border. Even a pull would not damage the tapestry. It would release easily if one gave it a slight tug."

The three men were turning toward the doorway. Tyrell smiled suavely as he joined them. He walked through the broad portal with Brockthorpe and Bexler. He turned as he reached the hallway.

The glow of the spotlight was full upon the tapestry. Yet no one not even Tyrell could note the corners nor the bottom border. There was reason for Tyrell's smile. On each bottom corner of the tapestry, Tyrell had attached a blackened fish hook. Between the two ran a length of fine wire, also blackened. These were totally invisible.

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People were watching Dutton at the light switch. They did not see Tyrell's hand relax as something dropped unnoticed to the hall floor. Dutton, with a final look toward his precious tapestry, gave pressure to the light switch. The glow faded. Dutton stepped into the hall. Servants closed the sliding doors.

Tyrell had strolled away before Dutton had finished the locking of the door. Entering the living room, the scheming crook encountered Lamont Cranston, standing beside Doris Munson. He noted that Cranston's eyes were toward the hallway where Dutton was stooped before the closed doors. Tyrell smiled as he walked by.

Half an hour passed. The party increased in its conviviality. Dutton and his cronies were engaged in private conversation while other guests drifted here and there, talking to each other. Tyrell noted Lamont Cranston and Doris Munson walking out through a door to an enclosed veranda. This was his final cue.

Chopper was passing with an empty tray. Tyrell hissed a low command in the fake servant's ear. Chopper continued on; Tyrell found a chance to stroll through the door that led into the hall outside the tapestry room.

Alone in the gloomy passage, Tyrell worked quickly. Dropping to his knees in front of the sliding doors, he found the object that he wanted; the end of a strong fish line. He gave a tug. There was a slight resistance at the other end. Then, like an angler making a haul, Tyrell pulled in his catch.

As he drew upon the cord, Dutton's Sicilian tapestry came sliding through the crack beneath the sliding doors. Tyrell, rising, gripped the border as it came in view. With a backward step, he whisked his valuable prize out into the hallway.

Soft footsteps came in his direction as Tyrell folded the tapestry. Chopper had arrived; the false servant held a small bag open in readiness. Tyrell shoved the tapestry into the container. Chopper whispered quick information.

"I'm pitchin' it out the pantry window," he stated. "Slug's there, ready to grab it. Muff's stickin' out in the kitchen, kiddin' the help. Nobody'll see me."

Tyrell nodded. Chopper, the tapestry inside the bag, turned toward his destination. Tyrell strolled back through the door into the living room. He was lighting a cigarette when Chopper reappeared, carrying another loaded tray. Tyrell helped himself to a glass. As he drank, he heard Rudolph Brockthorpe speak to Sebastian Dutton.

"Your room is as strong as mine," Brockthorpe was saying. "Triple locked; windowless –"

"But not as strong as a vault," interposed Hubert Bexler.

"Nonsense," scoffed Dutton. "Come out in the hallway, gentlemen. Take a look at those locks. I tried a locksmith on them. He was stumped."

Tyrell strolled on toward the veranda. At the door, he encountered Lamont Cranston. The globe-trotter stopped to put a question:

"Where is Mr. Dutton?"

"I think he went into the hallway," replied Tyrell, in a casual tone. "Out to show some friends the locks on his tapestry room."

"Thank you," returned Cranston. "I am anxious to talk to him."

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Tyrell caught the glint of burning eyes; nevertheless, he wore a triumphant smile as he stepped to the veranda to look for Doris Munson. His task was done. The tapestry was gone. Not even The Shadow could prevent the theft that was already accomplished.

HALF an hour later, Mark Tyrell and Doris Munson paid their respects to host and hostess as they made their departure. As he shook hands with Sebastian Dutton, Tyrell noted Lamont Cranston chatting with Rudolph Brockthorpe and Hubert Bexler. Tyrell knew that the trip to the hallway outside the tapestry room had revealed nothing except the fact that the locks were as strong as ever.

Doris was silent as they rode away in a taxicab. The girl was annoyed by Tyrell's lack of jealousy. She seemed to feel that he should be angry because she had talked so long with Cranston. Tyrell, however, was unconcerned.

After he had ushered Doris up to her apartment, the clever schemer returned to the street and hailed another cab. He ordered the driver to take him to the Esplanade. Tyrell was smiling suavely as he rode toward his abode. His first crime had been accomplished with surprising ease. Tyrell had expected that result. There was another reason for his expression of triumph. The schemer was positive that he had achieved his clever theft almost before the eyes of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. THE SECOND CRIME

IT was three nights after the robbery at Dutton's. Broadway was agleam. Amid the whirl of traffic, a taxicab was traveling north. There were two passengers in the vehicle: Mark Tyrell and Doris Munson.

"Rudolph Brockthorpe's," Tyrell was musing. "Another of the curio clique. I suppose that we shall have to listen to more talk of rare antiques."

"I hope," responded Doris, "that Mr. Brockthorpe will show us his Chinese screens. He says that they were brought to America from the Forbidden Palace in Peking –"

"– seized by soldiers during the Boer uprising," Tyrell added. "I know the story, Doris. Why repeat it?"

"I think the screens must be wonderful."

"Like Dutton's Sicilian tapestry. Well, if Brockthorpe has any brains, he will keep his precious screens under cover. The police are still trying to figure out who stole Dutton's tapestry."

The statement brought a gasp of alarm from Doris. The girl had read the newspaper accounts of the mysterious theft which had occurred at Sebastian Dutton's. She had not seen Tyrell since the night when both of them had attended Dutton's soiree.

"Do you think the tapestry could have been stolen while we were there?" questioned Doris, in an anxious tone. "Wouldn't it have been terrible if thieves had been among those guests?"

"A ridiculous supposition, Doris," returned Tyrell, in an easy tone. "Evidently you have read no further than the headlines. No suspicion is attached to any one who was at Dutton's home three nights ago."

"But the tapestry is gone –"

"It must have been stolen the next day," interposed Tyrell. "Dutton and other persons were in and out of the

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hallway all during the evening of the party. Trusted servants were about. It would have been impossible for any one to manipulate the locks and enter the tapestry room that evening.

"On the next afternoon, however, Dutton and his wife went out and did not return until late in the evening. There were two servants in the house; they did not hear any one enter. However, when Dutton returned late, he decided to visit his tapestry room; that was when he found the treasure had been stolen."

"Then you think that some one must have entered the house on the evening after our visit?"

"That is what the police believe. The locks were unbroken; apparently no one had tampered with them. Yet the sliding doors offered the only means of entry to the tapestry room. Presumably, some clever locksmith must have entered the house and spent a considerable time in making his entry to the windowless chamber that contained the tapestry."

"I feel relieved," sighed Doris. "It is good to know that the robbery did not take place while we were there. From what you say, it would have been impossible."

"Quite," remarked Tyrell. "Therefore, on second thought, we need not worry about Brockthorpe's golden screens if he displays them to-night. A more important problem should concern you, Doris."

"What should concern me?"

"Whether or not your new friend will be at Brockthorpe's. You seemed to be quite favorably impressed with Lamont Cranston."

The girl shot an indignant look toward Tyrell. The shrewd-faced man did not appear to notice the glance; he was lighting a cigarette. Apologetically, he offered his case to Doris. The girl took a cigarette herself. Her indignation still remained.

"One could hardly fail to be impressed by Cranston's personality," resumed Tyrell, in his suave tone. "The man is a cosmopolitan sort. I fancy that you found his conversation most interesting. I hope, Doris, that you will meet him again this evening."

The girl made no reply. Once again, Tyrell was treating her in subtle fashion. He was planning to use Doris as a lure to Cranston; to draw away the visitor whom he was sure must be The Shadow. Tyrell smiled as he threw a sideward glance toward Doris. He knew that his plan would succeed should Cranston be at Brockthorpe's.

THE cab pulled up in front of an old but well-kept residence. Tyrell and Doris alighted. They ascended the steps and were admitted. A servant announced them; they joined a small group of guests assembled in a front room.

Not more than a dozen persons were present at Rudolph Brockthorpe's. The heavy-browed host was standing in a corner, talking to two friends. One was Hubert Bexler; the other was Lamont Cranston. With them was a stocky, swarthy-faced man whom Tyrell eyed with thoughtful gaze.

Sebastian Dutton was absent. That was not surprising. His Sicilian tapestry stolen, the host of three nights previous had evidently no desire for viewing treasures that belonged to others. While Tyrell stood looking toward the corner, he noticed that Doris Munson had left him. A moment later, he observed the girl going toward the talking group.

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Tyrell smiled as he saw Doris speak to Cranston. Then she and the keen-eyed globe-trotter left the group. Tyrell watched them stroll into another room. He sauntered over to the corner and shook hands with Brockthorpe and Bexler. He turned a quizzical gaze toward the stocky man who stood with the two collectors.

"This is Detective Cardona," said Brockthorpe, by way of introduction. "He is investigating the robbery at Dutton's. He came to see me this evening. I invited him to remain."

"On account of the golden screens," added Bexler. "Our friend Brockthorpe insists on showing them to-night. He refuses to follow my advice. I have told him that he should keep them in a vault."

"Like the boy king's throne," chuckled Brockthorpe. "Worry about your own treasure, Bexler not mine. Wait until you see my strongroom. I want Detective Cardona to see it also."

"You are Joe Cardona?" inquired Tyrell, turning to the stocky detective. The man nodded.

"I have heard of you," said Tyrell, in a complimentary tone. "They say that you are the ace of the New York force. You are fortunate, Brockthorpe" – Tyrell turned to his host "in having this man here. If your strongroom has a weakness, he should certainly discover it."

"Detective Cardona has already –"

Brockthorpe broke off his statement as a servant approached, followed by a young man in evening clothes. Brockthorpe stared quizzically toward the new guest. Then he heard the servant's announcement:

"This is Mr. Vincent, sir."

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed Brockthorpe. "Meet Mr. Vincent, gentlemen. He arrived in New York yesterday, from Michigan. I invited him here to meet you. Mr. Vincent was a friend of Stephen Carruthers."

"So you knew poor Carruthers?" clucked Hubert Bexler, as he shook hands with the new arrival. "Well, well. He was a great chap. When did you last see him, Mr. Vincent?"

"Shortly before his unfortunate death," returned Harry Vincent, in a sober tone. "In fact, I had intended to accompany him by plane to California. I failed to reach Chicago in time. Hence I escaped the crash over Oklahoma the crash in which Carruthers was killed."

Bexler continued to converse with Harry. Tyrell, standing by, was a listener to the talk. The two were discussing Stephen Carruthers. Tyrell was also watching Brockthorpe and Cardona. He saw the detective turn to the heavy-browed host.

"Are the guests all here?" questioned Cardona, in a low tone.

"I think so," responded Brockthorpe.

"Show them the screens," suggested Cardona. "Get it over with. I want to make sure just how strong the room is."

"Very well."

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Brockthorpe called to his guests. Tyrell turned around to notice that Lamont Cranston and Doris Munson were close by. He wondered if Cranston had observed Harry Vincent's arrival. Brockthorpe led the way into an adjoining room. Tyrell watched the others follow. He came along at the rear of the throng.

A SERVANT was standing by the broad doorway between the rooms. It was Chopper Hoban, in a different livery. Tyrell paused to light a cigarette. He spoke in an undertone.

"Got it ready?" he inquired.

"By the door to the strongroom," whispered Chopper.

"Anybody seem wise?"

"No. I landed the job yesterday. Muff and Tony made the delivery when I was alone here at seven o'clock."

"Good. Be alert when I call."

Tyrell continued onward. The room into which he passed was furnished with heavy, massive furniture. Covered chairs and couches seemed musty among bookcases that lined the walls. This was Brockthorpe's library. At the opposite end was the door to his strongroom.

Brockthorpe opened that door before Tyrell arrived with the group of guests. People entered. Tyrell followed, in time to hear admiring gasps. As he stepped through the portal, he saw the reason for the pleased expressions.

The place was a curio room, filled with huge vases, squatty taborets and pieces of Oriental statuary. Centrally located were the golden screens that Brockthorpe had gained from the Forbidden Temple in Peking.

Each screen was six feet tall. It consisted of three folding panels, two feet in width. The panels were of thin, dull gold; upon each panel, glistening in bas-relief, was a polished dragon of the same precious metal.

As the guests strolled about, Brockthorpe rumbled the history of the screens. He also stated their value: one hundred thousand dollars each and added that as a pair they would bring a quarter million should he choose to offer them for sale.

There was one person present, however, who was more interested in the strongroom than in the screens. This was Detective Joe Cardona; he was examining the windows, one on each side of the room, which formed an extension of the house.

Each window was furnished with horizontal bars. These were five in number. They were three feet long; the space between them was less than one foot. The bars were made of heavy steel. Cardona nodded as he tested their strength. He tapped steel shutters that were closed outside the bars.

"Set with an electric alarm," explained Brockthorpe. "If any one tries to pry the shutters loose, bells will ring throughout the house. That would give us plenty of time before any one could saw away at the bars."

"It looks good," admitted Cardona.

"All my treasures are bulky," declared Brockthorpe, pointing about the room. "Look at the size of those vases those taborets those golden screens. Burglars would have to saw off all the bars before they could remove anything."

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"The door?"

"When I lock it, the alarm sets automatically. I haven't been using it while I am at home, because it would ring whenever I opened the door. But from now on, I shall set it on the door as well as the windows."

Tyrell was drawing a cigarette case from his pocket. Turning, he saw Lamont Cranston talking with Doris Munson. He nodded affably as he approached. He extended the cigarette case.

"Smoke, Doris?" inquired Tyrell.

"Yes," replied the girl.

Tyrell drew a cigarette from the case and let Doris take it. He offered another cigarette to Cranston; the globetrotter drew one forth himself. Tyrell extracted a third cigarette. He flicked a lighter and extended it toward Doris.

As he turned toward Cranston with the light, Tyrell saw that the hawkfaced guest was using a match of his own. Tyrell caught the burning glare of eyes above the aquiline nose. He turned away as he lighted his own cigarette. As he flicked out the flame of the lighter, Tyrell heard Doris begin a new conversation with Cranston. Tyrell strolled away.

He encountered Harry Vincent near the door. He nodded; then spoke in an undertone. He was giving instructions which Harry had expected but had not yet received.

"Do what I tell you," whispered Tyrell. "Stay at this spot until I give the word —"

A gasp sounded in the room. Doris Munson's cigarette had dropped from her fingers. The girl had placed her hand to her forehead. She was dropping toward the floor. Lamont Cranston caught her elbows and steadied her.

"Stand back," he ordered quietly. "The girl has fainted. This room is stuffy. Don't crowd close."

As guests drew away, Mark Tyrell swung to the doorway. Chopper Hoban was standing at the portal. Tyrell snapped an order to the fake servant.

"Some water!" he exclaimed. "Bring it at once!"

Chopper nodded. He turned and passed the word along to another servant who was at the front door of the library.

"Hurry some water!" he bawled. "Somebody has fainted!"

TYRELL was gripping Harry Vincent by the arm. The two men were nearest to the door. Tyrell pointed toward the library and gave another order.

"Bring a chair!" he told Harry. "From the other room that servant will help you carry it."

As Harry turned to obey, Tyrell sprang to aid Cranston who was supporting Doris. Cranston was about to carry the girl from the strongroom; Tyrell, in offering aid, held back the action. As he pretended to help, he stamped out the cigarette that Doris had dropped to the floor.

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Just outside the door of the strongroom, Harry Vincent found Chopper Hoban beckoning. He did not know that the servant was one of Tyrell's underlings. However, Chopper was lifting one arm of a heavy covered chair that stood by the door. Tyrell had ordered a chair; Harry gripped the other arm.

The two carried their burden into the strongroom. A servant arrived a moment later with a glass of water. Cranston, at Tyrell's suggestion, eased the unconscious girl into the big chair as Harry and Chopper set it near a taboret. He took the glass of water and placed it to Doris Munson's lips.

Rudolph Brockthorpe was urging the guests out of the room. He herded them through the door like a lot of sheep. Harry and Chopper followed with the throng. Tyrell remained by Cranston, while Brockthorpe and Cardona stood in front of the golden screens.

Reaching in his vest pocket, Cranston produced a tiny phial. He poured a purplish liquid into the glass of water. As a faint color permeated the water. Cranston made Doris take another sip. A moment later, the girl's eyes opened.

"What what has happened?" questioned Doris, weakly. "I I am faint –"

Cranston gave her another sip. The girl revived more rapidly. It was Tyrell who made the next suggestion.

"Let's get her out into the air," he said.

Cranston nodded. He carried the glass of liquid in one hand while he and Tyrell aided the girl into the library. They continued on to the living room; by the time they had reached the door, Doris was walking of her own accord.

"I shall take care of her," stated Cranston. "I shall take her to the porch. Open air will end her dizziness."

Tyrell watched Cranston and Doris walk away. He drew another cigarette from his case and lighted it. While he stood with a thoughtful smile upon his lips, Rudolph Brockthorpe and Joe Cardona entered from the library.

"We will go back to the strongroom later," Brockthorpe was saying. "Really, Cardona, it was quite unnecessary to set the alarm on the door. When I unlock it, the bells will ring –"

"I want to hear them work," interposed Cardona. "You can turn off the bells, can't you?"

"Of course."

Hubert Bexler had joined the host and the detective. Brockthorpe was explaining that they would go back to the strongroom within an hour. He was telling Bexler that Joe Cardona had approved the place as burglar proof.

Mark Tyrell smiled as he strolled away. He chatted in a pleasant fashion with the guests that he encountered. So far as his second crime was concerned, Tyrell was satisfied. The schemer's plan for theft had again succeeded, despite the presence of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. THE AFTERMATH

"THIS way, every one! We are going back too view the screens again!"

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Rudolph Brockthorpe was calling to his guests. They were gathering in the living room; Mark Tyrell was accompanying Doris Munson and Lamont Cranston. As the group moved toward the library, Tyrell dropped behind to light his inevitable cigarette. He paused close by Chopper, who was waiting for the guests to complete their passage into the library.

"How about it?" questioned Tyrell, in an undertone.

"Slug pulled out half an hour ago," whispered Chopper.

"From the side alley?"

"Yeah. With the swag."

"Good. Be ready."

Tyrell entered the library. He found the guests in a semicircle, watching Brockthorpe, who was standing by the door of the strongroom.

"There will be a loud clangor when I unlock this door," explained Brockthorpe to his guests. "Detective Cardona wanted me to test the alarm; so I set it. Remain here while I enter. I can turn off the alarm from inside the strongroom."

Brockthorpe inserted a key in the lock. As he turned it, bells began to ring throughout the house. Some were loud and drilling in tone; others sounded with a gonglike boom. Guests stood startled as Brockthorpe hastily opened the door and sprang into the darkened strongroom.

Brockthorpe pressed a switch that stopped the clangor. Then he found the light switch and gave illumination to the room. Standing within the door, he beckoned to his guests to enter. Before any one could follow the instruction, an interruption came.

Joe Cardona, leaping forward, stretched his arms across the doorway while he stared wild-eyed into the strongroom. Wheeling, he ordered the guests back. Gasps came as those closest saw the reason for the detective's action. Cardona had again turned toward the strongroom. Rudolph Brockthorpe faced inward as the detective pointed.

"The screens!" gasped Brockthorpe. "The screens! They are gone!"

THE cry was true. Taborets, statues, vases were all in place. But the six-foot screens from the Forbidden Palace had vanished as mysteriously as if they had been swallowed into space!

While Brockthorpe rubbed his hands in nervous, bewildered fashion, Cardona took charge of the situation. He ordered the guests to seat themselves about the library. He picked Lamont Cranston to stand by the door to the living room, to see that no one left. Leaving Brockthorpe and Bexler in charge, Cardona strode to a side door of the library and shouted for the servants. Three men and one woman appeared in answer to his summons. Cardona lined them up in the library and requested Bexler to take charge.

Then he went into the strongroom, where Brockthorpe was rumbling nervous imprecations.

"How about the windows?" demanded Cardona.

"They're closed," rejoined Brockthorpe. "I haven't examined them."

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"Let's look."

Cardona tested the bars at one window. He found them solid. He started to unfasten the outer shutter. Brockthorpe spoke a warning.

"Unless I turn off the alarm switch," said the robbed collector, "the bells will ring –"

"Let them ring," interrupted Joe. "I want to see if they're working. Stand by the switch."

As Brockthorpe moved to obey, Cardona released the inner bars of the shutter. The clangor or alarms began at once. Cardona motioned to Brockthorpe; the collector pressed the switch. Cardona closed the shutter.

"On again," he ordered. "I'm trying the other window."

The same result occurred there. Cardona found solid bars; the alarm rang when he worked on the shutter. The detective came to the door as Brockthorpe shut off the bells. There, Cardona made another inspection. The result was a definite decision. He gave it to Brockthorpe.

"Nobody could have come through the windows or the door," affirmed Joe. "The alarms would have gone off. What's more, those screens couldn't have been taken out by the windows. The screens are too big. They couldn't have gone out by the door; I was in and out of the library all during the last hour."

"But the screens are gone!" mumbled Brockthorpe.

"Apparently," remarked Cardona. He drew a stub-nosed revolver from his pocket. "Yes I admit they're gone from view. But that doesn't mean they're not here."

"You mean the closets?" questioned Brockthorpe, pointing to closed doors that appeared in the walls of the strongroom.

"Yes," said Cardona. "They could be hidden there along with the person who took them. Some one got into this room, Brockthorpe. He may still be here."

"But the room was empty when we left. We looked about. The closets are all locked."

"Count noses out there in the library," ordered Cardona, tersely. "I want to find out who's in on this."

Brockthorpe went into the library. He returned a few minutes later. He shook his head.

"Every guest is here," he stated. "Also all four of the servants."

"Then we've got a stranger to deal with," announced Cardona, as he stood grimly in the center of the strongroom, drawn revolver in hand. "Got any guns, Mr. Brockthorpe?"

"Two revolvers –"

"Bring them."

Brockthorpe went to a desk in the corner of the library. He unlocked a drawer and produced two revolvers. He showed the guns to Cardona. They were of .32 caliber.

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"Give one to Mr. Cranston," ordered Joe. "Bring the other here yourself. We'll smoke out the rat that's hiding in one of these closets. Call in two of your servants."

Brockthorpe passed a revolver to Cranston, whose duty was to watch the front exit of the library. Then he ordered two servants to follow him. One whom he chose was Chopper Hoban.

THE liveried men shuffled into the strongroom.

"Carry out those vases," ordered Cardona. "We don't want them to be smashed. Move those taborets to the corner, Mr. Brockthorpe. Let's see now –"

He paused as the servants were returning. He pointed to the big chair. It was blocking one of the closet doors. Chopper and the other menial lifted the arms. Cardona was looking at the chair itself; Chopper kept his face turned so the detective did not see it clearly.

"Move that chair out," ordered Joe. "It doesn't belong in here. Clear the way to the closet."

Chopper urged his companion to carry the chair clear over to the side of the library. They set it near the doorway. When they returned to the door of the strongroom, Cardona told them to remain outside.

"Your keys?" he asked of Brockthorpe.

The collector produced a well-cluttered key-ring. Cardona had intended to open the closet doors himself. He decided that Brockthorpe was the one to do it.

"They're thick doors," muttered the detective. "No guy's going to fire from inside until they're opened. You unlock them, Mr. Brockthorpe, while I cover."

The millionaire went to the first door. He carefully unlocked it and leaped away as he swung the door open. Cardona, revolver in readiness, saw the interior of an empty closet. The second door produced practically the same result. A few odd vases alone showed on the closet floor.

There was a third door; the one that the large chair had obscured. Cardona was tense as Brockthorpe unlocked this barrier and stepped aside. Cardona, watching the door swing, saw that the closet was empty save for two Oriental robes that hung from hooks in the center.

With a daring plunge, the detective leaped forward and pounced upon the robes. He swung as he gripped them, expecting to find a figure underneath. He came swinging from the closet, the robes loose in his grasp. The last closet, like the others, was empty.

Cardona stared all about him. The floor of the room was solid. So were the walls. Yet there was no sign either of the screens or any living person who might have remained here in search of concealment.

"We'll lock up," decided the detective. "Set the alarms, Mr. Brockthorpe. We'll go through this place later, after I've questioned the guests and the servants."

Cardona and Brockthorpe left the strongroom. Windows and doors were tight as before. Passing from person to person, Cardona put brief questions, inquiring if they had seen any one in the neighborhood of the strongroom.

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Every response was negative. Cardona eyed some persons carefully; among them, Chopper Hoban. This fellow chanced to be an underworld character whom Cardona had never seen before. That was one reason why he had been chosen for his job. Chopper passed inspection.

After a conference with Rudolph Brockthorpe and Hubert Bexler, Cardona decided that guests and servants could not be held under suspicion. Cross-checking of testimony indicated that fact. He ordered the guests into the living room; the servants to their duties.

It was in the living room that Mark Tyrell strolled toward Harry Vincent. He chose a time when Lamont Cranston and Doris Munson were engaged in conversation at the front end of the room.

"Stay by the door to the library," whispered Tyrell, to Harry. "Have a cigarette ready. Strike a match to light it if one heads into the library."

Harry strolled over toward the door that Tyrell indicated. The schemer walked away and joined Cranston and Doris. The girl was thanking Cranston for the aid that he had rendered during her fainting spell. Tyrell joined the conversation. He wanted to hold the attention of this keen-eyed guest whom he had identified as The Shadow.

Joe Cardona and Rudolph Brockthorpe had departed from the living room. The only man close to where Harry Vincent stood was Hubert Bexler. The gray-haired collector was smoking a cigar. His face seemed serious. Bexler had sobered considerably since the discovery that Brockthorpe's screens were stolen. Harry fancied that the man might be thinking of the safety of his own treasures.

Bexler's reverie, however, was advantageous. At present, it was Harry's duty to play in with Mark Tyrell's schemes. As yet, Harry could not fathom how the Chinese screens had been stolen. He was puzzling over the problem as he threw a sidelong glance into the library.

There, Harry saw Chopper Hoban entering stealthily from the side door. The fake servant glanced in Harry's direction. Seeing no signal, Chopper stopped beside the heavy chair that had been carried from the strongroom. Harry saw him raise the covering. Muffled clicks followed. Harry caught a glimpse of the seat moving upward in side-hinged sections. He saw the back of the chair open like a double door.

Then a figure squirmed in view. In the gloom of the library, Harry caught a glimpse of a wicked, yellow face as a limber form unfolded its legs and arms. A curious, spiderlike man reached the floor. The portions of the chair clicked shut. Chopper dropped the covering into place.

As Chopper made a gesture, the figure which Harry took for that of a dwarfish Chinaman went scampering through the side door of the library. The man was crouching as he ran. Chopper followed into the side hallway.

As the two figures went out of sight, Harry looked about the living room.

Joe Cardona was returning with Rudolph Brockthorpe. The two were joining Hubert Bexler. Harry caught Cardona's suggestion that the guests be urged to leave. As the trio stepped toward the door to the library, Harry moved aside and idly lighted his cigarette.

Mark Tyrell caught the signal from the other end of the room. The schemer smiled in satisfaction. He was sure that Chopper and the Chinaman had gained ample time. Harry's signal convinced him that this new henchman was alert.

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Cardona and the two collectors found nothing suspicious in the library. The detective's suggestion was followed. The guests were invited to leave. Lamont Cranston was one of the first to depart. Mark Tyrell and Doris Munson followed. Harry Vincent went afterward.

IN his room at the Hotel Metropole, Harry Vincent began to make a written report. He had scarcely started before the telephone rang. He answered the call. It was Mark Tyrell.

"Hello, Vincent," came the suave voice of the smooth crook. "I just wanted to extend my compliments. Very good, old chap."

"Thanks," responded Harry.

"I shall need you later," purred Tyrell, over the wire. "Within the week. Stay around your hotel and wait for a call."

"All right."

When he had hung up the receiver, Harry went back to his report. In coded writing, inscribed in bluish ink, he detailed his action of the evening. As he made the report, Harry added a definite theory regarding the robbery. The appearance of the Chinaman had told him all he needed to know. He wrote:

The dwarf was in the chair. The alarms could be turned off within the strongroom. The shutters were easy to open from the inside. Of all the articles in that room, the screens, though the largest, were the easiest to steal.

Folded, they could have been thrust singly through the bars of a side window. Turned endways, inserted flat, their width would have been no more than two feet less than the width of the window. The dwarf could have closed the shutter afterward.

Elsewhere in Manhattan another man was writing a report. Cliff Marsland, seated in a grimy room of a cheap hotel, was telling of his own activities. He was reporting how he had gone to cover up for "Slug" Bracken; how he had remained near the entrance of a passage outside of Rudolph Brockthorpe's home.

He had seen Slug and a henchman appear with one screen and then the other. They had driven away in an old touring car, carrying their burdens with them. Cliff and other guards had left in a sedan.

This report, like Harry's, was going to Rutledge Mann. Through the investment broker, both stories would reach The Shadow. Mark Tyrell had succeeded in crime. Joe Cardona was baffled. But The Shadow's agents had spotted the inside tale.

MEANWHILE, a light was glimmering above a polished table in a black-walled room. White hands were on the woodwork; one holding a sheet of paper while the other wrote. The Shadow was in his sanctum, preparing his own notes concerning this night's work.

Neither agent knew that his master had been at Rudolph Brockthorpe's. Mark Tyrell was sure that The Shadow had been there, in the guise of Lamont Cranston. He, like Harry and Cliff, believed that The Shadow had been thwarted.

Yet the laugh that sounded through the sanctum would have startled Mark Tyrell had he been there to hear it. The burst of mockery came with surprising suddenness, just as the click of the lamp switch brought Stygian darkness to the black-walled room.

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Taunting tones reached a weird crescendo. Sardonic mirth broke with a ghoulish shudder. Quivering echoes followed. Lispering taunts spoke back from the inky walls. When the creepy reverberations had ended their dying gibes, profound silence persisted throughout the sable-walled sanctum.

The Shadow had been present at Mark Tyrell's second crime, as he had been present at the first. He had divined the crafty method by which the crook had gained the Persian tapestry from underneath the door at Sebastian Dutton's. He knew the truth of to-night's episode.

A doped cigarette to Doris Munson; a chair introduced with a living being inside it. Screens through the window, as Harry had supposed; the escape of the hidden worker who had aided Tyrell's scheme. All these factors were apparent to The Shadow.

The master sleuth knew what his agents would report. The Shadow had studied Tyrell's actions almost step by step. Yet The Shadow had laughed. There had been foreboding tokens in his chilling mirth. That fading merriment had indicated that when the last laugh came, it, too, would be The Shadow's!

CHAPTER IX. THE THIRD CRIME

"HELLO, Vincent. Glad to see you, old chap. Wellington, take Mr. Vincent's hat and coat."

The speaker was Mark Tyrell. He was receiving Harry Vincent as a guest in his apartment at the Esplanade. It was five nights after the theft at Rudolph Brockthorpe's.

The two men were in Tyrell's dressing room. Wellington had closed the door. Away from listening ears Tyrell told Wellington but little of his plans – the scheming crook was about to give instructions for this night.

"Two days ago," stated Tyrell to Harry, "you received an invitation to a reception at Ferrell Gault's. I called you up and told you to accept it. Your attire" Harry was dressed in evening clothes "indicates that you are going there. Am I correct?"

"Certainly," replied Harry, with a smile.

"I arranged the invitation," resumed Tyrell. "I also received one of my own. I intended to go to Gault's, accompanied by Doris Munson. I have, however, changed my plans."

"How does that happen?"

"Because," declared Tyrell, "everything has been arranged. I merely wanted to be at Gault's to watch for any trouble. I also wanted to be there to keep my eye on a certain person who was present at Brockthorpe's. I refer to a man named Lamont Cranston."

"I remember him," nodded Harry.

"Doris Munson," continued Tyrell, "has become quite friendly with Lamont Cranston. He is a wise bird, Cranston; I have found Miss Munson quite useful in diverting his attention. She has unwittingly worked with my game. To-night, she will be at her best."

"How so?"

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"Doris is anxious to make me jealous. So instead of going to Gault's to-night, she has managed to make a date with Cranston. They are going to the theater."

"Which eliminates Cranston."

"Exactly. It also obviates the necessity of my being at Gault's. Nevertheless, I need a representative. I want a full report on what happens. You, Vincent, are appointed."

Tyrell arose as he spoke. He conducted Harry to the living room. Wellington brought Harry's cape and silk hat. He also produced Tyrell's overcoat and derby.

"I am going to my club," remarked Tyrell. "We can travel that far together, Vincent."

When the two men reached the street, they took a taxi. Tyrell left the cab at his club. Harry ordered the driver to take him to Seventy-second Street and Columbus Avenue, which was the neighborhood of Ferrell Gault's apartment. When he reached his destination, Harry alighted and entered a drug store. He stepped toward a telephone booth.

It was Harry's intention to put through a call to Burbank, The Shadow's contact agent. The fact that robbery was due at Gault's was sufficient in itself; Harry, however, had other information. Tyrell's reference to Lamont Cranston was something that Burbank should know.

Harry Vincent had reasons to believe that The Shadow sometimes guised himself as the globe-trotting millionaire. Tyrell evidently suspected Cranston as an enemy. If Burbank could reach The Shadow before the supposed Lamont Cranston kept his appointment with Doris Munson, matters might take a different turn to-night.

The telephone booths were by the window. The lights of the drug store threw radiance to the sidewalk. It was through that glow that Harry Vincent made a chance discovery. He saw a man outside the window by the booths. He recognized the ugly features of Pug Halfin.

Harry decided not to make his call to Burbank. He realized that Pug might be here to watch his actions. Ignoring the telephone booth, Harry went to the cigar counter and purchased a pack of cigarettes. He strolled from the store.

As he headed in the direction of Gault's apartment house, Harry gained the distinct impression that he was being followed. This persisted until he reached the apartment building itself. Harry knew that Pug, versed in the tricks of the underworld, could well have trailed him. So he made no attempt to use a telephone in the lobby. He rode directly to the fourth floor, where Ferrell Gault's apartment was located.

Harry was right in his assumption that Pug was on his trail. The ugly-faced mobleader had followed Harry's pace all the way from the drug store. But the trailing ceased when Harry reached the apartment house. Taking a dark alleyway at the side of the building, Pug gained an obscure entrance and took a flight of steps down to the basement.

Here he grinned as he discovered the entrance to a freight elevator. The lift was used only for carrying furniture and other bulky loads. Its entrance was obscure; no operator was on duty. Pug entered the elevator and ran it up to the fourth floor.

Here, again, he found an obscure entrance. He moved around a corner of a passage and tapped softly at the first door on the left. The door opened. Pug stepped into a room that had only a single light, covered by a

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handkerchief. He nodded in greeting to two rowdies who were standing in the empty living room.

"Is he in there?" questioned Pug, nudging his thumb toward an inner door.

"Yeah," grunted a mobster.

Pug kept on and entered the empty bedroom of the little suite. The door, as he opened it, revealed a crouched figure near a closet door. Pug caught a glimpse of a yellow face and beady eyes. He closed the door from the living room. He was in total darkness; his companion was the same distorted creature that Chopper Hoban had released from the chair at Rudolph Brockthorpe's!

"Hello, Foon Koo," whispered Pug. "Everything all ready?"

"Not yet," hissed the bent Chinaman. "Foon Koo, he listen. Foon Koo will hear."

"The wall's too thick," insisted Pug, in a cautious tone.

"Not for Foon Koo," replied the voice of the Chinaman. "When workmen fixee room for Mr. Gault, they bring in Foon Koo to makee the panel."

"I know," whispered Pug. "Those workmen were phonies that Slug Bracken and I put on the job. They smuggled you in an' out in a box."

"So Foon Koo could makee good trick," agreed the Chinaman. "Goodee job I do. The panel, he will workee once. Not workee twice. Poof! No goodee after the one time."

"But you can hear through it?"

"Yes. Foon Koo hear much. Foon Koo know when Buddha be where he wants it. Foon Koo know when peoples go. Foon Koo hear lightee go clickee."

"It's your job, Foon Koo. I'm here to help you. Where do we wait in the closet?"

"Yes."

WHILE the whispered conversation was passing between the ugly-faced mobleader and the dwarfish Chinaman, other events were occurring on the opposite side of the very wall where the evil workers lingered. A group was assembled in a paneled room. The guests of Ferrell Gault were being entertained in the sumptuous apartment of a millionaire collector.

Among those present were Sebastian Dutton and Rudolph Brockthorpe. The two – gloomy since their respective robberies formed a contrast to Ferrell Gault. A fat man of forty-five, Gault was a jolly individual who spoke with a tendency toward English accent.

"Glad to see you here to-night," Gault was saying. "Jove! It's a gala occasion. Well, here you see the shrine room for the jeweled Buddha. That niche with the gold fresco work is a duplicate of the spot the statue used to occupy in a Japanese temple.

"I had this room fitted up while I was out of town. I intended to keep Gautama Siddhartha that was Buddha's real name, you know on regular display. But my friends" he paused to indicate Dutton and Brockthorpe "have advised me against it. So you'll see my Buddha for about half an hour; then back he goes,

into the vault."

Two persons had entered the room. One was Harry Vincent; the other, Joe Cardona. Rudolph Brockthorpe stepped forward to introduce the arrivals to Ferrell Gault. The millionaire shook hands with Harry; then turned to Cardona.

"We've been waiting for you, old chap," said Gault, to the detective. "The Buddha's under lock and key. Brockthorpe told me you would be here."

"You intend to show the statue in this roost?" inquired Cardona.

"Yes," responded Gault. "In that niche on the other side of the room. There are no windows in this place –"

"There were none in my tapestry room," interposed Dutton.

"Keep the Buddha in your vault," advised Brockthorpe. "Show it; put it back again."

"All right," agreed Gault. "Jove! You chaps are squeamish. But I suppose you have a right to be. Come along, Mr. Cardona. The vault is in my study."

The two men departed. Harry Vincent, standing alone, heard Brockthorpe speak to Dutton.

"Gault's vault is a modern one," said the dark-browed than. "As good as Hubert Bexler's."

"Where is Bexler to-night?" inquired Dutton. "I thought that he was coming here."

"He intended to join us. He called me up to say that he could not come, due to unexpected guests."

"Do you think that he is worrying about his Persian throne?"

"I don't know. He told me that he asked Cardona to come down there and take a look at his vault. He wants to be sure that it is safe. Perhaps the detective is going there after he leaves here."

Ferrell Gault was returning. In his arms, the millionaire carried a heavy statuette, some two feet in height. Its golden surface glistened in Gault's arms. Crossing the room, Gault set the statue in the paneled niche. Gasps of amazement came from the guests as the millionaire stepped aside.

The Buddha was evidently a hollow casting grade of pure gold. But the metal represented no more than a fraction of its value.

From the forehead glistened a perfect emerald. This green gem was matched by four similar stones: two in the palms of the figure's hands, one on the sole of each foot. Representing five points of Buddha, the jewels caught the light and produced a resplendent glow.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed some one.

"No, no," objected Gault. He was standing back from the Buddha, with Cardona close beside him. "The lights are all wrong. They do not show the sparkle of the emeralds."

Gault frowned as he looked around the room. He ordered a solemn-faced servant to turn out certain clusters. Still, he was not satisfied.

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"Close the door," ordered the millionaire.

The injunction was obeyed. Gault went to the light switches himself. He clicked one; then another; he continued in rapid succession. Each new change seemed as unsatisfactory as the one before.

"No light reaches the niche property," decided Gault, in a disappointed tone. "The emeralds sparkle; but they do not create the glow. Bah! In this illumination they show no better than green glass.

"I must arrange lights within the niche itself. Jove! This is disappointing! Even darkness will prove better. Stand where you are, every one, while I turn out the lights. As your eyes become accustomed to the darkness, you will see a green glow creep from the emeralds. I promise you it will appear uncanny!"

"One moment, Mr. Gault –"

The objection came from Joe Cardona. Gault gestured impatiently for the detective to stand aside. Cardona subsided. Gault raised his hand for silence. Absolute hush fell over the throng. Gault turned off the final light switch. People waited, silent, in pitch blackness.

WHILE stillness reigned in Ferrell Gault's paneled room, whisperings began on the other side of the wall. Foon Koo, crouched in the closet of the empty apartment, was talking to Pug Halfin.

"Foon Koo has heard," hissed the Chinaman. "Lightee, they have all gone out. Foon Koo is ready. Makee no noise though. People, maybe, have not all goee."

"Better wait, Foon Koo –"

"Lightee gonee out. Foon Koo ready."

"All right."

Pug stood silent. He heard no sound, but he felt a slight draught as Foon Koo noiselessly opened a secret trap in the wall. Pug could sense that the Chinaman's clawlike hands were reaching through the opening. Foon Koo had spidery legs; but his arms possessed immense strength.

Not a sound occurred; yet ten seconds later, Pug felt something press against his chest. He gripped the object. He found it a heavy mass of metal. He felt Foon Koo's claws slide along his hands. Pug gripped his burden and waited.

Another feeble puff of wind. The Chinaman had closed the trap. Yet Foon Koo still worked for twenty seconds longer. The Chinaman, versed in the amazing craftsmanship of his native land, was springing secret bolts to render the movable panel useless in the future. Yet as he worked, Foon Koo made no noise.

A nudge in the darkness. Pug Halfin stepped from the closet, carrying his burden. He felt Foon Koo padding along beside him. They opened the door and stepped into the dim, empty living room. The waiting mobsters stared. Pug, a grin on his face, stretched his arms forward.

"There it is, boys!" he whispered.

In his hands, Pug was holding the golden Buddha with its five green gems glimmering from head, hands and feet. The mobleader clutched the idol with his arms and moved to a corner of the room where an open box stood.

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Foon Koo padded ahead. The Chinaman popped into the box; crouching, he held up his arms and leered in evil fashion as he received the Buddha from Pug Halfin. Foon Koo dropped out of sight with his burden. Pug placed the cover on the box. He jammed four clamps into place.

"Down the freight elevator," he ordered, turning to his men. "Shove the box in the touring car. I'll drive it away. Then you guys can scam."

The mobsters nodded. As Pug led the way, they hoisted the box and started toward the door to the passage. Less than three minutes had elapsed since Ferrell Gault had turned out the lights in his paneled room. Already the jeweled Buddha was on its way from the building!

BACK in his paneled room, Gault had begun to speak. His voice sounded annoyed as the listeners heard it in the darkness.

"Usually the glow commences after a few minutes," the millionaire announced. "The niche must be causing the same trouble it did in the light."

"Hardly, Gault," came Brockthorpe's voice. "Its position should make no difference in the darkness."

"Perhaps you need a trifling light," suggested Dutton. "Gems are not apt to glow in absolute blackness."

"Wait a few minutes longer," returned Gault, curtly.

People were shifting restlessly. Darkness was appalling. Subdued whispers began to pass among the guests. Some persons shifted toward the doorway. Another voice rose above the murmur.

"Quiet, every one!" Joe Cardona was growling. "Stay where you are. I don't like this. Suppose we turn on the lights, Mr. Gault."

"Why do you want them?" demanded the millionaire.

"I don't like this foolishness," retorted Cardona. "It's dangerous. It's too easy for some one to start trouble. Quiet, every one. Here come the lights!"

As he spoke, Cardona pushed Gault aside and pressed the light switch. As illumination filled the room, the detective came face to face with the millionaire. Indignation showed on Gault's features; challenge on Cardona's.

Then came excited cries that caused the two men to forget antagonism. People were gasping, pointing toward the niche in the wall. Gault and Cardona, turned to see the cause of the hubbub. They stared, as amazed as the rest.

The niche in the wall was empty. The failure of the expected green glow was explained. The golden Buddha with its precious emeralds had been purloined in the midst of darkness!

"Stay where you are!" shouted Cardona, grimly. "Watch these people, Mr. Gault! You, Mr. Dutton you, Mr. Brockthorpe! Some one has made a getaway!"

With that, Cardona yanked open the door of the paneled room. He dashed out into the apartment. He encountered bewildered servants. In response to the detective's questions, the attendants stated that no one had come out of the paneled room.

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Cardona dashed back to the assembled throng. He stared suspiciously from guest to guest. He marched people out one by one. Aided by Ferrell Gault, he began a systematic search of the room. Cardona tapped the panels as he went along. Not one portion of the wall sounded hollow.

HARRY VINCENT, herded with others in the room outside the paneled chamber, was the most puzzled person present. To him, the theft was unexplainable. Harry had come here to-night to serve a double mission. He was the secret agent of The Shadow; he was also the appointed aid of Mark Tyrell.

He knew that robbery had been planned. But he had decided that circumstances would prevent it. Yet the crime had been accomplished with a cleverness that left him totally bewildered.

Through Harry's confused brain drummed one final impression. It was a thought that left him worried; one that made him feel the sting of failure. Harry knew that crime had gained another victory. That one idea predominated.

Mark Tyrell had matched wits with The Shadow. Tyrell had triumphed. Another master theft had been accomplished. The Shadow had failed to prevent it.

Harry, secret agent for both, had been the logical man to turn the balance from Tyrell to The Shadow. Yet Harry had failed. Theft in the dark had left The Shadow's agent in total ignorance of how the crime had been accomplished.

Mark Tyrell had performed three master strokes of crime. Harry had heard of the first; he had spotted the method of the second; he had completely failed to trace a single feature of the third. Mark Tyrell, in Harry's estimation, was more than a shrewd schemer. The man was a wizard.

What other tricks lay in Tyrell's bag? How would The Shadow fare should he meet Tyrell in actual combat? Harry felt a sinking feeling. Confident though he was in The Shadow's prowess, he feared that his weird chief had encountered the insurmountable at last.

Hunches were not frequent with Harry Vincent; when he had one, it generally proved correct. As he stood in Ferrell Gault's living room, Harry gained a new impression a fearful thought that he could not shake.

Looking to the future, he could picture a grim scene. Mark Tyrell and The Shadow engaged in a fierce duel the thought was not pleasant. For Harry found himself forced to the conviction that a criminal who could produce so amazing a theft as that of the jeweled Buddha would be a terrible antagonist when it came to mortal combat!

CHAPTER X. THE FOURTH CRIME

"BURBANK speaking."

The words were uttered in a quiet tone by a man who sat in front of a table in a lonely room. Head and shoulders were back to the dim light that came from a hanging lamp. The man's face was out of sight; his right hand was resting on a plug that he had inserted in a switchboard.

"Marsland," came a steady voice over the wire.

"Report," ordered Burbank.

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"With Slug Bracken," informed Cliff. "Due to meet him at his car in three minutes. We're going to Hubert Bexler's."

"How many all together?"

"Five. I think Slug will pull the job himself. He'll make the getaway alone. With the swag. That's all."

"Report received."

Burbank pulled out the plug. A few moments later, another light glistened. Burbank plugged in to receive a report from Harry Vincent.

One hour had elapsed since the robbery at Ferrell Gault's. Harry and the other guests had been allowed to leave. Satisfied that Pug Halfin was nowhere about, Harry was calling Burbank to give a brief report of the mysterious occurrences at the millionaire's.

"Report received."

With his final statement. Burbank withdrew the plug. He made a quick insertion in the switchboard, for another light was glowing. As he received a response to his statement of identity, Burbank promptly recognized the new speaker.

It was The Shadow, talking in the quiet tones of Lamont Cranston. Tersely, Burbank gave Cliff's report; then followed with Harry's story. That completed – no orders followed Burbank pulled out the switch and settled down to await new calls that might not come for hours. Burbank seldom performed active duties for The Shadow; his passive endurance, however, made him an agent of unique value. As contact man, he never tired, no matter how long his vigil might be.

IN the lobby of a downtown hotel, Lamont Cranston was speaking to Doris Munson. Cranston had just made a telephone call. The next plan was an after-theater lunch in the grill room of the hotel. Quietly, Cranston offered an apology.

"I was talking to Hubert Bexler," he told the girl. "I promised to call his home this evening. He is anxious for me to come there at once."

"Any trouble?" questioned Doris, anxiously.

"He fears a robbery," explained Cranston. "Like those at Dutton's and Brockthorpe's. He seems very anxious for me to visit him. Would it be asking too much –"

"Of course not," interposed Doris. "You must certainly go to Mr. Bexler's at once. I can take a taxi home."

"No, indeed," returned Cranston. "My limousine is outside. I shall have Stanley drive us to your apartment house. I may be a few minutes later than Bexler expects; that will not matter."

Cranston accompanied the girl to the street. They entered the globe-trotter's limousine. Stanley received his orders. Fifteen minutes later. Lamont Cranston said good night to Doris Munson in the lobby of the girl's apartment house.

ROLLING onward in his limousine, Lamont Cranston rested back upon the cushions. Stanley was bound for Hubert Bexler's. A soft laugh came from Cranston's immobile lips. That whispered mockery was an echo of

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The Shadow's mirth.

Three crimes had been accomplished. The Shadow, though he had not prevented them, had gained an insight into Mark Tyrell's methods. In his sanctum, he had mapped out the schemer's ways of working.

His own observations the reports from his agents his preliminary survey gained from his first contact with Tyrell at the Paragon Hotel all had served The Shadow well. To-night, by keeping an engagement with Doris Munson, he had deliberately absented himself from the scene of crime. He had paved the way for Tyrell's scheme.

Why? Did The Shadow fear Tyrell's threat regarding the lives that might be at stake? That could have been the answer. At Dutton's at Brockthorpe's at Gault's, to-night there had been danger to innocent persons. The Shadow was thinking of the darkness in the paneled room, which Harry Vincent had reported. A shot in that blackness could have spelled quick death.

There was another explanation, however, of The Shadow's actions. Perhaps it was the reason for the soft laugh in the limousine. By playing a passive part as Cranston, The Shadow was giving Tyrell the definite impression that his threats had struck home. The Shadow was making himself appear to be a soft antagonist. When would the pretence end? Only The Shadow knew!

The limousine had crossed the East River. It was speeding along a broad highway. Hubert Bexler lived on Long Island, in an exclusive residential district. Stanley chose a road that led to the right. Half a mile on, he turned into a gravel drive and pulled up in front of Hubert Bexler's home.

The house was a gloomy structure, lighted only at the front, downstairs. But Lamont Cranston was not looking toward the house. He was busy in the back seat of the limousine. From a briefcase that he had drawn into view, he was extracting cloak and hat; also a pair of automatics.

Stanley had stopped the car past others that were parked in the drive. The door opened by the back seat; unseen by his chauffeur, The Shadow glided from the car. Stanley heard the floor swing shut. He supposed that Lamont Cranston had stepped from the limousine.

There was a narrow lawn at this side of Bexler's house. Beyond it was a hedge. It was this path that The Shadow took. He ignored a walk that led to a side door; instead, he weaved a way close by the hedge. He avoided trees and shrubbery without difficulty.

Low voices made The Shadow pause. Listening by the hedge, he heard men speaking. Among the whispers, he recognized the tones of Cliff Marsland. Then came a growl from the leader of this hidden crew.

"I'm going in with Muff." The Shadow knew that Slug Bracken must be speaking. "You birds stick out here. If there's any racket, use your gats. You know how. That's all."

"Afterward?" came Cliff's question.

"The swag goes in the touring car," responded Slug. "I'm driving away alone. You gorillas use the sedan."

Two forms shoved through an opening in the hedge. Slug caught himself, almost stumbling. The men moved along toward the house. The Shadow glided after them. When he reached the side door, the mobleader and his henchman were no longer there. The pair had gone inside.

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The Shadow followed. He reached a narrow stairway. He took it to the second floor. He paused outside the door of a room. He could hear low mumbles; the glare of a flashlight was full upon the combination of a vault. Slug Bracken was working while "Muff" Motter held the light.

THE SHADOW edged back into darkness. Five minutes passed. Then came a muffled growl. Slug Bracken was boasting to Muff Motter.

"Say" the words were audible to The Shadow "this box was a cinch. There's the piece of junk we want. Lend a hold, Muff. We'll drag it out."

A sliding sound; then came the shuffle of feet. The light was out; Slug and Muff were coming past The Shadow's post, carrying a heavy object between them. Against the dim light of the stairway window. The Shadow could see that they were carrying a small, chairlike throne that was evidently of considerable weight.

Carefully, the two men made their way down the stairs. They reached the doorway below. Thumps were muffled enough to make no great noise. The Shadow had followed to the steps. He paused to stare from the window. He could distinguish the two forms moving toward the hedge.

Once again, The Shadow's actions had been paradoxical. He had deliberately allowed the two crooks to enter and open Bexler's vault. He had permitted them to carry away the collector's most cherished possession, the Persian throne of the boy king!

Why had The Shadow failed to act? Was he heeding Tyrell's threat? That was a logical answer. For The Shadow, as he descended the stairs, paused by a door that led to a front room. The buzz of voices reached his ears.

Hubert Bexler was entertaining guests in a room on this side of the house. The windows of that room opened directly toward the hedge. Had trouble started in the house, mobsmen could have opened fire with direct aim.

By ignoring the theft of the throne, The Shadow had prevented possible murder. At the same time, he might have acted with certainty. He could have overpowered Slug Brackett and Muff Motter while they were at the door of the vault. Meanwhile, Cliff Marsland could have disposed of the two outside mobsters who thought that he was one of their own ilk.

All had been set for an easy victory on the part of The Shadow and his agent. Quick shots by The Shadow and Cliff would have prevented any attack upon Bexler and his guests. Yet The Shadow, still passive, had preferred to continue his waiting game. He had brought along his automatics only for emergency.

Two cars were easing away from beyond the hedge as The Shadow reached the lawn. He retraced his way to the limousine. He opened the door softly and deposited black garments in the bag. The automatics followed. Stanley, half-asleep behind the wheel, did not hear the door open; nor did he hear it close.

IN the side room of his house, Hubert Bexler was talking to three other men when the door bell rang. A servant went to answer it. The lone menial returned, ushering in Lamont Cranston. Hubert Bexler advanced to receive his guest.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the gray-haired collector. "I am pleased to see you, Cranston. You promised to drop in on me some time —"

"I was driving by," interposed Cranston. "Just thought that I might find you still up at this late hour."

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"Meet my friends," said Bexler. "Business associates from Chicago. They are the cause for my absence from Gault's this evening. I suppose you were there, Cranston?"

"No," responded the new guest. "I had business here on Long Island."

Cranston shook hands with Bexler's friends, while the gray-haired collector introduced them by name. Then came another ring at the door. The servant answered it; he returned to announce that Detective Cardona had arrived.

"That's right!" recalled Bexler. "Show him in, Cuthbert. I was telling you gentlemen about this man from headquarters" Bexler turned to the men from Chicago "and I mentioned that he might be here this evening to look at my vault. Ah! Here he is."

Joe Cardona had entered. Bexler stepped forward to meet him. As he shook hands with Bexler, Cardona nodded to Cranston. The detective's face wore a serious expression that Bexler did not notice.

"I decided you were not coming," declared the gray-haired man. "After all, I can depend upon my vault. I think that you will agree with me that it is quite secure."

"Not after what happened to-night, Mr. Bexler," returned Cardona, seriously. "The crooks have struck again."

"What!"

"I have just come from Gault's. His jeweled Buddha has been stolen."

"The Buddha from the old temple in Yamagata! Impossible! Gault had it in a vault as strong as mine!"

"He took it out of the vault. He showed it to a party of guests in a paneled room. The Buddha was stolen from there."

"With the guests present?"

"Yes. But the room was dark. I can give you the details later. Right now, I'm thinking about your possessions, Mr. Bexler. Is that throne of yours safe?"

"Certainly. It's in the vault, upstairs."

"I'd like to look at it. We are dealing with some mighty smart crooks, Mr. Bexler. That's why I came out here. I couldn't trace Gault's Buddha. I decided to make sure that your throne was protected."

"Come upstairs. All of you" Bexler turned to the others "and see my vault. My word! Gault's Buddha, with its emeralds! It's worth as much as Dutton's Sicilian tapestry, or Brockthorpe's Chinese screens.

"But my Persian throne, too, is equal in value to that Buddha. Come along" – Bexler was moving toward the doorway to the stairs "and see it for yourselves. While you are examining the vault, Cardona, the others might as well view my one great prize."

When they reached the top of the stairs, Bexler halted the group. He had turned on a light from below; he was ready to enter the room in which the vault was located.

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"I alone know the combination to my vault," he stated. "I change it frequently and never keep a record of it. One time I forgot the combination" – Bexler paused to chuckle "and we had to call in a paroled expert who had done a term in Sing Sing. It took him two hours to open it.

"I changed the combination again after that episode. I always make it a policy to have no one in the room while I turn the combination. Therefore, gentlemen, you will wait here until I call you."

"Of course," agreed Joe Cardona, impatiently.

Bexler turned on a light as he stepped into the room. He swung toward the vault, which was visible to him alone. A hollow gasp came from his lips. He clasped his hands to his chest and stared, motionless.

Joe Cardona sprang to Bexler's side. The others followed. All saw the reason for the collector's gasp. Before them was the opened door of the vault. In the light that entered from the room, they could see that the vault was empty.

"Gone gone" Bexler's voice was an almost incoherent stammer "my Persian throne. A quarter of a million gone –"

HALF an hour later, a group of sober guests left Hubert Bexler's home. Detective Joe Cardona had found no reason to hold them. Hubert Bexler himself had insisted that they could not have aided in the theft of his Persian throne.

It was apparent that the burglars had entered by the side door of the house. The door, like that of the vault, was open. Cardona decided that they had opened the formidable vault and had removed the throne while Bexler was engaged with his guests.

As Joe Cardona followed the men who had left, he found Lamont Cranston standing by the door of his limousine. The detective paused to speak to the globe-trotter.

"Serious business, this," remarked Cranston.

"It is," admitted Cardona. "Maybe we're not at the end of it."

"How so?"

"There may be other collectors of these rare curios."

"I hardly think so. None with such valued treasures. I am speaking, of course, of those who own or owned but one prize item."

"There's a man named Powers Jordan," remarked Cardona, "and he has a sort of crown that's worth as much as any of these things that have been lifted."

"Have you seen him?"

"I called him up. Dutton gave me his name, after the first robbery. Jordan said he had sold the crown. He used to travel around with these other collectors. But he isn't interested any more."

"Then this means the end of it."

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"I hope so, Mr. Cranston. Good night."

As Cardona was about to move forward to his car, which was parked ahead of the limousine, he heard Cranston's quiet voice detaining him. The detective paused.

"Cardona," Lamont Cranston asked quietly, "just what do you estimate as the value of these objects that have been stolen? Do you think that they average two-hundred thousand dollars each?"

"More than that," returned Cardona, in an emphatic tone. "I've checked the values. Call it an average of a quarter million and that's putting it conservative."

"A great deal of money," observed Cranston. "Good night, Cardona."

"Good night," rejoined the detective.

Cranston entered his limousine. The car followed Cardona's from the drive. As his car reached the broad highway to Manhattan, the solitary passenger in the limousine indulged in a thoughtful soliloquy.

"Five thefts." The tone was the whispered hiss of The Shadow, although it came from the lips of Lamont Cranston. "One million dollars. That was Tyrell's claim. Four thefts have been completed."

A hand stretched out. It grasped the speaking tube to the chauffeur's seat. The Shadow spoke this time in the quiet tones of Lamont Cranston. Stanley inclined his head to hear his master's words.

"Stanley," came the unexpected question, "how much is two hundred and fifty thousand, multiplied by five? One million?"

Stanley kept his head inclined as he drove ahead. His lips were mumbling as he repeated the question and made a calculation. In the back seat, Cranston's lips were wearing a smile as the orbs above them viewed the chauffeur's difficulty. Stanley raised one hand to scratch the back of his head, behind his chauffeur's cap. Then came his reply.

"It's more than a million, sir," he said, as he tilted his mouth toward the speaking tube. "Five times two hundred and fifty thousand dollars it's a million and a quarter, sir."

"Thank you, Stanley."

Lamont Cranston's lips were still smiling as his hand dropped the speaking tube. His little jest with Stanley was but the expression of a thought that he had answered automatically while talking with Joe Cardona.

In his interview with Mark Tyrell, The Shadow had learned that the schemer's goal was a million dollars. He knew that Tyrell was too crafty a man to have misstated the figure. He knew also that Tyrell was wise enough to know the exact value of the prizes which he had expected to gain.

Why five thefts when four had been sufficient? Why was another crime still on the calendar? Mark Tyrell knew the answer. So did The Shadow.

A soft laugh came from the lips of Lamont Cranston. Shuddering tones, held to a whisper, died away without reaching Stanley's ears. That mockery was a burst of knowing mirth. It was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XI. THE FIFTH CRIME

"TAP tap tap tap –"

"That's Tyrell," asserted Pug Halfin. The gangleader was in his room at the old Morocco Hotel. With him was Slug Bracken. Pug stepped to the door and opened it.

Mark Tyrell entered. He was wearing his inconspicuous overcoat and his derby hat. To-night, however, his scarf was not in evidence. There was no need for it. Tyrell was wearing an ordinary business suit beneath his overcoat.

With the door closed behind him, Tyrell seated himself and smiled shrewdly as he studied his two companions. In Pug Halfin and Slug Bracken, he viewed a pair of ruffians as tough as any in the underworld.

"We're on the home-stretch," announced Tyrell. "One more job and we will be done. I think to-night will be the finish."

"The crown?" questioned Slug.

Tyrell nodded.

"Then you'll be ready to fence the swag," asserted Pug. "That ain't goin' to be no easy job –"

"There will be no difficulty," interposed Tyrell. "The shipment of the stolen treasures will be a simple matter. First of all, the stuff is well under cover. We three alone have visited the hiding place."

"Foon Koo has been there," reminded Pug.

"Of course," declared Tyrell. "He is there now. It is his duty to guard the treasure. Foon Koo might be regarded as part of the hiding place. However, the disposal of the treasures will come later. To-night, our task is to obtain the diamond tiara owned by Powers Jordan."

"How're you goin' to grab it?" questioned Pug.

"By force," returned Tyrell. "To-night's theft will mean murder."

The insidious suggestion did not faze either of the ruffians who listened to Tyrell's discourse. On the contrary, both mobleaders appeared pleased by the statement that bloodshed would be required.

"You both did good jobs last week," complimented Tyrell. "You worked well at Gault's, Pug. You teamed perfectly with Foon Koo. As for the job at Bexler's –"

"It was a cinch," interrupted Slug Bracken, with a grin.

"It was properly handled," returned Tyrell. "That is why I know that I can depend upon both of you and the entire crew for this coming job at Jordan's."

"Let's hear the lay, Tyrell," suggested Pug.

"VERY well," said the suave society man. "First of all, we are dealing with a man who is quite different from

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any of the other collectors whom we have robbed. Powers Jordan owns a diamond tiara worth a quarter of a million dollars, at least. Yet he has stated to the police as well as to his friends that the tiara is no longer in his possession."

"He's stallin'?" questioned Pug.

"He is," returned Tyrell.

"Foxy bird," put in Slug.

"During the past week," resumed Tyrell, "I have been making the most of a friendship with Powers Jordan. He is a member of my club. Occasionally, he becomes loquacious. He admitted to me privately, some time ago, that he still has the tiara."

"Where?" questioned Slug. "Has he got it in a safe?"

"No," replied Tyrell, with a shrewd smile, "he has it hidden somewhere in his apartment."

"Do you know the place?"

"I expect to find it to-night."

"How?"

"From Jordan. I saw him night before last. He asked me to drop in to see him. I have been very subtle in my private conversation with Jordan. I told him, in light of the robberies which have been accomplished, that he should not depend upon any ordinary hiding place. He finally wagered one hundred dollars that I could not find the spot in his apartment where the tiara is kept."

"Did you take him up?" inquired Pug.

"Certainly," smiled Tyrell. "Furthermore, I expect to lose the bet."

"Then you won't find the spot," put in Pug.

"On the contrary," stated Tyrell, "I shall discover it very easily. When Jordan demands payment of the wager, he will have to show me the actual cache which contains the tiara. Otherwise, I can express disbelief that he has a hiding place in the apartment."

"Foxy stuff!" ejaculated Slug. "Say, Tyrell that's the real ticket."

"When I have located the tiara," resumed Tyrell, "I shall leave Jordan's. I shall communicate with you in the vicinity of his apartment house. It will then be your job to enter and take the tiara. You will know where to get it after you hear from me."

"Do we rub out Jordan?" asked Pug.

"Sure we do," growled Slug.

"Correct," declared Tyrell. "Inasmuch as I shall be the only person who knows the hiding place, Jordan would suspect me of complicity in the theft. Therefore, he must die."

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"I got it," nodded Slug. "We two go in and make the grab. The rest of the outfit will be covering the getaway.

"Then Pug and I head for Foon Koo's joint."

"Exactly," stated Tyrell, rising. "After that, the two of you disband the crew. Both of you keep going. Get away from New York. I shall see that you receive further remuneration later."

"After the swag is fenced?" questioned Pug.

"Before," replied Tyrell. "You will gain final payment for your services as soon as I hear where you have gone."

"We're satisfied," asserted Slug. "You've passed us the mazuma regular, Tyrell. We know we can count on you."

LEAVING the old East Side hotel, Tyrell went uptown. He returned to his sumptuous apartment at the Esplanade. He spoke to Wellington, asking the valet if any calls had been received.

"Mr. Vincent phoned, sir," said Wellington.

"Any message?" asked Tyrell.

"No, sir." Wellington shook his head. "He simply stated that he was at his hotel. I told him that you might call him from your club."

"Very good. Did you telephone Miss Munson?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was she at home?"

"No, sir."

Tyrell nodded. He left the apartment. On his way to the lobby, he smiled suavely. Tyrell was pleased, particularly by the report of Wellington's call to Doris Munson's. Tyrell held the hope that the girl might be attending another show with Lamont Cranston.

As he rode in a taxi toward Powers Jordan's apartment house, Tyrell considered the situation that lay ahead. He felt that he had balked The Shadow four times. On each occasion, he had overcome odds.

Doris Munson had served well at Dutton's. Again, she had been an aid at Brockthorpe's. Finally, she had eliminated Cranston as a factor at Gault's and had been responsible for his late arrival at Bexler's.

Tyrell had allowed the blonde's annoyance to continue. He had raised no objection to her friendship with Lamont Cranston. It was logical to suppose that Doris and Cranston were together to-night; even if such were not the case, Tyrell had no qualms.

He recalled that he had told The Shadow that there would be five robberies. The Shadow had apparently picked the first two places and had given up the struggle so far as the third and fourth were concerned. With Jordan's apartment set as the scene for the fifth crime, Tyrell considered his plans as good as accomplished.

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As he alighted in front of the apartment house where Powers Jordan lived, the schemer was convinced that he had entirely shaken off The Shadow as a threat. Even the police did not know that Jordan still owned the diamond tiara. Joe Cardona had been a more stubborn antagonist than The Shadow; therefore, Tyrell reasoned that he had nothing to fear.

Apparently, The Shadow had heeded Tyrell's threat that violence would be delivered should he attempt to intervene against crime. As he walked up a broad stairway to the second floor of the apartment house, Tyrell already felt the gloating joy of final triumph.

Murder would be necessary in Jordan's case. Murder would certainly arouse The Shadow. Murder, however, would spell the completion of Tyrell's run of crime. The Shadow would be a menace of the past. Tyrell felt confident that he could pass beyond the sphere of The Shadow's vengeance.

Tyrell looked about as he stopped at the doorway of Jordan's apartment. He saw a fire tower close at hand. This exit, with its stone-walled stairway, would be perfect for a getaway following a murder. Pug Halfin and Slug Bracken would have a simple task, once Tyrell had uncovered the hiding place of Jordan's tiara.

Tyrell had pressed a bell. He heard a voice calling to come in. He found the door unlatched; his smile persisted as he entered. This carelessness would mean more ease for the murderers when they arrived. Tyrell was still smiling when he advanced through an entry and came into the living room of the apartment.

POWERS JORDAN was standing with extended hand. Jordan was a tall, stoop-shouldered man; his face was pale and cadaverous. He had a habit of letting a cigarette hang loosely from his sagging lips. Tyrell saw that he was puffing in this habitual fashion.

"Hello, Tyrell," greeted Jordan, in a weary tone. "Sit down. Help yourself to a fag. Have a drink."

Tyrell seated himself beside a table. He reached for a cigarette, taking it from a box beneath the lamp light. Jordan was at another table, which had a similar lamp. The cadaverous host was pouring drinks from a cocktail shaker. He advanced and gave a glass to Tyrell. He sat down in a chair opposite the visitor.

"Well, old chap," drawled Powers Jordan, "I've got a disappointment for you. Our bet is off. I'm not going to let you search for my tiara."

"Why?" questioned Tyrell, in a puzzled tone.

"Because it wouldn't be fair to take your money," returned Jordan, with a dry chuckle. "I'm going to show you the tiara. I'm not bothering to hide it any longer. No one knows that I still own it. Why bother to keep it out of sight?"

"Good logic," admitted Tyrell, swallowing his drink. "But these robberies at other places –"

"They all talked too much," interrupted Jordan. "I don't. That's why I'm not worried about my tiara. Come along" he set his glass upon the table – "and see it. Those diamonds are worthwhile looking at. This is a real crown, Tyrell; it used to belong to the Empress Josephine. I have it on display in my little curio room. Wait until you view the set-up. It will surprise you, the way I have placed the tiara on show."

Tyrell followed eagerly as Jordan led the way through a darkened hall. The cadaverous man unlocked a door. He stepped into a darkened room. He pressed a light switch and beckoned to Tyrell.

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As the visitor entered the lighted room, he saw his host pointing to the wall at the end. Tyrell turned in that direction.

Instantly, the shrewd crook stood transfixed. His body became rigid, his eyes bulged; his lips formed a frozen line. Total astonishment gripped Tyrell as he stared. Sparkling before his gaze was the diamond tiara; but that was not the object that caused his amazement.

The end of Jordan's curio room had been arranged with a most unusual setting. From the wall, glistening in the light, hung the Sicilian tapestry that Tyrell had purloined from Sebastian Dutton's.

On either side, like enclosing wings, were the golden screens from the Forbidden Temple. These were the prizes which Foon Koo had so artfully thrust between the bars of Rudolph Brockthorpe's strongroom.

In front of the tapestry stood the Persian throne that Slug Bracken and Muff Motter had carried from Hubert Bexler's opened vault. Seated in the throne, glowing green from the emeralds which adorned it, was the jeweled Buddha that Pug Halfin and Foon Koo had drawn through the secret opening in Ferrell Gault's paneled room.

Powers Jordan's diamond tiara was crowning the head of the jeweled Buddha. This was the final touch to the surprise which had been prepared for Mark Tyrell. The prize which he had come to steal was set in the very midst of the treasures which he had already pilfered and which he thought were safely held in the custody of Foon Koo!

Tenseness reigned as Mark Tyrell stared, unmoving. Then the silence was broken by the rising shudder of a mocking laugh. Wheeling in sudden terror, Tyrell faced the only other occupant of the curio room Powers Jordan.

Eyes were burning from Jordan's cadaverous countenance. The mocking laugh was coming from those pallid lips. In this light, for the first time since his arrival, Tyrell could see the masklike appearance of Jordan's face. He could catch boring fire of eyes which had previously seemed dull.

Mark Tyrell, crook de luxe, was fearful and dumbfounded. Stark terror gripped him as he stared into the transformed face before him. He was helpless against the enemy who confronted him.

Powers Jordan the man whose murder Tyrell had come to prepare was The Shadow!

CHAPTER XII. THE SHADOW EXPLAINS

"You wanted the diamond tiara. Take it."

The words came from lips that looked like those of Powers Jordan. They were spoken in the drawl that Jordan customarily used. But Mark Tyrell knew the true author of the speech; he stood nonplused as he faced The Shadow.

Long hands were resting in the pockets of Jordan's smoking jacket. Tyrell sensed that fingers were gripping the handle of an automatic. His own arms seemed paralyzed. Mark Tyrell prided himself upon his quickness with a gun; he had a revolver ready in his pocket. But he knew that a move to draw a weapon would bring disaster.

Staring viciously at the personage before him; maddened despite the dread that gripped him, Mark Tyrell

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managed to find recourse in words. He knew that the tiara was safe from capture. That was provoking enough. But he was furious to find that all his stolen prizes had been thus wrested from his grasp.

"What is this?" questioned Tyrell, in blurring fashion. "How how did you gain those objects that I that I –"

"That you stole?" interposed The Shadow, in Jordan's drawl. "Quite simply, Tyrell. I took them before you stole them."

"You mean that I –"

"You told me too much during our first interview. You gave me a satisfactory understanding of the crimes that you intended to commit. You spoke too long before your actions. You gave me the time that I required.

"In this room, you see the genuine treasures that you sought. None of them were ever in your possession. I was the one who took the actual articles. You still hold the imitations which you managed to purloin."

Tyrell blinked. He began to understand. He realized that Foon Koo's house had not been entered by The Shadow. The dwarfish Chinaman was still guarding a hidden lair. Tyrell could see why The Shadow had played so passive a part during the four robberies.

"You told me," resumed The Shadow, still using Jordan's tone, "that you intended to steal five objects each the prize of an otherwise mediocre collection. I, myself, have a penchant for art treasures. I knew of the clique composed by Dutton, Brockthorpe and three others.

"In fact, I had excellent descriptions of the very objects that you sought. Two items the Sicilian tapestry and the pair of golden screens had already been copied. I obtained excellent imitations. The reproduction of the tapestry cost me but a few hundred dollars. The screens that I obtained were made of brass.

"As for the jeweled Buddha, I had an iron casting plated with gold. Instead of emeralds, I used false gems of special glass formed from pure powdered quartz. Copper oxide and chromium oxide produced the proper color. The false emeralds lacked the luster of the genuine, I must admit; but they managed to pass inspection, even though Ferrell Gault could not understand why they failed to give their famous glow.

"Hubert Bexler's famous Persian throne was reconstructed from an excellent photograph which was fortunately in color. Thus its tinted inlays were well produced by the craftsmen to whom I gave the task. The throne was always kept in Bexler's vault. Hence it did not receive the critical examination that was given to the other objects."

"Then you were the real thief!" fumed Tyrell. "You stole the treasures that I sought. You, The Shadow, are a crook –"

"I merely dealt in crime prevention," came the drawling interruption from this personage who had masked himself as Powers Jordan. "I entered Dutton's tapestry room a few nights before the robbery which you planned. His locks were quite easily opened. I substituted the false tapestry for the genuine.

"Brockthorpe's strongroom might have given me trouble. I visited it in advance, and learned, fortunately, that Brockthorpe did not have the alarm set on the door. I worked the locks and entered. How do you suppose I substituted the screens, Tyrell?"

"I have no idea," retorted the smooth crook, sullenly.

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"I anticipated your method." The Shadow paused to chuckle in a manner that befitted Powers Jordan. "I opened the outer shutter of the window after turning off the alarm and passed the screens out through the bars, sliding them end foremost. The false screens were pushed in to me. I set them up instead of the genuine."

"As for the jeweled Buddha and the Persian throne; those substitutions depended simply upon opening the respective vaults in which they were contained. Ferrell Gault was out of town. Hubert Bexler's house was practically unguarded.

"The vaults were troublesome. Bexler's, in particular, required a considerable length of time to open. I doubt that the most expert safe cracker in the underworld could have completed the job in less than an hour. However, I succeeded easily on both occasions."

"You brought your swag here?" demanded Tyrell.

"Not until last night," came The Shadow's feigned drawl. "You see, Tyrell, I am not actually Powers Jordan. You duped the real Jordan very well. I found that out when I came to see him yesterday afternoon I came here as an old friend."

Tyrell remembered that Jordan had mentioned Lamont Cranston as an acquaintance whom he had not seen for many months. The truth began to dawn upon the crook.

"Powers Jordan," resumed The Shadow, "became ill after smoking a cigarette. That was an idea of yours, Tyrell; one that I appropriated for the occasion. I summoned a physician a specialist who was awaiting my call. When Jordan recuperated, the doctor ordered him to leave immediately for Atlantic City. Jordan agreed that the sea air would be good for him.

"Jordan was worried about something. So he confided in me. He showed me where his tiara was hidden and asked if I would guard it during his absence. Of course, I consented. Since I was to be here, I decided to bring in the treasures that were in my keeping. I entertained myself by arranging them as a setting for the tiara.

"Then, as an afterthought, I decided that since I occupied Jordan's apartment, I might as well adopt his personality during his absence. Thus, Tyrell, I was able to receive you this evening."

A mockery had come into the drawling tone. Mark Tyrell, as he tightened and unclenched his fists, came to the full realization of The Shadow's mastery. He knew that The Shadow had definitely avoided actual encounter in order to offset Tyrell's threat of death to innocent parties.

That danger was past. The Shadow had played a deceptive waiting game. Powers Jordan was safely out of town. An attack upon The Shadow even with all these treasures at stake would be a fruitless effort. One man, armed and prepared to resist an invasion, could hold off Tyrell's entire crew of mobsters long enough for the police to arrive on the scene. This apartment house was located too near Times Square. Moreover, Mark Tyrell knew that the protector of the swag would be no ordinary fighter. Reclaimed wealth was under the guardianship of The Shadow!

"THESE treasures," came The Shadow's announcement, "will be restored to their rightful owners. Those men will be warned and protected against new attacks. Your crimes, Tyrell, have proven fruitless.

"You are fortunate in one respect. I have followed your game. I have seen you avoid the one crime that might have forced me to become your executioner: namely, murder."

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Mark Tyrell quailed. Did The Shadow know that he had planned the murder of Powers Jordan? Tyrell suspected it. The Shadow knew the situation that existed here. Probably, he had divined that Jordan's death would be essential to the culmination of the final robbery.

"My policy toward criminals" The Shadow's tone had suddenly become the sinister whisper that all crooks feared "is one that yields no mercy. You, Mark Tyrell, are a thief. Yet you have accomplished nothing. You have been thwarted."

"I am beaten," acknowledged Tyrell, in a gasping, pleading tone. "I've got nothing –"

"You have henchmen," warned The Shadow. "You have accomplices. I know their identities. If they persist in crime, I shall deal with them as they deserve."

"I'm through," admitted Tyrell. "I've paid my associates for what they've done. I owe them nothing. I'm not only licked; I know that I was wrong."

There was pleading in the crook's tone; yet Tyrell maintained an earnest bearing as he raised his eyes to face The Shadow's gaze. Realization of crime's hopeless hazards had apparently gripped Mark Tyrell.

The Shadow stood silent. The glow faded slightly from his eyes. His gestures, his leisurely manners all became those of Powers Jordan, the man whose part he was playing. With his right hand, The Shadow gave a slight wave toward the door.

Faltering, with head half-bowed, Mark Tyrell walked from the room. The Shadow followed. Tyrell found his hat and coat. He donned them while The Shadow spoke in the easy drawl of Powers Jordan.

"Honest opportunity lies before you, Tyrell," he suggested. "Why not take it? You may find that it will pay."

"I'll try it," nodded Tyrell.

"In that case," came the easy drawl, "the past will be forgotten. Take a friend's suggestion, Tyrell. Avoid crime in the future. If you do not –"

The last sentence came in another tone. The contrast was electric. The Shadow had replaced Jordan's drawl with a sinister whisper that made Tyrell quake.

"If you do not –"

The hissed words seemed to echo in Tyrell's startled ears as the beaten schemer stepped into the hall. Tyrell did not pause. He walked weakly toward the stairs; as he reached them, a new sound brought a quiver to his frame.

This was the whispered shudder of an eerie laugh that Mark Tyrell had heard before. It was the final warning of The Shadow. Weird reverberations persisted as Tyrell descended the stairs. His face ashen, his steps those of a man in a trance, Tyrell crossed the lobby and reached the street.

Mechanically, he called a cab. He gasped an order to the driver, telling the man to take him to the Esplanade. He sank back in the cushions and sat staring from the window as the cab rolled along.

The Shadow had explained. The Shadow had shown mercy. The Shadow had warned. Mark Tyrell had left his presence in penitent fashion. The schemer had maintained his hangdog, beaten bearing.

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BUT when he entered his apartment at the Esplanade, the schemer no longer wore a pitiful expression. His suavity had returned. His face was flushed with an evil glow; his eyes were hard and wicked.

Ordering Wellington outside, Tyrell picked up the telephone. He dialed a number; his voice rasped as he spoke across the wire.

"That you, Slug?" queried Tyrell. "This is Tyrell... No, the game's off for to-night... I'll tell you more later... I've got another job coming... Yes, stick with Pug at the Morocco until you hear from me."

As he hung up the receiver, Mark Tyrell blurted an evil laugh. He was pleased as he faced his reflection in the mirror. Beaten, he had managed to extricate himself from The Shadow's toils.

Mark Tyrell felt that he had tricked The Shadow. His pretended penitence had been a clever ruse. He had no intention of heeding The Shadow's warning. So far as crime was concerned, Mark Tyrell was ready to make it pay.

Twice had Mark Tyrell discoursed with The Shadow. On both occasions, the smooth crook had come out second best. The Shadow had shown leniency at each meeting. Mark Tyrell was looking forward to a third event.

He knew that he could expect no quarter. He did not seem perturbed. Fiendish at heart, despite his cleverness in pretending that he had reformed, Tyrell had gained a singular wish.

Crime was to be his watchword. It would be his answer to The Shadow's warning. It would bring him so Tyrell hoped to the culmination of the desire that now gripped his entire being. Mark Tyrell wanted what other crooks avoided: the chance to meet The Shadow face to face, on even terms.

Mortal combat with The Shadow! That was what Tyrell sought. Through new and daring crime, he would find the way to his dangerous goal!

CHAPTER XIII. NEW CRIME BREWS

For several days following his second meeting with The Shadow, Mark Tyrell behaved himself with the utmost caution. He feared that he might be under surveillance; hence he planned his course so that The Shadow if spying – would suppose that Tyrell had renounced his career of crime.

The schemer was never at home in the evenings. When calls came in from Slug Bracken or Pug Halfin, Wellington answered them with the simple statement that his master was out. Toward Harry Vincent, Tyrell also preserved a new attitude. He told Harry, on the occasions when the young man telephoned, that he was planning some promotion work. He added that a job might be open and that he would notify Harry later.

On certain evenings, Tyrell accompanied Doris Munson to society affairs. On others, he paid visits, alone, to men of high repute. Among them were such friends as Sebastian Dutton, Rudolph Brockthorpe and Hubert Bexler.

None of these men had regained their stolen treasures. The police were still looking for the pilfered valuables. Powers Jordan had not returned from Atlantic City. Tyrell saw significance in these facts. He knew that he was practically under parole; that The Shadow was waiting to make sure that he had reformed.

The Shadow, in the past, had dealt with other crooks who masked their evil under a gloss of social status. The

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majority of such had been weaklings by nature men who had turned to crime to make up for spendthrift losses. Others had been ex-criminals who had found the upper crust more to their liking than the underworld. Mark Tyrell, however, belonged to neither of those groups.

A polished gentleman, a man capable of high earnings through honest practices, Tyrell had swung to crime as another man might have taken up another business. The Shadow had recognized that fact. By blocking Tyrell's course of crime, he had shown the suave schemer the uselessness of evil effort.

Yet Tyrell had refused to learn his lesson. Still, he had seen the advantage of keeping up the pretence that he was in accord with The Shadow's view. Thus a new evening found him in his apartment at the Esplanade, smiling archly as he thought of the cunning game which he had managed and contemplating new crime that lay ahead.

The telephone was ringing. Tyrell pushed Wellington aside and answered the call. He heard the gruff voice of Slug Bracken. Tyrell responded in a suave tone.

"All ready to see you," he remarked. "Pug, too... You know where... With the stuff... Yes, tell Foon Koo I'll be there... No, I haven't seen him... Right. Mum to the gorillas."

One minute after Tyrell hung up the telephone, there was another ring. This call was from Harry Vincent. Tyrell's voice was an easy purr as the crook spoke to the secret agent of The Shadow.

"Not ready yet, Vincent," stated Tyrell. "Where are you? I see... At the Metrolite... Good. Suppose you stay there... Yes, I may have some word within the hour... Yes, I'll call you from here, and you can come over to see me... Yes, it looks like a good opportunity."

Handing up the receiver, Tyrell summoned Wellington. As the servant aided him with hat and coat, Tyrell issued a non-committal command.

"The taxi trick to-night," he said. "Get ready, Wellington. After you come back here, tell any one that calls up that I'll be back later. Get any messages."

"Very well, sir."

TWENTY minutes later, Mark Tyrell was riding northward in a cab. It was the third vehicle that he had taken since his departure from the Esplanade. The taxi stunt had shown that no one was on his trail; Tyrell, however, had switched cabs later on as an additional precaution.

The cab reached its destination a dilapidated block on the upper East Side. Tyrell paid the driver; he strolled along past various houses. He came to an old building that had a passage beside it. Tyrell headed into the darkened walk.

He found a door and gripped the knob. Pressing firmly, Tyrell unscrewed the knob from the handle. His thumb found a button where the knob had been. Tyrell gave four quick presses; then screwed the knob back in place.

When Tyrell twisted the knob lightly, the door opened.

Ascending a short flight of steps, Tyrell groped his way through the darkened first floor; then took a stairway upward. Boards creaked beneath his feet the house was an old one but Tyrell kept on through the darkness. He had followed a twisting course on the first floor; the second story was like a labyrinth. Blocking walls and

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doorways forced Tyrell to thread his path through various rooms until he found a stairway to the third floor.

At the top of this flight, he again performed maneuvers in the darkness until a final barricade stopped further passage. This door opened as Tyrell tapped. The visitor stepped into a dimly lighted anteroom that had no windows. There was a door, however, in the opposite wall.

The man who had opened the door was the dwarfish Chinaman, Foon Koo. The room had two other occupants: Slug Bracken and Pug Halfin. Tyrell's mobleaders were seated in broken chairs. They growled a greeting as the smooth crook entered.

"Hello," greeted Tyrell, in a suave tone. "I guess you chaps are wondering when I intend to get busy. Well, I'll answer that to begin with. To-night."

"Jordan's?" questioned Slug.

"No," returned Tyrell. "Jordan's is out."

"Are we going to fence the swag, then?" inquired Pug.

"No," answered Tyrell. "Open the inner door, Foon Koo."

The Chinaman obeyed. He clicked a light switch. Tyrell motioned to the gangleaders. He followed Foon Koo into another room, larger than the one they were leaving. The others came along at Tyrell's heels.

The light showed an array of objects. A folded tapestry, a pair of metal-paneled screens, a green-jeweled Buddha and an inlaid throne these were the supposed treasures that the following mobleaders viewed.

"The swag," remarked Tyrell. "How much do you think it's worth?"

"Plenty," stated Pug Halfin.

"If you know how to fence it," added Slug Bracken.

"It looks mighty good," observed Tyrell. "Yes, mighty good for what it is – a load of junk."

"Junk?" questioned Prig.

"That's right," asserted Tyrell. "An imitation tapestry, a pair of brass screens, a gold plated statue with green glass instead of emeralds and last of all, a fake throne built by some cabinetmaker."

"You mean this stuff is phony?"

"Yes. Every bit of it. That's why I called the game off."

"But it's the stuff we kited –"

"I know it. But somebody took the real treasures ahead of us."

"Who?" The question came simultaneously from both mobleaders.

"The Shadow," answered Tyrell, quietly.

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THE statement brought stares from the two mobleaders. Slug Bracken was totally disconcerted. He had thought that Tyrell's schemes were beyond The Shadow's range of action. To Pug Halfin, however, the news of The Shadow's success against crime brought up potent recollections.

Pug remembered that first night at the Paragon Hotel. Apprehensions that had gripped him then came back with sudden force. Pug had been present when The Shadow had outwitted Tyrell. He feared The Shadow because of his own experience.

"We're beginning over again," announced Tyrell, in his most convincing tone. "We can forget this junk. After all, the real loss is mine. I have one job in mind set for to-night that will equalize our failures."

"But if The Shadow's on your trail," protested Pug, "you're goin' to hit more trouble. If he knows –"

"The Shadow knows nothing about my present plans."

"But The Shadow is smart. Don't forget that he –"

"I forget nothing, Pug. I hope that your memory is as good as mine; I also hope that you will be wise enough to talk as little as I do."

Pug was silent.

"For one thing," reminded Tyrell, "remember that I prefer a .38 to a .45."

This thrust hit home. It made Pug remember his own blunder at the Paragon. Slug Bracken and Foon Koo, however, did not catch the remark. Slug had stepped forward to examine the false treasures. The Chinaman, still acting as guardian, had moved along with him. Tyrell advanced to join them. Pug Halfin followed.

"Forget this stuff," ordered the schemer, tapping his knuckles against a panel of the brass screen. "I'm playing a close game on account of The Shadow. I'm going to engineer a robbery to-night that will have all New York talking. Did you ever hear of Westbury Grolier?"

"The bird that owns all them Texas oil wells?" questioned Pug. "Sure. Who ain't heard of him?"

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Yeah. In a big joint over on Madison Avenue. The place looks like a jail."

"It resembles a huge mausoleum," corrected Tyrell. "Particularly the side wing, which has no windows at all."

"That's the private museum in which Grolier keeps his rare art treasures; it contains a collection of jeweled relics that is worth a million dollars for the gems alone."

"But how's anybody goin' to crack the joint?"

"I am informed that there is one vulnerable point to the relic room, namely, the roof. It has a barred skylight that could be opened. After that a twenty foot drop to the floor."

"Who's going to make that?"

"Foon Koo."

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Pug Halfin had been questioning Tyrell. It was Slug Bracken's turn to interpose.

"Say!" exclaimed Slug. "That's a sure bet. Foon Koo could get to that roof, easy. If any guy can wiggle in past that skylight, he's the one."

"But after he's in," inserted Pug, "how's he goin' to get out with the swag?"

"By letting us in," declared Tyrell. "There is a suitable entrance at the rear of Grolier's home. We shall have the entire crew ready. It will mean a fight; but it will be worth it."

"Only one trouble with the crew," objected Slug. "That outfit hanging around on Madison Avenue it won't look so good."

"I have allowed for that," stated Tyrell. "You will be posted in cars close by. Vincent and I shall be on the street, strolling along in evening clothes. When we receive Foon Koo's signal, we shall make our entry. Unless we return, it will be your cue to follow."

"That'll work," approved Slug.

"Foon Koo will hasten away before the robbery," added Tyrell. "He will come back here. Have the men equipped with bags. Stow the relics in the touring car. You two will come here; and deliver the goods to Foon Koo."

"Right," growled Slug.

Foon Koo was nodding. He had listened intently to all that Tyrell had said. He spoke for himself.

"Foon Koo ready," announced the dwarfish Chinaman. "He likee jobee. You watchee him do it. Keepee stuff here when they bring. Me savvy."

"As soon as the relics are here," reminded Tyrell, addressing Foon Koo, "set the trap. If any birds fly into this nest, we'll pluck their feathers. Come on down. You chaps never had a look at the cellar since Foon Koo finished rigging it."

FOON KOO led the way as the four men descended. Catlike, the Chinaman seemed able to see in the dark. On the ground floor, they reached a flight of stone steps. At last, they stopped before a solid wall.

"Turn on the inside light," ordered Tyrell.

Foon Koo pressed a switch. The men found themselves staring through a broad, low pane of glass that was set in the wall. Inside, they observed a lighted cell, with a traplike opening in the ceiling. The floor of the cell was heavily padded.

"What's the idea?" questioned Pug.

"Traps all through the house," explained Tyrell. "Only Foon Koo knows where they are. They all end in chutes that will send a person sliding into this cellar."

"The glass is bullet proof. The door is down here" he clicked a bar in the darkness beneath the window "and there are loopholes on each side of the window. If any one lands in this trap, we can look him over; then let him out or finish him, as we prefer."

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"You mean we've been walkin' over them traps?"

"Certainly. But Foon Koo did not have them working after he received your signal. That's why we have the button under the door knob. Come along, men. It's time to get started. You two assemble the mob. Open the traps when we leave, Foon Koo. Then head for Grolier's house on Madison Avenue."

ONE hour later, Harry Vincent received a telephone call in his room at the Metrolite Hotel. It was from Mark Tyrell, ordering him to come at once to the Esplanade. Harry put in a prompt report call to Burbank. He simply stated that he was going out and added that he would supply further information later.

In compliance to a request that Tyrell had made, Harry hastily donned evening clothes. He descended to the lobby and walked to the street. Before he could hail a taxi, a man stepped forward. It was Tyrell, also wearing full dress.

"Come along, Vincent," ordered the shrewd crook, urging Harry away from the hotel entrance. "You and I have some work to do. I came over here to save you the trouble of going to the Esplanade."

A cab was approaching. Tyrell called to the driver. The cab stopped and the two men entered. Harry's only choice was to go with Tyrell. He knew that crime was in the wind; the proof came when Tyrell whispered, in the darkness of the cab:

"Are you armed?"

"Yes," responded Harry.

"Good," said Tyrell.

Harry's companion gave the driver an address on Madison Avenue. Harry's last chance to get word through to The Shadow was ended. He knew that he must accompany Mark Tyrell and be prepared for what might occur.

WHILE Harry was with Mark Tyrell, another agent of The Shadow was also becoming a part to impending plans. In the back room of an underworld dive, Cliff Marsland was listening to instructions given by Slug Bracken. The mobleader had assembled his crew. Half of the men were to remain with him; the rest were to meet Pug Halfin.

Hand in coat pocket, Cliff was busy with the stump of a lead pencil. He was writing brief information upon the top sheet of a little pad. As Slug gave the order to move, Cliff arose with the mobsmen and shuffled out through the door.

As they passed through a room where hoodlums were making merry, Cliff tore off the top sheet of the pad and quickly wadded it. Unnoticed by his companions, he flipped the paper pellet beneath a table where a young man was slouched, apparently half asleep.

As the mobsters passed, this individual plopped his foot upon the wadded paper. When the crew had left, he stooped and gathered in Cliff's note. Lighting a cigarette, he sauntered from the dive.

This man was Clyde Burke, police reporter of the New York Classic. He was an occasional visitor to dives of the sort where Slug Bracken had assembled his mob. Out in the street, Clyde strolled a short distance; then quickened his steps in the direction of an avenue where an elevated structure loomed overhead.

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Entering a second-rate drug store, Clyde Burke found a dilapidated telephone booth. Inside this pigeon-hole, he unfolded the wadded note and called a number. A quiet voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Burke calling," responded Clyde.

"Report," ordered Burbank.

"Marsland going with mob," reported Clyde. "Two parties to be formed. Ready to enter home of Westbury Grolier, on Madison Avenue. Robbery intended."

"Report received," came Burbank's response.

Where Harry Vincent had been forestalled, Cliff Marsland had succeeded. Through Clyde Burke, he had relayed word to Burbank. Information concerning the coming crime would soon reach The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIV. CROOK VERSUS SHADOW

WESTBURY GROLIER'S home on Madison Avenue suited the description that Mark Tyrell had given it. Built of white marble, it loomed like a silent mausoleum from a quiet corner. The center of the building had the appearance of a mansion; the wings were blank-walled extensions.

Passages ran by the inner side and the rear of the edifice. A low wall surrounded the entire structure. Gates at front, sides and back were barriers; but they were not formidable. All were equipped with latches on the inside; these could be handled by any one who might scale the wall.

While crooks were on their way to Grolier's mansion, a stealthy, sneaking figure made its appearance on Madison Avenue. Foon Koo, the spider-legged Chinaman, was coming in advance of Tyrell and his comrades. The yellow-faced underling chose the alleyway behind the house. He scrambled over the wall like a jack rabbit and plumped inside the grounds.

Foon Koo slunk to the rear of the inner wing. His beady eyes studied the wall that he was to scale. Blocks of marble had been set to form an ornamental corner; every alternate block offered a slight projection. This suited Foon Koo. The Chinaman began the ascent. His limber figure reached the roof, thirty feet above.

Shortly after Foon Koo had ducked from sight beyond the parapet of the roof, two men came strolling along Madison Avenue. Their coats were open; the white fronts of dress shirts showed in the light of the street lamps. Mark Tyrell and Harry Vincent had arrived.

The strollers walked beyond Grolier's grounds. As they returned, a touring car pulled up on the other side of the avenue and parked at a vacant space. A few minutes later, a sedan arrived; then came another car of the same description. Lights out, these vehicles looked like any of the other automobiles that were parked at intervals along this section of the thoroughfare.

A policeman, patrolling his beat, eyed the two men in evening dress as he went past. The officer observed that one Tyrell was lighting a cigarette. Chatting, the pair started for the corner. The bluecoat continued on his way. These men were by no means suspicious characters.

Foon Koo the strollers the men in the cars these were not all who had arrived in the vicinity of Grolier's

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home. Another visitor had also made his appearance; but he had come with almost invisible silence. Harry and Tyrell, as they glanced along the passage in back of the grounds, failed to see the black-garbed shape that was ascending the low wall.

THE SHADOW had received Burbank's message. He was on the scene. He had chosen the same course as Foon Koo. When he dealt with the thrusts of mobsters, The Shadow preferred to work from the inside.

A blackened shape appeared against the white wing of Grolier's mansion. It edged toward a gloomy section of the wall. The Shadow had decided that the corner, with its projections, was too open a spot. Like a gigantic bat, The Shadow's cloaked form moved upward. Squidgy sounds marked his ascent.

The Shadow was utilizing rubber suction cups. His hands and feet were equipped with these devices. Direct pressure made each cup adhere to the marble wall. A twisting motion caused a prompt release. With steady progress, The Shadow moved upward toward the roof.

Though The Shadow had received no word of Foon Koo's activity, he had recognized the natural spot that would be chosen for crime. He realized that the roof would afford the only mode of entry to the interior of this wing. He was choosing this path to arrive ahead of the waiting crooks.

In the meantime, Foon Koo had gained access. Scarcely had The Shadow disappeared beyond the parapet of the roof before a motion occurred at the rear gate. Mark Tyrell, glancing along the passage, saw the sign. He gripped Harry Vincent's arm. The two men moved toward the gate.

Foon Koo was awaiting them. He whispered brief words to Tyrell a statement which Harry Vincent heard only in part.

"All velly good," informed Foon Koo. "Me open way. Me findee ladder in closet. Shutee top tightee. Puttee ladder back. Foon Koo waitee at old house."

"All right," whispered Tyrell. "Good work, Foon Koo."

As the Chinaman padded along the alleyway, Tyrell urged Harry through the gate. They found an opened back door. A little entry showed another opened barrier to the left. It led into the wing, up a short flight of steps.

Tyrell's flashlight glimmered along the floor. The wing was totally dark inside. A turn of the brief steps served to keep the flashlight guarded. The rays revealed an opened door at the side of a long passage. Tyrell and Harry entered.

Glimmering light from Tyrell's torch showed that Foon Koo had unbarred the door of the relic room. There was another floor leading into an adjoining portion of the museum. Evidently the custom was to bar the relic room from the inside; then to pass through the other exit and lock it.

This had simplified Foon Koo's task. Tyrell chuckled as his flashlight fell upon glass-fronted cases. Sparkling jewels glimmered in the rays. Coronets, heavy buckles, necklaces decorations of all sorts were ready for the thieves who had entered.

Harry Vincent eased his hand into his pocket. He was ready to balk Mark Tyrell's game. It was a whisper from the other man that made him pause. Tyrell had turned his light up toward the ceiling, nearly twenty feet above.

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"Hear anything, Vincent?"

"No."

"That skylight's a bit off center."

"Only a trifle."

"Yes. I guess Foon Koo barred it hurriedly."

"Perhaps he damaged the fastenings, Tyrell."

"That's possible."

Tyrell lowered his light. Harry began to draw his gun. Then came another interruption. Other flashlights appeared suddenly from the hall. Harry swung; Tyrell stopped him.

In that instant, Harry realized that his chance was gone. He had thought that this was to be a two man job. Instead, others had arrived. Tyrell was whispering to the arrivals. Harry recognized names: Slug Bracken Pug Halfin – Chopper Hoban Muff Motter.

Cliff Marsland was absent. Evidently he had been left with guards outside. Harry's dwindling hopes were ended. His only course was to play along with crime. Along with the other raiders, he helped at the glass cases. Bags had appeared in the glimmering field of the flashlights. Men were loading them with jeweled relics.

THE job was a brief one, thanks to Tyrell. The chief crook had already picked the particular cases which contained items of real value. He seemed remarkably familiar with the objects that he wanted.

"All right," came Tyrell's order. "Hold those lights at the door. I'll take one more look; then we'll be on our way."

Of the five men aiding Tyrell, three including Harry Vincent were standing with loaded bags. Harry was actually within the room. He was beside the opened door. The others were in the outer hall. Beside them were the two who held the brilliant flashlights. Mark Tyrell was also part way in the room. The steadied torches were gleaming from either side of him. The angles of their focused light joined at the center of the roost and showed the rifled cases at the opposite wall.

As Tyrell paused to look about, he heard a scraping sound from the ceiling. He looked upward. His right hand tightened on a revolver that he was holding pointed to the floor.

"What's that?" he questioned, hoarsely. "Turn a light up, Pug –"

Before Pug could respond, something swished from above. A shape of blackness dropped squarely to the center of the room, directly in the range of the flashlights. Long, spreading arms stretched outward upon the floor, to break the fall. A head swung upward from a pair of cloaked shoulders. Burning eyes reflected the glare of flashlights.

Like a creature from the night, The Shadow had plunged through the skylight. Delayed by the fastenings that Foon Koo had replaced, the master of vengeance had arrived just in time to check the escape of the robbers.

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A snarl came from Slug Bracken, who was holding one flashlight. Pug Halfin – he held the other glimmer emitted a frenzied grunt. The men with the bags paused dumbfounded, all except Harry Vincent. He was ready to drop his bag and spring to The Shadow's aid.

Before Harry could act, a startling climax capped the unexpected arrival of The Shadow. Mark Tyrell was the man responsible. He had seen his archenemy drop out of space. He saw The Shadow, instantly recovered from his plunge, rising upward with a pair of automatics swinging in his black-gloved fists. Quick as a flash, Tyrell swung his revolver upward and pressed the trigger.

THE SHADOW had risen with a swinging twist. It was the uncanny shift he made while aiming, to trick opponents into missing their mark. At the same time, his automatics were on their way to cover Tyrell. The Shadow, marksman extraordinary, was an adept at beating enemies to the shot.

Tyrell, however, gained the advantage. His revolver barked as The Shadow's automatics pointed. More than that, Tyrell showed surprising skill. As The Shadow shifted, Tyrell followed with his aiming gun. The bullet from his .38 found its mark in The Shadow's left shoulder.

Harry Vincent saw The Shadow's feinting twist end in a sprawling fall. An automatic blazed a split second too late. The bullet whistled over Tyrell's head as the crook fired a second shot. This blast from Tyrell's gun was high. The crook dropped his aim, as The Shadow, crumpled on the floor, loosed another shot that went wide because of his weakened aim.

Before Mark Tyrell could fire a third time, Harry Vincent acted. Instinctively, he chose the most effective plan. Instead of dropping the bag, he clutched it tightly. Driving madly toward the door, he jostled Tyrell squarely and sent the chief crook staggering backward to the hall.

"The Shadow!" cried Harry, hoarsely. "The Shadow! Get going! It's The Shadow!"

Harry had blocked Tyrell perfectly.

His thrust had sent the suave crook completely from the room. The other bag carriers leaped for safety as they heard Harry's shout. Pug Halfin sprang along with them. Slug Bracken, yanking out a gun, remained to aim. He, unlike Pug, had been holding his flashlight in his left hand.

Flat from the floor, The Shadow fired his right hand automatic. His target was the flashlight. His cramped position spoiled his usually perfect aim. The bullet whistled half an inch from Slug's wrist. Instinctively, the gangleader sprang back as he returned the shot. Through his sudden haste, Slug missed his mark.

Tyrell, alone, was springing back toward the relic room. Slug, past the corner of the door, saw him in the light of Pug's flashlight and grabbed him wildly.

"Stay back!" he shouted. "Stay back! He's got the doorway covered!"

As Tyrell tried savagely to break away, the boom of the automatic sounded. A bullet zipped through the open door and flattened against the wall of the hallway. A second shot followed. The Shadow, still on the floor, was loosing an intermittent barrage.

Tyrell stopped short. Shots in the dark were not to his liking. He had crippled The Shadow; but the wounded fighter was still dangerous.

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"I clipped him!" he snarled as Harry Vincent used one arm to aid Slug Bracken drag Tyrell down the hallway. "I clipped him! Next time I'll get him!"

A shout came from below. Pug Halfin answered it. He had reached the head of the stairs. Then came the sound of revolver shots. Tyrell, fuming, ordered the retreat. His command was none too soon.

Two servants armed with rifles had appeared at the bottom of the stairs. Gangsters from outside had felled them with revolvers. One man lay wounded; the other was dead when Tyrell and his band arrived.

Then came shots from the street. Harry Vincent was side by side with the others who held the bags. Slug Bracken was herding them forward. A touring car was waiting in the street. Hurriedly, Harry ran with the two men beside them. All three threw their bags into the touring car. The driver leaped to the street as Slug Bracken arrived and jumped for the wheel. Pug Halfin sprang aboard. The touring car shot forward.

Two policemen were firing from the corner. Scattered mobsters were answering from moving sedans. Beckoning hands waved Harry and his companions aboard one car. Mark Tyrell gained the second sedan.

Barking revolvers dropped one bluecoat as the first sedan whizzed by. The other officer dropped for shelter behind a large hydrant. He fired futile shots at the tires of the cars. Sirens were whining. A patrol car was coming down the avenue. Another was heading along the side street. Its searchlights showed the sedans as they sped by the crossing.

Ugly-faced drivers were determined to make a getaway. It was apparent that they would do so. They had sufficient start. Cliff Marsland was not in Harry's car; hence Harry assumed that the other agent of The Shadow was in the sedan with Tyrell. There was no other course than to stick with the mob and keep mum.

POLICE were arriving at Westbury Grolier's mansion. They had found one wounded officer, a crippled servant and a dead one. They were entering the wing where the fight had taken place.

The door to the relic room was closed and barred. There was good reason. Within that rifled room. The Shadow was standing, with his flashlight sweeping to every corner. He had barred the door as soon as he had gained his feet.

The door of a closet was ajar. Unsteadily, The Shadow reached it. A faint laugh came from his lips as he spied a long ladder. With his right arm, The Shadow brought out the ladder and managed to raise it to the skylight. He paused, as though to steady himself.

He ascended the ladder and reached the skylight. He clung there as he kicked the ladder to the carpeted floor. On the roof, he shifted the barred trap over the opening; then made for the parapet.

A policeman had passed by the bottom of the wall. With an effort, The Shadow produced his suction cups. He began a perilous descent. At intervals, he nearly slipped, for one arm hung useless. Yet he managed to gain the ground.

Pausing by the wall, The Shadow could hear voices of police at the door. He caught the words. Apparently, the crooks had all escaped. Most of the arriving police had taken up the futile chase. Westbury Grolier was being summoned from his bedroom in the far wing of the house. He, alone, had the key that would unlock the master door to the chain of rooms in which he kept his collection of rarities.

As the policemen moved away, The Shadow stumbled toward the gate. He was lucky as he gained the passage at the rear of the outside wall. Faltering, he found an opening between two houses. Shifting from

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view just as a policeman appeared from the avenue, The Shadow merged with darkness and moved along to the next street.

Here, his course became an unsteady one. There were intervals of blackness between the splotches of light that came from street lamps. The Shadow chose the darkened sectors when he was forced to pause. He neared the avenue and clutched at the door knob of a parked limousine.

The door yielded. The Shadow sank into the cushions. With an effort, he managed to drag his cloak from his shoulders. It fell to the floor, with gloves and hat. His right hand found the speaking tube. His voice, steady, sounded in the ear of the dozing chauffeur.

"Hurry, Stanley." The Shadow spoke in the voice of Lamont Cranston. "Take me to Doctor Rupert Sayre's. I have an important appointment with him."

The limousine pulled from the curb as The Shadow sank exhausted. He was on his way to safety. His wound would gain prompt attention. The Shadow had escaped from other dilemmas as serious as this one.

But usually, in spite of wounds, The Shadow had managed to frustrate crime. To-night, he had been balked. Mark Tyrell, launched upon a new career of evil, had returned hot lead for the mockery which he had accepted on two previous meetings.

A million-dollar robbery had been accomplished. Mark Tyrell had recouped his losses in one stroke. Yet a faint laugh sounded from the interior of the rolling limousine.

The grim game was not yet ended. Recovered from his wound, The Shadow would be ready to force another encounter. A new task lay before him; already, The Shadow was planning a way by which he could reclaim the wealth that had been so recently purloined from the museum of Westbury Grolier!

Soft echoes wavered. The limousine was pulling up in front of the apartment office occupied by Doctor Rupert Sayre. A light showed in the windows. The physician was in his office.

One minute later, Lamont Cranston, pale-faced, but steady, stepped from his car to keep his supposed appointment with Doctor Rupert Sayre.

CHAPTER XV. STRATEGY

"THERE'S a phony in the outfit."

Slug Bracken was the speaker. The listeners were Mark Tyrell, Pug Halfin and Foon Koo. They were assembled in the top room of the labyrinthic house. Around them, stacked in neat heaps, were the jeweled relics stolen from Westbury Grolier.

"You are sure of it, Slug?" questioned Tyrell.

"You bet," affirmed the mobleader. "I've been thinking steady on it since that job at Grolier's two nights ago. Look here, Tyrell. I didn't hand out the word to the gorillas until we were all set to go."

"What about it?"

"Well how did The Shadow drop in?"

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"Forget The Shadow. I crippled him, didn't I?"

"Sure. But who wised him to the lay?"

Tyrell pondered. The question was natural, coming from Slug Bracken. That particular mobleader knew nothing about the contact that Tyrell had experienced with The Shadow. Tyrell's first impulse was to discount the question.

"Why worry about The Shadow?" he demanded. "You saw me drop him, didn't you? If your gorillas are troubled because he came into the picture, remind them that I proved my superiority. Tell them that the next time I meet The Shadow, I shall kill him. I beat him to one shot. I can beat him to another."

"I told the mugs that," asserted Slug. "They know what you can do, Tyrell. You clipped The Shadow, right enough. But the bulls didn't find him at Grolier's. That means he ain't hurt any too had. He'll muscle in again; and we can expect him pretty quick. If you'd killed him two nights ago –"

"I would have killed him!" broke in Tyrell. "I had the drop on him. My third shot would have finished him, if Vincent hadn't become excited –"

"That's just it," interposed Slug.

"What do you mean?" demanded Tyrell.

"Well," suggested Slug. "The Shadow didn't hear us talking here, before we started out to Grolier's. That part of it's sure enough. We worked quick. Somebody wised him. The guy that did it must have been in on the know.

"The Shadow didn't have to snoop, with one of his heels in our outfit. What's more, it's a sure bet that The Shadow's stool would be ready to help him out in a pinch. All right. One guy did help him out."

"Vincent?"

"Yes."

"He was simply trying to get away with his bag. He also thought he was saving me."

"Yeah?"

"Certainly. You grabbed me yourself, Slug, out in the hall."

"Yeah. But that was when it was too late for you to get The Shadow. When Vincent rammed into you, the deck was all stacked your way. You had The Shadow covered."

Tyrell frowned. He saw Pug Halfin nodding in approval of what Slug had said.

"Slug's right, Tyrell," asserted Pug. "He knows his own gorillas, don't he? Like Chopper Hoban an' Muff Motter and –"

"I know all of them," growled Slug. "They've worked for me plenty long – all except one guy. I mean Cliff Marsland."

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"You suspect him also?" inquired Tyrell.

"I don't know," admitted Slug. "Cliff's got a good rep. I wouldn't want to accuse him of working with The Shadow. Maybe it wouldn't be good for my health. But I do know this, Tyrell: Marsland is a mighty high class torpedo to be working as an ordinary gink in my mob. It don't look any too good. What's more, he's the gazebo who dragged in Vincent."

"Have you questioned Marsland about Vincent?"

"No. Vincent was your man. When I began to see something phony about it, I kept mum."

"Then Marsland knows nothing of your suspicions?"

"You bet he don't."

TYRELL lighted a cigarette as he paced back and forth across the room. His shrewd eyes began to light. He was scheming, in subtle fashion. At last, he whirled to face the others.

"I've got it!" he decided. "Listen, Foon Koo these traps of yours. Can I count on them to snag any one that comes in here?"

Foon Koo leered as he nodded.

"Even The Shadow?"

Again, the Chinaman nodded.

"All right," said Tyrell with a smile.

"What's up?" questioned Slug. "Are you going to bring Marsland and Vincent here? Say that's no ticket. We can rub those bimboes out any time."

"I'm thinking of The Shadow," declared Tyrell, seriously. "I'm beginning with the assumption that Vincent is his agent; and that Marsland may also be in his employ. One or the other perhaps both may have passed some word to him two nights ago.

"The Shadow knows that this place exists. He knows that I stored all the false treasures away somewhere. However, he had no reason in the past to seek the location of this house. It was more to his advantage to avoid it.

"At present, we have gained real treasures. The Shadow will try to reclaim them. I don't think that he has trailed any of us to-night; but we cannot be sure. Therefore, it would be unsafe to remove these stolen relics."

"If you can't move the swag," protested Pug, "you ain't goin' to be able to fence it."

"But The Shadow's not going to get it while it's here," put in Slug. "Tyrell's right, Pug. It's the best bet to leave the stuff with Foon Koo."

"Exactly," said Tyrell, with a smile. "These relics, however, can serve a double purpose. Not only can they be held for profitable sale; they can also lure The Shadow to his undoing."

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Mobleaders stared in slow understanding. Foon Koo grinned. Artfully, Mark Tyrell proceeded to outline his plan.

"We shall work through both Vincent and Marsland," explained the shrewd crook. "First of all, Slug, you will act as leader. Talk to Pug and Marsland – down at the Morocco and tell them that they are to go together to the old garage where we keep the cars.

"You act wisely, Pug, while Slug is passing the information. He will say that the swag is to be moved. Pug will be deputed to drive one car; Marsland the other. Mention the location of this house. That will give Marsland an opportunity to inform The Shadow where we have the treasure.

"Add that Foon Koo is watching it, in the top story of the house. Tell Marsland how to ring the bell; but state that five buzzes are necessary not four. Pug and Marsland will go to the garage, accompanied by Chopper and Muff."

"The strong-arm boys," grinned Slug. "But where'll I be, Tyrell?"

"Down in the cellar, by the padded cell. Waiting to greet The Shadow when he drops in."

"Good. But if Marsland ain't the squealer? What if Vincent is working alone with The Shadow?"

"I shall provide for that. I have been taking Vincent into my confidence. I shall take him with me, to join Pug and Marsland at the garage. I shall tell him that we are coming here in a sedan, to supervise the removal of the stolen goods. My story to Vincent will be the same as your story to Marsland.

"While Pug and I are meeting at the garage, The Shadow will be on his way here. Aided by Chopper and Muff, Pug and I can easily overpower Marsland and Vincent. Meanwhile, Slug, you will wait in the cellar with the remainder of your mob. You will hold The Shadow a prisoner when he falls into the cell."

"Why not bump him?" questioned Slug.

"He shall die," returned Tyrell, "but not until I give the order. With Marsland and Vincent prisoners, I shall come here. My work will be the execution of the master; after that, I shall go back to quiz his servants. If both prove to be in The Shadow's employ, they shall die."

"It sounds good, Tyrell," said Slug, with a nod. "Then we'll leave the swag here?"

"No," returned Tyrell, "Pug will follow me here with one car. We shall actually remove the treasure after The Shadow is dead."

"Where to? There's no place as good as this one."

"No? You are forgetting something, Slug. I have a much better place for these valuable relics."

"You mean you'll take it to –"

"Yes."

Slug Bracken grinned while Mark Tyrell nodded wisely. Pug Halfin was puzzled. He knew that he understood certain facts that Slug did not know – particularly those that pertained to The Shadow. Now it was apparent that Slug also shared certain secrets with Tyrell.

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"That's one place where the swag will be safe enough," decided Slug. "It'll make it easy to pull the fencing job, too. You're a foxy bozo, Tyrell."

"That completes our plans," asserted Tyrell, quietly. "I may alter them if circumstances prove it necessary. Trapping The Shadow in the cell is excellent, despite the fact that I should prefer to meet him face to face and gun to gun."

"Nevertheless, it may be best to depend upon Foon Koo's clever traps. One, at least, should surely snare The Shadow. It might be best" Tyrell paused thoughtfully "for me to test them first. Should I fail to pass them, The Shadow would also fail."

The mobleaders stared as they heard Tyrell's confident statement. They were ready to believe Mark Tyrell the superior of The Shadow. The encounter at Grolier's had proven his claims of ability.

"However," resumed Tyrell, "I shall consider that matter later. It is time for us to leave. Our plans are made. It is time that we were going. To-morrow night will be the time of action."

The mobleaders shuffled from the room where the swag was kept. Tyrell lingered to watch Foon Koo manipulate a switch that made safe descent a possibility.

"You're sure your traps will snag The Shadow?" questioned Tyrell.

"Foon Koo trapee anybody," returned the Chinaman, with an evil grin. "Catchee you, Mister Tyrell; catchee Mister Shadow allee samee. Foon Koo know all best trickee. Learnee plenty when he livee in Shanghai."

Tyrell nodded as he followed his companions through the anteroom. His shrewd lips wore a satisfied smile beneath the stubby mustache. Tyrell was confident that The Shadow, and his agents also, would soon be at the mercy of their enemies.

CHAPTER XVI. IN THE TRAP

"STAY around the house, Cranston. Your shoulder needs the rest."

Doctor Rupert Sayre was speaking. The physician a keen-eyed, brisk practitioner was talking to his patient in the living room of Cranston's New Jersey home. It was the third night after the affray at Grolier's.

"You were fortunate," added Sayre, "that the wound was not more serious. You seem to bear a charmed life, Cranston. A bullet from a .38 is not a pleasing sort of souvenir."

"Perhaps not," came Cranston's smiling response. "However, Rupert, you are second to none in the extraction of such troublesome objects."

"Thank you for the compliment. At the same time, consider yourself lucky that the slug did not come from a .45."

There was a rap at the door. Cranston issued a summons to enter. A servant appeared.

"What is it, Richards?" asked the wounded man.

"Mr. Burbank is on the wire, sir," explained the servant. "He insists that he must talk to you."

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"More chatter about my sending station," came Cranston's chuckle. "That chap Burbank is a wireless expert. I've had him out here working on the apparatus that I have in the third floor. Burbank is always calling up when he knows that I am at home."

Cranston reached for an extension telephone. Doctor Sayre sat quietly by while his patient talked to Burbank.

"Hello..." Cranston's tone was calm. "Yes...Yes... I have a guest, Burbank, but I can talk a short while...Go ahead..."

"I understand... Certainly,... They should both go along with the arrangements... I shall attend to the other matter... What's that, Burbank? To-night? Of course. That will be all right..."

"You do not intend to go out this evening?" questioned Doctor Sayre, as Lamont Cranston hung up the receiver. "Remember my instructions."

"Burbank may be coming here," was the quiet rejoinder. "He has been getting advice on trouble that we have had with my sending station. He thinks that he can fix it."

"Watch him while he works, then," remarked Sayre, as he arose to leave. "No heavy exercise, Cranston. You might throw too much strain on that left shoulder."

"I shall remember."

The physician departed. Lamont Cranston returned to the living room. He sat down beside a table and picked up a book. Though apparently reading, he was listening to the throb of Sayre's motor. He heard the physician's car roll from the driveway. He summoned Richards.

"Tell Stanley to have the limousine ready," was Cranston's quiet order. "I am going into New York, Richards. Should any one call, tell them I am in the radio room and cannot be disturbed."

"Very well, sir."

Lamont Cranston strolled upstairs. Richards ordered the car. The servant went about his duties, expecting to hear his master come down to the ground floor. As he stood in the living room, fifteen minutes later, Richards did not observe the phantom, black-cloaked shape that emerged from the gloom of the stairway and crossed the hall to the front door.

The Shadow had chosen to don his sable-fitted garb before he departed from the house. Hence Richards was astonished when he ascended to the second floor to find Lamont Cranston missing from his room. An opened door was all that the servant encountered.

Stanley, at the wheel of the limousine, was also puzzled when he heard Lamont Cranston's voice through the speaking tube. His master was ordering him to drive into New York. Usually, Cranston stepped openly into the car when he left his home. This time, Stanley had not heard him enter.

HALF an hour later, Lamont Cranston's limousine was completing a speedy journey along the New Jersey skyway, rolling toward the entrance of the Holland Tunnel. Stanley was at the wheel; his master was resting easily in the back seat, his right shoulder bearing his weight against the side of the car.

Word had been received from Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland. Both reports to Burbank had told a coinciding story. The agents were going to an old garage in the neighborhood of Tenth Avenue. From there,

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they were to travel to an old house that was to serve Mark Tyrell no longer.

Neither Cliff nor Harry had voiced any suspicion regarding the facts that they had received. Hence Burbank's report had been quite methodical. It had carried no indication of danger to either of The Shadow's workers. Hence The Shadow was doing exactly as Mark Tyrell had hoped. He was traveling to the old house of Foon Koo.

The limousine reached the seclusion of a street on the upper East Side. Stanley nodded as he heard Cranston's voice through the speaking tube – instructing him to wait at this parking spot. The chauffeur did not see the black-cloaked form that emerged from the back of the car. He merely heard the closing of the door that announced the departure of his master.

FIVE minutes later, the Shadow had reached the side of the old house where Foon Koo guarded the swag. His gloved right hand unscrewed the knob of the door. A finger pressed the hidden bell five times. The Shadow replaced the knob.

The door opened this time. The Shadow arrived in total darkness. The door closed behind him. He ascended the little steps to the first floor. A brilliant flashlight, its ray no larger than a silver dollar, revealed the path along the floor.

The Shadow's light uncovered a door that led into a hall. The barrier yielded to pressure. But The Shadow did not step forward. Instead, he pressed the door completely open and let his flashlight glimmer downward.

The floor had opened also. Silently, a trap had dropped. The glimmer showed a tube of polished metal, curving downward, like a chute. The Shadow's hidden lips emitted a soft laugh. The Shadow had uncovered the first of Foon Koo's snares.

The eerie visitant proceeded in another direction. He found a door that led into another room. His light showed smudges on the woodwork. Again, a trap opened with the door; this time, The Shadow gave a forward spring and cleared it. From the next room he found his way into the hall.

A spot of light moved up the stairs. It was the only indication of The Shadow's presence. It uncovered each step to the hidden eyes above it. Suddenly, The Shadow stopped. His keen gaze had noted a tiny crack at the bottom of a step. Swinging the light upward, The Shadow observed a corresponding mark above.

Three steps were ready to give should he tread upon any one of them. The Shadow's light swung toward the banister. His hand reached forward and pressed the rail. A section dropped with his touch. Had he used it to support him while crossing the steps, he would have fallen.

The Shadow let the rail rise automatically as he released it. The posts had sunk into the floor under pressure. The flashlight clicked out. The Shadow's cloak swished as its wearer made a long, upward dive, twisting so that his right shoulder struck an upper step.

The trick steps opened beneath The Shadow's weight; but their action was useless. The gloved right hand had caught a post past the loose section of the rail. The steps moved upward into place as The Shadow drew himself to the safety above.

In the labyrinth of the second floor, The Shadow weaved a cunning course. The traps were different here. In one spot, The Shadow encountered a delayed opening. A click suddenly told him that the floor that seemed solid was about to swallow him. His quick hand caught the top of an opened door. The Shadow clung there while the flashlight showed the trap break downward; then rise and click solidly back in place. He resumed

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his journey.

The steps to the third floor were untrapped. The Shadow reached the last stage of his journey. Burbank had mentioned that the swag was in a top room of the house. The Shadow, as he weaved safely through the final maze, was coming close to his goal.

He arrived at the door of the anteroom. It was locked. There was no keyhole. The Shadow probed panels with his fingers. He found one that began to yield. He laughed softly. His hand stopped as his foot tapped the floor.

Pressure of that panel, which any searcher could easily have found, would have meant the release of another trap. The Shadow knew that the crafty designer of this door would not have resorted to so simple an artifice. He knew that this was not the actual one that controlled the door.

It took The Shadow three minutes to solve this Chinese puzzle. At last, he delivered a twisting inward pressure to the left. Something clicked. The door swung open. The Shadow stood peering into the dimly lighted anteroom.

THERE was no sign of Foon Koo. The Chinaman was probably inside the inner room. The phantom visitant could see the closed door ahead. His eyes spied something else: the switch upon the wall. The Shadow entered the anteroom and let the door swing shut behind him.

The laugh that came from beneath the umbra of the hat brim was soft and whispered. The Shadow had reached the switch. He had divined its purpose. He knew that no one had been expected to pass the traps below. This was the control that rendered the devices safe for welcome visitors to pass.

By pressing that switch, The Shadow could nullify the snares that he had passed. That meant that his retreat would be prepared, should he desire it. This was the proper action to perform before seeking entry to the final lair, where an enemy must be lurking. His laugh still quivering, The Shadow pressed the switch.

It was then that he learned the greatest subtlety of Foon Koo. The Shadow's conjecture had been correct. The switch was the one that locked the lower traps. It served a double purpose, however, when Foon Koo so arranged it.

As the switch clicked under The Shadow's pressure, the floor of the anteroom dropped downward in two sections. The only portions that remained firm were those where broken chairs were resting. The Shadow was too far from solid floor to grasp it.

Out went the lights. Downward shot The Shadow, into a mammoth funnel. His cloaked figure whizzed twisting through a polished tube of metal, like those that he had previously avoided.

Sliding helplessly at breakneck speed, The Shadow sped past the openings of other tubes. All led into the same main artery. Gloved fingers could gain no hold at any place along the slippery route. Only the curve near the bottom of the main chute sufficed to slow The Shadow's breath-taking skid.

The end was reached as speed slackened. The Shadow was precipitated through a vertical stretch of tubing. He reached the end of the course just as he had come into Grolier's relic room with a thudding tumble to a solid floor.

The drop was more dangerous than at Grolier's; but it was broken by the padding that covered the stone floor. Slumped, half-stunned by the thump, The Shadow was in the middle of the cell room at the bottom of the

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house. He was trapped within the snare that had awaited him.

GLOATING eyes were peering into the padded room. Slug Bracken and his mobsters were staring through the bullet-proof glass. Before them lay the arch-enemy of crime: The Shadow. Eager fingers trembled upon the triggers of guns that were thrust through loopholes.

Slug knew the temper of his mob. He also had instructions from Tyrell – orders that he intended to obey. He growled a command to wait.

"Don't plug him!" warned the mobleader. "Hold it, unless he tries to make trouble. I'm boss here. Watch him that's all."

The Shadow was rising. He stood with shoulders stooped and head bowed, recovering from the force of the fall. Vicious gorillas waited his next move. Slug Bracken was most tense of all.

Slug half expected The Shadow to try some incredible attempt at escape; he half expected him to offer a futile challenge. The mobleader, however, was totally unprepared for the action which came.

The Shadow's eyes turned upward. Their glow was hidden by the hat brim and the fact that they did not face the light. Hands deliberately peeled away black gloves and let them drop to the floor. The right arm raised and loosed the sable-hued cloak. It fell to reveal a tall form clad in evening clothes. The right hand swept upward and sent the slouch hat tumbling back.

Slug Bracken gasped as he recognized the face that he saw through the glass. A suave smile showed upon lips that were topped by a short-clipped mustache. In an astonished tone, Slug Bracken identified the prisoner who stood within the cell:

"Mark Tyrell!"

CHAPTER XVII. DEATH DELIVERED

MOBSTERS had backed from their guns at Slug Bracken's cry of recognition. Though these gorillas had never dealt with Mark Tyrell, they knew the man by reputation and description. They also knew that Slug was expecting Tyrell here to-night.

Slug, staring through the glass, remembered that Tyrell had said something regarding a possible change in plans. He had also recalled Tyrell's remark that he might test Foon Koo's traps for himself. These thoughts in mind, Slug saw Tyrell make a nudging gesture toward the front of the cell.

"All right, gang," ordered Slug. "Ease back into the outer room. This is Tyrell I'm letting him out."

Stooping, Slug unbarred the low doors. He stepped back while Tyrell advanced; then stooped and came through to join him. A door had opened away from the glass window. Mobsters were filing into a lighted room.

"Come along," Slug heard Tyrell say. "We can talk in there. It's all right for your crew to hear."

THE two men joined the gorillas. Pop-eyed mobsters were seated on benches, watching this conference between Slug Bracken and the man who had so unexpectedly transformed himself from the guise of The Shadow.

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"What's the idea?" questioned Slug.

"Plans have gone wrong," responded Tyrell.

"You mean The Shadow didn't come?" inquired Slug.

"No," was Tyrell's easy answer. "He did come here; but he balked. I was watching."

"In his get up?"

"Yes. I thought that since The Shadow found it so effective, as a covering in darkness, I could make use of it also."

"A good gag. But why did you come in? To test Foon Koo's traps?"

"Yes. The Shadow rang for entry. Then he hesitated. He suddenly departed. I was afraid that he might be lingering. So I acted on the spur of the moment. I was well hidden under cloak and hat. I chose to enter in his place, feeling that it would be the quickest plan."

"Did you see The Shadow working on the knob?"

"Yes."

"How many times did he ring?"

"Five."

"Foon Koo heard him all right. He set the traps. Well, if The Shadow comes back. Foon Koo will drop him through. But there's one thing, Tyrell, that –"

"You're wondering why I didn't plug The Shadow while I was watching him?"

"Yes."

"Suppose," a crafty smile was on Tyrell's lips "that the visitor had been a fake, like myself. I would have killed some person of no consequence; and The Shadow would have been warned."

"You think The Shadow sent a phony ahead of him?"

"I'm inclined to that belief. I doubt that The Shadow would ordinarily balk upon mere suspicion of danger. There may be trouble yet. When The Shadow does arrive, he may choose some extremely clever plan of action. In fact" – Tyrell's voice paused speculatively "he might even suspect that five rings at the bell would be the signal of his arrival."

"You don't think he'll get wise to the four rings, do you?"

"Possibly. The Shadow is wily."

"Say" Slug Bracken glowered "you know what that would mean. Foon Koo would open the way for him to come down here. Listen, Tyrell we ought to have thought about that before –"

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Slug broke off. The further door of the room was opening. The gangleader stared in that direction; the gorillas saw Tyrell turn also. Turning heads followed. An oath came from Slug Bracken's lips.

Standing in the doorway was the counterpart of the prisoner whom Slug had released from the padded cell. For the second time to-night, a person who looked like Mark Tyrell had arrived among the flock of waiting thugs.

LIKE the first Tyrell, the second was clad in evening clothes. He was staring straight across the room, meeting the gaze of the one who stood beside Slug Bracken. The rough-faced gangleader stood stupefied at the amazing sight. The gorillas, too, were dumbfounded. It was the two Tyrells who acted.

Right hands shot toward hips. They whipped out simultaneously. Flashing revolvers glimmered as quick fingers snapped at triggers. Two guns roared. The burst close by Slug Bracken was deafening. Compared to it, the report from the door seemed slight.

A bullet whistled past the ear of the Tyrell who stood near Slug. Then came a gasp from the Tyrell by the door. The revolver clattered from the new entrant's nerveless fingers. The man's hands clutched fiercely over his heart.

With a choking gasp, the arrival wavered; then sprawled to the floor. He made no further motion. He was dead.

"The Shadow." The scornful words came from the victor who was standing by Slug Bracken. "I wounded him at Grolier's. To-night I have killed him."

"You said you'd get him," stammered Slug.

"He was clever," came Tyrell's sneer. "More so than I expected. He called my game. While I was coming here clad in cloak and hat like his, he trumped my ace by disguising himself to look like me.

"Fortunately, I held a higher trump." The speaker slapped his big .45. "I beat him to the draw. That ends The Shadow. Pick him up, men. Toss him where he belongs in the cell that was arranged for him. Cover the body with the cloak and hat. They are the garments that he should have worn."

While sober gorillas lifted the body, Slug Bracken watched Tyrell crack open his revolver and remove the empty cartridge from its chamber. Deft fingers inserted another bullet.

Paddy steps from the door, Foon Koo had arrived. He was grinning as he surveyed Slug Bracken and Mark Tyrell.

"Getee Shadow?" he inquired.

"In there," informed Slug, nudging his thumb toward the padded cell from which the gorillas were returning. "Tyrell killed him."

"Shadow ringee five," declared Foon Koo. "Tellee me he come. Foon Koo dropee. Wait to hear four ringee. Mister Tyrell come. Foon Koo comes down. Find out."

"Say" Slug turned to Tyrell as Foon Koo left by the door to the room outside the cell "The Shadow must have wised up to the four rings. Foon Koo don't get it."

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"Why worry?" came Tyrell's suave inquiry. Keen eyes here watching through the door, where Foon Koo was surveying the cloak-covered body through the window of the strongroom. "I killed The Shadow. That's enough."

Slug was nodding as Foon Koo came pattering back. The Chinaman seemed gleeful. He turned toward the outer door and pointed upward.

"Foon Koo be ready," he informed. "Letee Pug in. When you thinkee Pug be here?"

"Any minute, Foon Koo." The reply was in Tyrell's tone.

The Chinaman padded away. Slug Bracken called to his gorillas. He posted them along the benches. Then he put a query.

"You're moving the swag? Like you said, Tyrell?"

A nod was the response.

"Alone?" quizzed the gangleader. "Or with the mob?"

"Take the mob if you want."

"But they don't know the real lay on –"

"That doesn't matter. The Shadow is dead."

"Yeah. But there's no use letting these mugs know too much. Anyway, it's up to you, Tyrell. What you say goes. You're the guy I'm to take orders from. You've seen –"

Slug broke off as a new arrival appeared. It was Pug Halfin, alone. The mobleader was wearing a quizzical expression.

"The Shadow is dead," came Tyrell's spoken response.

"Where?" demanded Pug.

"In the cell," was the response. "No time to look him over now. We're moving the stuff."

"So you got The Shadow, eh?" grinned Pug. "You told me you'd bag him, when you was leavin' the old garage. I got my bus outside the tourin' car –"

"Come on," broke in Slug. "We'll start the swag on the move. Here's Foon Koo."

The dwarfish Chinaman had arrived from above. He was beckoning and making gestures upward. He was wearing an inquiring look upon his yellowed face. He was ready to conduct the removal squad to the top story.

"I'll go up," stated Slug, accepting the job as his own. "Come along, a couple of you mugs. Got the swag packed, Foon Koo?"

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The Chinaman nodded. Without asking any further word of Mark Tyrell, Slug strode from the underground room, followed by a pair of his gorillas. Pug Halfin turned to see Mark Tyrell lighting a cigarette.

"Slug's takin' the crew along with him?" questioned Pug.

A nod was the response.

"He can use my buggy," declared Pug, "an' one of them two sedans he's got out on the back street. We can take the extra car back to the garage. We'd better be movin' pretty quick, Tyrell. Chopper an' Muff are gettin' kinda restless."

A quizzical expression appeared upon Tyrell's countenance. Pug saw the raise of his companion's eyebrows.

"On account of what you told us," he explained. "Remember that you said gettin' The Shadow was all that counted? Maybe that it wouldn't be good to stall aroun' too long at the garage? Well I said if we wasn't back there inside of an hour after I left, they could go ahead. That gives us plenty of time, don't it?"

"You took my statement too literally," was the severe reply. Tyrell's brow was clouded. "You seem to have understood that I intended to return to the garage. That is exactly what we shall do."

"All right," agreed Pug, in an apologetic tone. "I just wanted to play it safe an' keep the boys from crabbin'. You know what those mugs are like. We can get started now, if you give the say—so."

PUG shifted toward the outer door. His companion followed. They reached the flight of stairs and ascended to the ground floor. They stepped out into the alleyway beside the house. Pug saw Tyrell's eyes turn toward the front street. A touring car was parked on the opposite side of the thoroughfare. It was empty.

The cigarette glowed as it was pressed between firm lips. Pug wondered why Tyrell was staring at the empty car. He was about to put a whispered question when scuffling sounds announced the arrival of Slug Bracken and his followers. The extra gorillas had arrived from above.

Slug and the two who had come from upstairs were carrying the bags laden with jeweled relics. The gangleader gave his own bag to another henchman. He instructed the three bearers to carry their burdens to the touring car.

"I'll drive," announced Slug. "The rest of you guys take one of the sedans. Wait a minute not you, Lefty. You'll need this one gorilla, Tyrell, to help Slug lug out that dead phony. Go back inside, Lefty. Take your orders from Tyrell."

The gorilla obeyed. Slug watched the remaining men, four in number, head through a passage toward the rear. He spoke in a low tone to Tyrell.

"I don't have to take all those extra mugs," he stated. "The three with me will be enough. It's a good idea, though, to have the sedan tag us. If we get in any trouble on the way, they can put up a scrap while we keep on."

"That's safest," came Tyrell's purring agreement. "Don't be in a hurry, Slug. Better drift along."

"I'll take a long way," agreed Slug. "Keeping away from traffic is the best bet. Don't worry, Tyrell. I'll deliver the swag. So long I don't want to keep that touring car sitting still out front."

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DURING Slug Bracken's final conference with Mark Tyrell, Pug Halfin had followed "Lefty" into the house. The gorilla had gone down into the cellar. Pug had taken the same course. They had reached the padded cell room, to find Foon Koo staring gleefully through the bullet-proof window.

Lefty yanked open the entrance to the cell. He stooped and entered. Pug followed. The gorilla indicated the cloak-covered body. Pug stepped forward eagerly and raised the enshrouding cloth to view The Shadow's face.

The mobleader stepped back with a start as he viewed the dead man's countenance. The sight of Mark Tyrell's features left him stupefied. Lefty laughed.

"The mug tried to pass himself as Tyrell," explained the gorilla. "But Tyrell was here already. He beat this phony to the shot. Look here's The Shadow's gun he didn't have a chance. His slug went high and Tyrell croaked him."

Lefty picked up a revolver and handed it to Pug. The mobleader stared at the weapon. It was a .38.

"Sounded like a pop-gun," snorted Lefty, "alongside of that cannon Tyrell used. His smoke-wagon sure did the trick, Pug."

"You mean Tyrell had a .45?"

"You bet he had. He knew how to use it, too."

Pug grabbed the gorilla by the arm. He dragged him through the door. Foon Koo saw the action; he noted the excited expression on Pug's face. In spiderlike fashion, he joined the two men.

"Listen, Lefty," spoke Pug, hoarsely, "an' you, too, Foon Koo. This dead guy ain't The Shadow. It's Tyrell!

"Let me tell you somethin', both of you" Pug glared from man to man – "The Shadow pulled a fast one on Tyrell before. He fooled me, by makin' up to look like Tyrell. Listen, Foon Koo. Tyrell told me somethin' upstairs last night. Maybe you don't remember it. He told me that a .38 was the kind of rod he used not a .45.

"This guy that's upstairs talkin' with Slug Bracken ain't Tyrell. Tyrell's dead! The bimbo that looks like him is The Shadow. Come along" Pug urged his companions toward the adjoining room and pulled a revolver as he spoke "an' have your rod ready, Lefty. We've got to get The Shadow!"

Pug completed the sentence while Lefty was pulling out a revolver. He and the gorilla had reached the door. Foon Koo was behind them. As they thrust themselves into the room, Pug Halfin uttered a sudden snarl.

Stepping through the opposite door was the person whom they sought. The light was squarely on the living features of Mark Tyrell. For the first time they looked masklike.

"The Shadow!" came Pug's rasp of recognition.

IN answer, false lips uttered a bursting laugh. No longer did The Shadow seek to hide his identity. His arms were crossed: like whips they snapped outward. As Pug and Lefty raised their ready revolvers, long hands displayed a brace of automatics.

Shots boomed through the underground chamber. Quick on the draw, ready with his fingers, The Shadow met the challenge with the guns that he had hitherto concealed. Lefty crumpled, downed by a shot from the

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right-hand automatic. Pug Halfin staggered, but fired in return.

The Shadow's cramped left arm had failed him. The bullet from the second automatic had found its mark in Pug's left arm; not in the gangleader's heart. But the shot had served a purpose. Pug's returning aim was wide. As quickly fired bullets sizzled past him, The Shadow dispatched a second shot from his right hand gun. Pug Halfin sprawled upon the floor and rolled over on his back, dead.

The Shadow dropped. He was just in time. Instinctively, he floundered to the floor as a gleaming knife came whizzing from the quick hand of Foon Koo. The blade missed The Shadow's falling form by inches. After it, quick as a cat upon his spidery legs came Foon Koo.

The Chinaman had launched an amazing spring, his strong hands extended, their clawlike fingers hoping to clutch The Shadow's throat. With a mighty dive, Foon Koo came hurtling out of space, straight for the rolling form upon the floor.

The right-hand automatic spoke its final message. Foon Koo landed squarely upon the figure that he sought, but the evil Chinaman's hands found nothingness. They struck the stone floor beyond The Shadow's body. The last shot, fired at a plunging shape, had found the heart of the dwarfish monster.

Rising, The Shadow shook off the sprawled form of Foon Koo. Thrusting his automatic out of sight, he strode toward the padded cell room. There, he plucked the cloak and hat from the corpse of the real Mark Tyrell.

An ominous laugh sounded weirdly in the underground cell as The Shadow donned his chosen garb. He had reclaimed the garments which he had discarded. They were to serve him in an adventure that demanded his prompt attention.

The Shadow had let Slug Bracken and his gorillas travel away with the swag. He had seen the need for action elsewhere. He had learned important facts from Pug Halfin's statements. He knew why Pug had come here alone.

Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland were prisoners in the old garage. They were doomed to die. Minutes alone remained before their execution. They were prisoners; The Shadow knew their place of captivity. Both had given Burbank the location of the old garage where they had gone to-night.

Two minutes later, the extra sedan shot away from the curb in the street behind the house of Foon Koo. A grim, whispered laugh came from the blackened shape that gripped the wheel. The Shadow, triumphant over enemies, was setting forth upon the pressing rescue.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE BROKEN TRAIL

"THE rub-out, Chopper."

"In a couple of minutes, Muff."

The speakers were the two henchmen who had been left in the old garage. They were standing in a stone-walled room that had but one door. A single light showed their sullen faces. It also revealed two figures propped against the wall.

Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent, bound and gagged, were facing death. They had been trapped. Mark

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Tyrell, Pug Halfin and these two gorillas had fallen upon them unaware. Their impending massacre had become a question of minutes only.

Chopper Hoban and Muff Motter had become restless after Mark Tyrell had left. They had argued with Pug Halfin that living prisoners might prove troublesome. According to their code if such it could be called men slated for the spot should be dispatched without delay.

That was why Pug, in leaving, had set a time limit. That period ended, the killers could slay without waiting for the return of either Pug or Tyrell. The hour set by Pug was ending. Chopper and Muff were arguing the fact.

Of the two, Chopper was the harder. He was more ready to bide his time. Despite Muff's urging to complete the job, Chopper was determined to hold out until the final minute of the established period.

"You never can tell what's happening, Chopper," snarled Muff. "Maybe Tyrell or Pug ran into some bulls. Say we'd be in a lousy jam if a bunch of cops showed up here."

"Sure," growled Chopper. "But there's no bulls coming. How're they going to find this joint. Muff? Tyrell cleared out and so did Pug. They didn't throw out no confetti while they went along, so some flatfoot could go back over the trail. Whatta you think this game is? Hares and hounds?"

"Well, if they was coming back, they'd be here now —"

"Maybe. Maybe not. Suppose we plugged these bimboes and scrambled. Suppose some flatfoot heard the shots."

"He wouldn't find us."

"No. But he might be on the job when Tyrell and Pug got back. That's why we're waiting, Muff."

Chopper pulled a bulky watch from beneath the folds of the grimy gray sweater that he was wearing. He tapped the dial in significant fashion.

"Two minutes more," he announced. "After that, we know for sure that Tyrell and Pug ain't coming back. I don't figure they are coming back. If Tyrell got The Shadow like he was sure he would there'd be no reason to come back. But I ain't going to be a mug. No use of putting him and Pug in a jam if they do head back here —"

Chopper broke off. He had heard a sound outside the room. It was that of a motor, pulling into the side entrance of the deserted garage. Chopper nudged his thumb toward the door.

"Sounds like 'em now," he stated. "Take a look upstairs, Muff."

Muff unbarred the old wooden door. He moved cautiously up a short flight of stone steps, to a darkened floor six feet above. He heard the final chugs of a motor that a driver was turning off. Chopper watched his companion reach the top of the flight.

"Who's there?" growled Muff, in challenge.

"Tyrell," came a cautious voice from the darkness of the raised floor. "Who's that?"

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"Muff."

As he gave his identity, Muff Motter performed an action that was foolish as well as unnecessary. He pressed a light switch at the head of the stairs to illuminate the abandoned garage room into which the car had pulled.

An oath came from Chopper Hoban in the room below. The gorilla who was guarding Harry and Cliff was about to growl to Muff to douse the glim. It was Muff's sudden cry that stopped Chopper's protest.

"The Shadow!"

BEFORE him, approaching from the side of a stopped sedan, Muff saw the black-cloaked figure. He had heard Tyrell's voice; but instead of viewing the suave crook, Muff was staring at the form of The Shadow. He was confronted by the scourge of the underworld!

Muff Motter was holding a ready revolver. He had been gripping this gun in anticipation of riddling helpless prisoners. At sight of The Shadow, Muff swung his weapon upward; his revolver never gained a chance to bark.

An automatic spat flame from The Shadow's right hand. A slug caught Muff Motter in the chest. The mobman floundered. The Shadow gave him no further heed. As he fired, the black-garbed marksman sprang forward; his goal the steps to the room below.

Chopper Hoban acted. While the gunshot echoed, he snarled an oath. He slammed the door of the stone-walled room just as The Shadow reached the top of the steps. Chopper shot the bolt. Fuming, he swung to aim at Harry Vincent and Cliff Marsland.

"You rats are going out!" rasped Chopper. "Curtains for you first. Then The Shadow!"

The scoundrel's lips wore a vicious leer. Chopper was away from the door. He knew that quick shots would finish Cliff and Harry. After that, it would be a battle with The Shadow.

The revolver pointed toward Cliff Marsland. With a sudden effort, Cliff twisted from the wall. Bound as he was, he rolled clear of Chopper's aim. Rasping a laugh, the executioner turned to level his gun at the spot where Cliff had flattened.

Apparently, Cliff's action was futile. Actually, it brought the precious delay that The Shadow needed. The cloaked rescuer had reached the wooden door. His right hand was driving downward with a terrific stroke. The Shadow was gripping the barrel of an automatic. The butt of the big .45 was swinging to the panel of the door.

Crash!

The blow was equal to the stroke of a sledgehammer. The heavy weapon, swung by a long and mighty arm, came smashing through the panel. The upper center of the door was splintered. A gloved fist stopped short as it appeared through the opening.

Fingers released the automatic. The improvised hammer went clattering across the floor. Chopper Hoban, whirling at the sound, saw the hand draw quickly out of sight. He aimed to fire at the floor.

The clatter of the automatic told Chopper that The Shadow's withdrawing hand was weaponless. That was why the gorilla acted in a frenzied fashion. His first shots, from an angle, were useless. Knowing this,

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Chopper sprang to the far wall, directly above Harry Vincent's bound form, and aimed point-blank for the hole in the door.

As finger sought trigger, Chopper saw the rounded muzzle of a second automatic. Above it were two blazing eyes. Then came a burst of flame; the echoing roar of the automatic. Chopper Hoban was too late to fire. His gun arm dropped; his sweated form twisted dizzily, then clumped to the stone floor.

A LAUGH from beyond the door. It was a peal of mocking triumph. The automatic disappeared. A fist reached through and drew the bolt. The shattered door swung open. The Shadow entered the room where his agents lay.

Swiftly, the black-garbed rescuer produced a knife and cut the thongs that bound the prisoners. The Shadow loomed like a blackened phantom from the night, amid the light of this stone-walled room. Directly beneath the single incandescent, his tall figure formed four separate shadows which stretched along the floor like the pointers of a compass. Splotched streaks of blackness made an uncanny sight that neither Harry Vincent nor Cliff Marsland noticed.

The agents, rising from the floor, were obeying The Shadow's hissed order. A blackened arm rose and pointed toward the steps. Harry and Cliff scrambled in that direction. The Shadow reclaimed his first automatic and followed. His laugh sounded with a sardonic burst that left whispering echoes in the underground room.

As Harry and Cliff scrambled into the back of the sedan, The Shadow gained the wheel. The motor rumbled. The car swung about, swerved past Muff Motter's outspread body and roared through the open entrance to an alleyway.

Shouts came from the street as the sedan appeared. A policeman had heard The Shadow's shots. He was looking for the spot where they had come from. The escaping car told him it must be the old garage.

As the sedan swung screeching into the thoroughfare, the bluecoat shouted a command to stop. The Shadow did not heed it. The officer fired ineffectual bullets after the swiftly moving car. The sedan roared ahead.

A patrol car, with siren whining, drove up to take the chase. It had arrived too late. The Shadow's car had already reached the end of the block and was swinging out of sight into the traffic of an avenue.

Harry and Cliff, crouched in the rear of the sedan, heard a whispered laugh from the shrouded driver. They took the tones to be a new expression of The Shadow's triumph. They did not know that the hissed taunt was for the future, not the past.

New adventure lay ahead. With his freed agents to support him. The Shadow was bound on his most important quest. He was taking up the broken trail of Slug Bracken. He was out to reclaim the stolen relics that men of evil still possessed!

CHAPTER XIX. THE MASTER HAND

"DETECTIVE CARDONA, sir. Gentlemen with him."

"Show them in, Cuthbert!" exclaimed Hubert Bexler. "Here, in the living room."

The servant departed. He returned, followed by four men. With Joe Cardona were two whom Bexler

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recognized promptly: Sebastian Dutton and Rudolph Brockthorpe. The fourth visitor was a man of military bearing, whose firm, full face showed a trim, pointed mustache.

"This is Commissioner Weston," introduced Cardona.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bexler, as he extended his hand. "This is unexpected, gentlemen. I was just preparing to leave to meet all of you at Ferrell Gault's."

"We decided to come out here," explained Weston, in a methodical tone. "Cardona and I went to Dutton's; then to Brockthorpe's. We brought them along with us."

"I see," smiled Bexler. "You decided to go the rounds. You thought it best to see all of the valuables that had been returned."

"Precisely. First-hand observation is best. The simultaneous return of the stolen treasures is fully as mysterious as their theft. I have hopes, Bexler, of tracing the unknown thief."

"Any luck as yet?"

"No." Commissioner Weston was seating himself as he spoke. The others had already done so. Bexler copied the example. "The mystery began this afternoon, when Dutton called Cardona to state that a package had been delivered at his home. It contained the stolen Sicilian tapestry.

"Hardly had Cardona reported this before a call came from Rudolph Brockthorpe to announce the fact that his Chinese screens had been delivered at his house. Then came your call, Bexler, regarding the Persian throne."

"Did Gault call last?" inquired Bexler.

"Gault did not call at all," stated Weston. "Cardona telephoned his home and learned that he was out of town. A servant stated that a heavy box had been delivered. Cardona ordered the man to open it. The box contained the jeweled Buddha."

"I see," nodded Bexler. "Then Gault found out about it when he arrived back in town?"

"He is not here yet," stated Weston. "He is due in New York at eleven o'clock. I decided that all four of you gentlemen should get together. That is why I picked Gault's apartment for the meeting. We can be there when he arrives."

"Very well," nodded Bexler. "Cardona did not tell me that Gault was not in town. I wondered why the meeting had been set at such a late hour. I begin to understand."

"Commissioner Weston figured we could go to the other places in the meantime," broke in Joe Cardona. "Mr. Dutton's tapestry is safe in its room, with a man from headquarters on watch. The same with Mr. Brockthorpe's screens. They were both pleased with the idea of having a detective on duty. Their places needed it. That's why we came out here, to see if you required the same protection."

"I have placed the throne in my vault," explained Bexler. "That, of course, is stronger than the rooms where Dutton and Brockthorpe keep their treasures."

"It's where the crooks copped it from."

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"That is correct, Cardona. Of course, I have had the vault thoroughly inspected and changed the combination."

"Gault's Buddha is in his vault waiting until he gets back. Just the same, we've got two men posted there as a precaution."

"Do not misunderstand me. I believe I should have a headquarters man guard here. But I do not consider the precaution as pressing. Do you have a man with you?"

"No." It was Commissioner Weston who spoke. "Cardona can call headquarters, Bexler. The man will be here in half an hour."

HUBERT BEXLER glanced at his watch. He raised his hand to stop Cardona as the detective was stepping toward the telephone.

"It is half past ten," stated Bexler. "We should start at once if we expect to arrive at Gault's before eleven. Suppose we call headquarters from there."

"But in the meantime?"

"Cuthbert can remain on guard. He is armed. Suppose we start, gentlemen. I can ride in with you, commissioner. Cuthbert! My hat and coat."

Hubert Bexler spoke in emphatic fashion. Cuthbert brought hat and overcoat. The visitors had not taken off their outer garments. They were rising as Bexler slipped his arms into the coat that Cuthbert held.

"Maybe you'd like to look at the vault, commissioner," suggested Cardona, turning to Weston. "How about it, Mr. Bexler?"

"Time is too short," returned Bexler, as he took his hat from Cuthbert. "It would require fifteen minutes, at least, for me to explain the features of the vault. A mere glimpse of it would be useless."

"Yes," agreed Weston. "You are right, Bexler. Put your servant on watch. We can send a man out from Manhattan."

"Guard the vault, Cuthbert," ordered Bexler. "Have that revolver of yours ready."

"Yes, sir."

Bexler turned toward the door. The others were about to join him when Joe Cardona raised a warning hand.

"Listen!" said the detective, in a low tone.

SILENCE followed as Cardona glanced toward the window. The shades were drawn. From beyond somewhere past the side of the house the listeners could hear the sounds of low throbbing motors.

"That's beyond the hedge," warned Cardona. "That's the same spots the crooks used when they stole the Persian throne. There's no reason for cars to be in that side lane. Put out the lights, some one. I want to look."

Sebastian Dutton pressed the light switch by the door. Cardona moved to the window. Weston followed. The detective pressed back the side of a shade and stared into the outer darkness.

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"Look, commissioner!" he exclaimed. "See those figures, by the hedge? Somebody's sneaking in toward the side door. Like they did the night when they grabbed the throne –"

A grunt came from Weston. The commissioner was staring intently. Others were moving toward the window. A low whisper sounded in the room. It was a muffled order, unnoticed by any except the man to whom it was given.

"There's a guy at the door," spoke Cardona, in a low tone. "Another in back of him. They're trying to get in."

"Stop them!" answered Weston.

"Let them in!" returned Cardona. "We can trap them here, commissioner, if –"

The detective's suggestion ended in a sudden cry of anger as some one pressed the switch and flooded the room with light. The utterance was followed by a snort from Weston.

Detective and commissioner wheeled. With them turned two others: Dutton and Brockthorpe. All four were rooted with astonishment. Hubert Bexler was standing by the inner door; Cuthbert he had pressed the switch was at the outer.

Master and servant were holding leveled revolvers. The glare on Bexler's face was duplicated on Cuthbert's visage. Then, at a snarled call from Bexler, two more men appeared from the passage that led to the stairs.

With revolvers in their hands, Slug Bracken and a henchman had added their aid. Poor defenseless men were covered by four armed ruffians. Bewildered, the helpless visitors gained their glimmer of the truth.

Bands of crooks had worked under the hidden leadership of an unknown chief who had revealed himself. Hubert Bexler was the master hand of crime!

CHAPTER XX. ENEMIES SPEAK

"FOOLS!" Hubert Bexler snarled the epithet. "If you had stayed away from here to-night, you could have kept your precious treasures. I sought them; but I lost them. I do not need them any longer."

The gray-haired speaker paused, a fiendish glare upon his face. Usually benign, Bexler had no further reason to mask his expression. He seemed to enjoy the privilege of showing himself as he was.

"Four robberies," sneered Bexler. "Actually there were to have been five, in my scheme to gain a million. Aided by a clever man Mark Tyrell and these other henchmen, I engineered my work.

"We robbed you, Dutton. Tyrell snatched the tapestry from beneath your door. Your screens, Brockthorpe, were slid out between the bars on the windows of your strongroom. Gault's Buddha was removed through a secret panel. Tyrell failed, however, when he sought the diamond tiara owned by Powers Jordan.

"My throne? Its theft was a bluff. My henchmen knew the combination of my vault. They entered and opened it, to remove the throne unmolested. It looked like a robbery. Unfortunately" Bexler scowled "the nests had been robbed before. The treasures that we gained were false even my throne. A person called The Shadow had taken the genuine objects and left imitations in their places. He is the one who returned them."

Gasps of astonishment came from the men who faced the guns. Bexler laughed scornfully. He continued.

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"I would have shipped my throne abroad with the other treasures," he declared. "It would have brought its value with the rest. One million dollars would have been my gain.

"Failure merely forced me to a quicker but more dangerous course. I ordered the robbery at Grolier's. I planned it one night when Tyrell visited me. That crime was successful.

"I shall tell you why these men are here to-night. They have come to put Grolier's relics in the safest of all places my vault. From there I could ship them abroad, unsuspected. However, since you gentlemen have formed an obstacle, the relics will go back to their former hiding place."

Bexler paused to chuckle while he schemed. His face was merciless as he proposed his fiendish plan.

"There will be a fight here to-night," he announced. "Four of you will die. Cuthbert and I shall survive. Our story will be that crooks came again to take the Persian throne. Outnumbered, we resisted. In fact, I shall let the throne go for good measure."

Commissioner Ralph Weston clenched his fists. Detective Joe Cardona glowered. Unlike Sebastian Dutton and Rudolph Brockthorpe, who were pale-faced, these men of the law did not cower. Yet they realized that any attempt to start a battle would mean their instant death.

"Tyrell got The Shadow," growled Slug Bracken, as he stood beside Hubert Bexler. "Down at Foon Koo's."

"So I presumed," replied the gray-haired man, with a gloating chuckle. "Your presence here is proof of it, Bracken."

FACING the helpless men before him, Bexler spoke louder, in a tone of finality. His savage words were warning that the victims soon would die.

"The Shadow!" sneered Bexler. "He spoiled my original game. He was shrewd – The Shadow. He offered no active resistance while he knew I held innocent lives in my hands. He saw the working of my schemes.

"The Shadow played a cunning part. I believe that he was clever enough to recognize me as the master hand. I think that he restored the Persian throne to blind me to the fact that he knew my part in this game.

"But The Shadow is a menace no longer. He cannot save you. His counter-schemes are ended. The Shadow is dead slain by Mark Tyrell."

A pause; then Bexler rasped an order to Slug Bracken. That word was the beginning of the last step.

"Summon your henchmen," commanded Bexler. "We shall waste no more time. We are ready for the slaughter."

Slug Bracken nodded to the gorilla who stood beside him. The mobster shifted out into the hall, hastening to bring in the rest of the crew. With Hubert Bexler and Cuthbert steadily covering the group of four helpless men, Slug lowered his gun carelessly as he added a growled command to the departing gorilla.

"Three mugs in through the front" Slug shifted half into the hall "and the rest in this way –"

Weston and Cardona, faced by death, were like hounds on leash. They wanted to leap at Bexler and Cuthbert. Unfortunately, those fiends had their guns placed squarely. Bexler was covering Cardona; Cuthbert held Weston at bay. Dutton and Brockthorpe were quivering with dread.

SPOILS OF THE SHADOW

"Death awaits you," scoffed Bexler. "We shall make it swift. I have consideration for your feelings, gentlemen, and –"

The gray-haired man's sentence ended. With Cuthbert, he swung instinctively as a startling sound issued from the front door of the room. Like a whisper from limitless space came the sudden shudder of a fierce, sneering laugh!

A silent figure had issued from the door. Unseen by any not even by the doomed men The Shadow had arrived through the front door of the house. His hands were raised before him. Each fist clenched a bulging automatic. One .45 was aimed toward Bexler; the other toward Cuthbert.

WILDLY, the master criminal and his servant forgot the doomed men before them as they wheeled to fire at this foe who had come from the dead. They were pitifully late in their attempt. The Shadow gave no quarter to these murderous fiends. His automatics spoke together.

Cuthbert collapsed while Bexler staggered. Toppling forward, Bexler tried to rise and aim not at The Shadow but toward the group of four men whom he had picked for victims. The Shadow laughed as Joe Cardona pounced upon the fiend and knocked the gun from Bexler's dying grasp.

For The Shadow had other work. At the sound of the automatics, Slug Bracken had sprung back into the room. Livid with wild fury, the mobleader aimed for the black-garbed avenger. Slug's revolver delivered its first quick spat as a simultaneous bark came from an automatic.

Slug's whistling bullet mushroomed in the wall. The Shadow's missile found its mark. The mobleader followed the course that Bexler and Cuthbert had taken. With a gasp, he sank dying to the floor, his revolver dropping from his numbed fingers.

Shouts in the hall. The Shadow's automatic roared a warning to other comers. But it was not the master fighter who sprang to the inner doorway. Weston and Cardona, ready to aid, had produced revolvers. They were pounding forward to resist invaders from the inner hall.

Police revolvers barked at startled gorillas as the commissioner and the detective aimed at an angle through the doorway. Dutton and Brockthorpe, responding to a hissed warning from The Shadow, dropped to the floor just as The Shadow swirled suddenly and disappeared through the front door of the room.

Crash!

Gorillas from outside were firing at the windows. Bullets smashed glass and riddled shades. They found no targets. Dutton and Brockthorpe were crouched below the level of the sills. Cardona and Weston were fighting down the inner hall. The Shadow was at the front door of the house.

His move was well timed. Gorillas were heading for this entrance. The Shadow's automatics roared. One man staggered on the front steps. Another made a lucky dive for safety in the outer darkness.

The Shadow's laugh rose eerily from the doorway. Mobsmen were in flight. From the veranda, as he reached it, The Shadow could spy the scattered remnants of Bexler's band as they dashed toward the hedge, he could hear the shouts of Weston and Cardona.

Singularly, The Shadow made no move. He seemed to be expecting some new action. It came as the fleeing gorillas neared the hedge. From beyond, out of the darkness of the cars that the mobsters had left, flashed the flame from bursting automatics.

SPOILS OF THE SHADOW

While The Shadow had entered Bexler's house, Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent had advanced along the hedge. They had laid their ambush after the departure of the last gorillas.

Gangsters toppled on the lawn before the hedge. Two managed to turn and raise their weapons back toward the house. Prompt shots came from Weston and Cardona, who aimed at the revolvers. The last pair of gorillas rolled prostrate on the turf.

Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent were away from the parked cars before Weston and Cardona arrived. They gained the front of the hedge and scrambled into the rear of the sedan that had brought them. Whispered words of commendation came from a shrouded figure at the wheel. The Shadow had arrived before his agents.

The motor purred. The car pulled away. Joe Cardona, standing by the touring car in the lane, stopped short. Commissioner Weston was standing beside the detective. Cardona had a flashlight glimmering on the bags that contained a million dollars' worth of recovered relics.

"Another car!" growled Cardona.

"More mobsters?" queried Weston.

The negative answer did not come from Joe Cardona. It was uttered from the car that detective and commissioner had heard. As the tail light of the moving sedan glimmered faintly past the entrance of the lane, a weird farewell betokened the departure of the master who had conquered crime.

It rose like a shuddering wail the laugh of The Shadow. Sardonic mockery gained a swift crescendo. It burst into shivering, chilling echoes that seemed to cling amid the darkened air.

Ralph Weston and Joe Cardona stood motionless. Though the shuddering, taunting merriment had come from a friend, they could not shake off the quivering effect that it produced.

Such was the triumph laugh of The Shadow!

THE END